

## Where in Nepal is Katherine?

I'm not! I came back to the USA in mid-March, intending to join the Board of Directors meeting at Global Ministries and return to Nepal a week later. But when I reached my transit point in Turkey I learned of the plan to close flights from Europe to the US, and by the time I reached the US, Nepal had started imposing travel restrictions that made it impossible for me to get back. Then Nepal shut down all international flights and long-haul buses, and finally went into lockdown, restricting everyone to stay at home except to visit your closest local shop for food. So I'm stuck here in California for the duration, which has been a mixture of guilt of not being with my community at this time of need and gladness that I can be a comfort to my family.

Given the limited health care infrastructure in Nepal (see an update on our hospitals below), I praise God that Nepal took fast and decisive action as soon as the second case of COVID-19 was identified in the country. The first case of community-transmission was identified this week and we will likely see a rise when more testing becomes available, but it is not widespread yet.

**"Work from home" is the new norm in Nepal too**

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[Katherine Parker](#)



Serving with the  
Monitoring,  
Evaluation &  
Learning Team  
of the  
United Mission to  
Nepal

United Mission to Nepal has mobilized our Incident Management Team as we work to protect our staff and plan for how we can best contribute to relief and recovery while following Do No Harm principles. Since last year we have starting using Skype between Kathmandu and our field offices; I've also been working to get our documents into cloud storage. I'm glad that we had already started these steps and can scale up now.

I've gone from team meetings twice per month to three times per week. But I am also up past midnight most days in order to join calls with my co-workers during their morning work hours. The emerging challenge is that load-shedding (cutting off the electricity) is again on the rise in Nepal and hits neighborhoods at different times, which is making it difficult to consistently get everyone on calls.

### **How is COVID-19 impacting Nepal?**

The economic impact on Nepal has been devastating. The many day laborers are hardest hit right now. The government of Nepal is organizing for a very minimal food and cash distribution to the ultra-poor during lockdown and we are looking at ways to contribute to the relief efforts when the lockdown ends. The long-term effect will be even grimmer; almost 50% of Nepal's GDP comes from



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movement related work: sending out migrant workers and bringing in tourists.

We are planning now for how we can contribute to re-training and support returning migrants to build up the local economy. As part of the Health Team we are looking not just at supporting our two remote hospitals, but also at how to expand our mental health and reproductive health work. Our Education team is planning how to support schools in areas where much of the population doesn't even have phone access and where schools provide a critical meal for children. I am hopeful that the schools we work with can be key points for WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) outreach.

So, despite being stuck in California, I thank God that I can continue to work with friends in Nepal on these issues.

### **UMN Hospitals face challenges**

The hospitals that the United Methodist Church helped UMN start in Nepal have done amazingly well at becoming financially self-supporting in recent decades. The commitment to provide free and reduced-cost care to the poor continues to be supported by your donations but is also undergirded by our ability to recruit and maintain high quality Nepali doctors, nurses and staff to our

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remote hospital locations (a difficult challenge). Funds for the salaries of our staff come primarily by providing quality routine and elective care for a fee.

But with the lockdown in Nepal, patients are not traveling in from the surrounding villages to access these services, and hospital income and cash flow are down. This means that our hospitals are facing a challenge to pay salaries at a time when we need to be prepared for the chance of a widespread outbreak in Nepal. We are still working to source PPE equipment for our hospitals. Tansen United Mission Hospital has set up a 6-bed isolation ward where they can treat with oxygen and IV fluids, but they will not be able to use their ventilator or do CPR due to the lack of PPE. We ask for pray that the early call for strict lockdown in Nepal will be effective and there won't be a country-wide outbreak.

### **Our greatest need is support for our hospitals**

Our critical appeal right now is for funds to help us keep our hospital staff employed. Tansen United Mission Hospital has its own UMCOR number, [Advance 13421a where you can contribute](#) towards this. I will come back later to ask for your continued support to our [community development](#) work,

especially around the area of mental health support and migrants, as this challenge unfolds.

We know that this is a global disaster that is having devastating effects here in the USA for health and life and economics, that many of you are facing personal hardship and job loss and that the need for compassion and response is worldwide. Your prayers for our world and for the people of Nepal are so appreciated as we face this struggle together.

### **Stay in touch**

Drop me a note if your small group, Sunday School class or UMW unit is organizing a Zoom or conference call and would like me to join. We can have a conversation on the unfolding impact in Nepal.

### **The church in the world this Easter**

This is a powerful time for the church to claim the Easter message that Christ is in the world. We cannot be gathering inside our buildings this Sunday, but as I sang as a child *the church is not a building*. And so, when we say *He is not here* at the tomb on Sunday at dawn, let us take encouragement that the church is with Christ in the world.

**He is not in the tomb, He is Risen, Christ is**

**Risen, Christ is in the world, and let us be with  
Christ in the world.**

Your sister in service for Christ,  
**Katherine**

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