

PRAYER NOTES

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2018

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

John 8:12

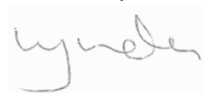
Autumn is a time of celebration in Nepal, including the two greatest festivals, Dashain (pronounced Dossai) and Tihar. Nepalis use a lunar calendar to determine the dates of their festivals so each year they fall on different dates in our calendar. This year they will take place in October and November, so we thought we would bring you a special edition of Prayer Notes focusing on praying for Hindu people during this time.

But we also have some answers to prayer to thank God for and some other items which need our prayer.

We really appreciate your faithfulness in praying for the people of Nepal and the work of INF.

Thank you.

With love,



Lynda Scotson (prayer@inf.org.uk)



AUTUMN FESTIVALS IN NEPAL

Autumn is a time of celebration in Nepal. The lunar calendar determines the dates of their festivals so they do not fall on the same dates in our calendar each year.

Dashain (9-23 October 2018) is the longest festival and is celebrated by both Hindus and Buddhists. It commemorates a great victory by the gods over the demons. The goddess Durga is said to have slain a demon who terrorised the world in the guise of a water buffalo. The first nine days of Dashain signify the nine days of ferocious battle between Durga and the demon.

The tenth day is the day the demon was slain, and the last five days are a celebration of the victory. Durga is worshiped with great rejoicing. Dashain is a family celebration with people travelling home to spend time with relatives. Houses are cleaned and decorated in the hope of a blessing from Durga. Those, who can afford to, buy new clothes. Activities such as kite flying and swinging on huge homemade swings are traditional parts of the celebrations. Worship includes frequent visits to the temples and thousands of animal sacrifices.

We are grateful to God that many migrant workers are able to return home to spend some time with their families.

Please pray:

- for safety on the roads as thousands of people travel to be with their families for the holidays
- that those migrant workers unable to return home, and who will feel lonely, will find comfort and peace
- that families will find joy in one another's company

- that the cost of the celebrations will not overwhelm the finances of poorer families
- that there will be no incitement to violence between people of different faiths



Tihar (5-9 November 2018) is the Nepali version of the Hindu festival of Diwali. It is the second biggest festival after Dashain. People worship Laxmi, the goddess of wealth, and clean and decorate their homes in the hope that she will visit. Candles, oil lamps and colourful electric lights are lit to attract her attention.

Each of the five days of Tihar has a particular significance. On the first day crows, the “messengers of death”, are worshiped and fed sweet foods in the belief that this will prevent calamities. The second day is the day of the dogs. They are thought to escort the souls of the dead. People will mark them with a tika (a red spot) and put garlands of flowers around their necks. The following day cows, regarded as symbols of wealth, are worshiped with tikas and wreaths. Oxen are similarly worshiped on the fourth day. On the final day of Tihar brothers and sisters exchange multi-coloured tikas, garlands and gifts.

Chhath (13 November 2018) is the most important festival observed in the plains of the Terai region and falls on the seventh day after Tihar. Worshipers fast and gather at riverbanks to make offerings to the sun.

Christians in Nepal can feel quite isolated during this long festival time, especially if they are the only Christian in their family and churches often organise conferences and Christian family events for believers at this time of year.

We are grateful to God that the festival times also provide opportunities for Christians to spend more time together.

Please pray:

- that conferences and events will encourage those who attend
- that there will be spiritual light and not simply physical light in each home where Tihar is celebrated
- that a desire for wealth will be balanced with compassion for those who have less

BUILDINGS GALORE

Fistula Centre



The formal opening of the Fistula Centre in Surkhet took place on 21 September. Congratulations to Dr Shirley and the team for this marvellous achievement - it would not have been possible without their determination and dedication.



The Centre will enable us to better serve the most disadvantaged, marginalised and vulnerable women in the Karnali region and beyond. It will give hope and healing to women suffering from the discomfort and shame of obstetric fistula.

