

Happy Easter to you all!

I see from the last letter that we told you about our Christmas celebrations and now it's Easter, and what a change in the weather since last month; we now have morning and evening temperatures of 20 – 24C and midday temperatures of up to 35C! The local people still wear their jackets and shawls in the mornings but they soon come off. We went up to Kathmandu this week and there was quite a difference there with daytime temperatures a pleasant 26C and a blanket needed on the bed at night!

We are looking forward to the visit of some of our family in 2 weeks time and are pleased that the weather has warmed up for them. We have already had a delightful visit from our niece Philippa and her friend Sarah as they passed through on their way to Pokhara and trekking though they did experience a chilly time when they arrived in Kathmandu. They also hit a patch of political trouble when one of the local political parties decided that they would close the main road from the Indian border to Kathmandu for a week or two in protest for their "rights". In the end the government gave in to all their demands as no petrol, gas or imported goods were getting to Kathmandu from the border. However as the election is on April 10th these demands may not be met anyway. The government seems to be giving in to anyone who makes trouble nowadays so it doesn't mean much. This didn't affect Butwal but Philippa and Sarah had to come from Kathmandu via Pokhara which took an extra day.

We are again in the midst of the main Nepali wedding season with the sounds of bands, drums and dance music and the lavishly decorated tents and cars that go with it. We had a wedding at our church between two of the young people, Pradip and Susanna. The weather was beautiful, the service was lovely and the congregation were dressed in their best like a flock of tropical birds. Nepali Church tradition is for the bride to wear white, and not raise her eyes – so in the photo you can't see her face.



The church family organised everything and it was all magnificent especially the food. It all started with groups of people preparing vegetables, cleaning rice, cooking meat and decorating the church grounds with flags and flowers. The inside of the church had been decorated the day before with what to our eyes were Christmas decorations but that's the Nepali way. The cooking continued throughout the arrival of the bride and groom and the marriage service. When we all came out it was ready to eat; pilau, curried vegetables, curried meat, chutney, popadums and raw vegetables as a side dish; all delicious. Our

pastor's wife, Bagwati was in charge and by the end of the day she was exhausted. It really was a very happy occasion.

Easter

Our Easter Day celebration started with a sunrise service, starting at about 5.30 am. Then after that we all ate breakfast together at church, preparation and cooking of the food had started well before 5.30 am. We had been joined by a group of German visitors, and combined with our growing congregation this meant that we needed three bus journeys to take us all out to the picnic site in the jungle, where we spent the rest of the day. We went to the same spot that we used last year, there is plenty of level ground, some shelter from the sun, and the river is a great attraction. So by 11.00 am the goat had been cut up, firewood had been collected and cooking was well under way. We were able to baptise four adult members of the congregation, using a pool in the river, in a very moving ceremony. Then the rest of the morning was spent playing games, a three legged race for the children led to the expected chaos and confusion, and a balloon blowing competition for the ladies produced some laughs and red faces.



Food having been eaten most of the young people headed for the river to swim and play, the water level seemed lower this year, but still enough to provide a lot of fun. After a final thanksgiving service it was time to return to Butwal, we were back before dark, but the last bus load finally reached their homes by about 9.00 pm.

Hope Children's Home

The first house is now complete and the second house well on the way though the carpenter seems to have taken up residence as there is so much wood work to do! The compound still looks like a building site but the children, dog, goats and chickens don't seem to mind. We have a new pair of house parents; a lovely couple from our church who offered themselves last month out of the blue. It's strange because I've had a feeling they were a possibility for a long time but hadn't said anything. They are called Kul Bahadur and Lal Mathi and they have two little boys of their own, Anis and Arpan. There are some orphan children in the pipeline and once the work on the house is complete they will come to join the family. In the meantime Kul and Lal Mathi and the boys have moved in to the nearly completed house and the newlyweds, Pradip and Susanna, have moved into Kul's house. It's like musical chairs but everyone benefits!

The children are in the middle of end of year exams after which they will have a month's holiday before starting the new school year at a new school. They're enjoying the space in

the new house and making new friends with neighbour's children though Bikram had a nasty shock when a neighbour's dog bit him on the leg when he rushed over to make friends. All was well in the end and no lasting harm done. The families continue to come to Jaitan church even though it's quite a way away but they are all part of the family and take an active part in the life of the church.

Butwal Technical Institute

Our short term welding courses are going well with the last 6 month course graduating yesterday and proudly receiving their certificates and the next course having already completed their first two weeks of bench work. The photo shows the graduates with members of staff.



Most of the students have been offered jobs in the Gulf as there is a high demand for good welders with good salaries to match. These welders will send money back to Nepal and return after a 2 year contract and probably build a house then return for a further contract. These young men will not stay abroad to live on a long term basis as their qualifications generally only entitle them to limited duration work permits. Generally they return to Nepal after having earned enough money to build a house and possibly start a business. They are highly motivated and work hard to reach a high practical standard even though their academic standard may not be as high as that of our apprentices. Pradip and Bom, Lila's son, are taking part in this new course and thoroughly enjoying it.

- Give thanks for all of our Easter celebrations throughout the world, and especially for those enthusiastic celebrations enjoyed by our Nepali friends.
- Pray for the politicians and leaders here in Nepal, for peace during this period of tension during the run up to the constitutional assembly elections.
- Pray for our newly baptised church members, Ganga, Gopal, Urmilla, Dan Bahadur and also for the newly married Susanna and Pradip.
- Pray for Kuhl Bahadur and Lal Mathi, as they get ready to fill their house with needy children.
- Give thanks for the Nepali Christian congregations here in Butwal, as they seek to witness to God's love in a difficult political and cultural environment.