Chapel and Pastoral Centre



The building of the Chapel at Shining Hospital Green Pastures has now begun. Ground was broken in early July and work on the foundations is well underway. It is estimated that it will be completed in April 2019.

The chapel will be a place of prayer and worship at the heart of the hospital. It will provide a central focus for the Pastoral Care Team, helping to fulfil their goal of providing holistic care to patients and support for their families.

Houses for the Chepang

Churches from Pokhara have been helping people of the Chepang community to rebuild houses destroyed in the 2015 earthquake. The Chepang are among the most vulnerable ethnic groups in Nepal and do not find it easy to access government support. Some are still living in temporary shelters.

The houses are almost complete. All that is needed is the roofing material. But there are no supplies because of a strike at the firm that manufactures it.

We are grateful to God:

For the opening of the Fistula Centre and the progress on the Chapel

Please pray:

- That women who need help will hear about the Fistula Centre and be able to get there for treatment
- That there will be no unforeseen problems with building the Chapel
- That the materials will become available to complete the houses for the Chepang people

LEPROSY

Leprosy has been around for hundreds of years. Although it is curable, if not detected at an early stage it can have devastating consequences for an infected person, such as physical disabilities and life-long stigma and discrimination.

The most vulnerable are the most likely to contract leprosy. Poverty, poor personal hygiene, and inadequate sanitation can be linked to the increasing number of leprosy cases.

Children are more prone to the disease as they come in contact with people suffering leprosy in their community and cannot take care of their personal hygiene on their own.

Since leprosy was declared 'eliminated' in Nepal a few years ago, training in diagnosis and treatment were considered less important, which left many patients undiagnosed. INF's health camps offer great opportunities to detect new cases and to give advice for treatment of related health problems.

Detecting leprosy early can prevent physical disabilities and reduces the risk of spreading the virus further.

INF has always sought to treat people with leprosy, but now we are stepping up our campaign, During October we will be providing basic leprosy training for staff in government health posts, culminating in a Skin Outreach Camp from 28 to 30 October.



Please pray:

- that those being trained in detecting leprosy will pick up their new skills quickly
- that the Skin Camp would be well attended despite the stigma attached to leprosy
- that the stigma attached to the disease would diminish as people begin to understand it better
- that people already disfigured by the disease will get the help and support they need
- that leprosy will be completely eradicated in Nepal

LANDSLIDE UPDATE

Last time we told you about a landslide in Parbat and how our partners at ACN were helping those affected.

It has become clear that the children of the community did not have the resources to go back to school so, after completing the relief distribution programme, ACN decided to help with this too. Twenty-three children were given new uniforms, bags, books and stationery - everything they needed to get back to school. Both children and parents were delighted.



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ALASTAIR SEAMAN

At the end of November Alastair will step down from his five year role as International Director of INF.

It has been a period of transition for INF. The leadership of the medical work is now entirely Nepali and there has been a growth in ambition to provide quality care for people with disabilities. Instead of two doctors, there are now 15, and hospital buildings have been refurbished, and new departments opened.

A strategic review of our work with communities has been done to make sure that we can continue to be effective in the rapidly changing political and economic context of Nepal - giving communities the confidence and skills to radically transform their lives; ending child-marriage; installing toilets and clean drinking water; immunizing children; and creating new small businesses.

Alastair and his family were in Nepal during the earthquakes of 2015 and he helped to manage INF's initial humanitarian response. Ongoing rehabilitation and reconstruction is still taking place, long after media attention has moved on.

As Alastair reflects on the past five years he says, "One of the biggest encouragements for me has been the number of dedicated and talented Nepali Christian professionals who have joined INF in recent years. Often they make personal sacrifices in terms of career status and salary to work with us."

We are grateful to God for Alastair's service with INF, not simply over the past five years, but with his family in Nepal from 2003 to 2007

Please pray: for the family as they make plans for the future

