

In my role as CLSA I spend most of my time discussing, or supporting ministers of small parishes, or leadership groups who have no minister (I dislike the “vacant” tag). The questions or concerns they face have no easy solutions. The one underlying issue most of them wrestle with is how do they continue to lead when there are problems like dwindling numbers, hostile, or ambivalent, responses to the Christian message (Gospel), and growing separation between church and community.

So you can imagine my delight when I was invited to accompany Revs Joao Petreceli, and Ian Guy to view the work of Aashish Presbyterian Free Church of Nepal (APFCN). The APFCN have a vision to plant fellowships throughout Nepal’s 78 provinces, which are divided into seven districts. It is a massive undertaking, which will require years of work. Very much like the early church who saw their role as working with the community to communicate the gospel, the APFCN work with their church planters to bring practical, as well as spiritual remedies to some of Nepal’s most pressing needs. For the APFCN to continue to support their ministers and leaders they need a strategy for continuing development at a leadership level. Well equipped leaders create permission-giving space to their congregations to develop.

The church planters, who are scattered through the provinces, come to Kathmandu twice a year for a weeks intensive training. Last year was the first year APFCN trained six new church planters. I was asked to offer Biblical Studies training to these second year church planters. We had an intensive course of Old Testament Overview.

Provinces of Nepal



The six church planters hard at work



It was a delight to work with such a dedicated group of young men. They are full of energy, faith and hope. They long to bring the gospel to their communities. They all work in predominately rural settings. Some work full time as church planters, while others work part time. Juggling work commitments and the needs of their fledgling communities.

I taught in English, but to hear them discussing in a mixture of English and Nepalese was an experience.



After the four day intensive Rev Ian Guy and I accompanied two of the church planters to their villages where we participated in their weekly fellowship service.

Badri is pictured here with his wife and mother. Badri's mum walks two hours to be at the service, then she will walk two hours back!

I must stress that it took us 16 hours by road to get there from Kathmandu - and I thought that my travelling throughout the Southern Region was a lot!



After being with Badri, we visited Pradeep. Seen here with his wife (Preetika in the blue), father and two of his fellowship's helpers.

There are so many challenges facing these young men and their families, but they have faith, and an even bigger God who longs to see His salvation reach into the hearts of the Nepalese nation.

What a privilege it was to serve them.

Once back in Kathmandu we had some down time, then on the Friday before we left we spent the day with an inspirational couple Silvio and Rosmari Silva. They began Apple of God's Eye 17 years ago in Kathmandu.



Apple of God's Eye is a ministry dedicated to restoring the spiritual, physical and emotional health of girls who have been rescued from sexual trafficking. These girls, some as young as 8 years of age, come to live in one of three homes Silvio and Rosi run. There are 260 girls and about 10 boys in their 'family'. Yes it is a family, not an institution — that's why they have such amazing success.



Apple of God's Eye is also an education and health care provider. From pre-school to teacher training, including scholarships education is fundamental in helping to eradicate trafficking. They also operate health clinics, including a mobile medical and dental clinic. The school is a wonderful facility, and is instrumental in restoring the girl's dignity, hope and joy.



A group of girls, and their leaders, were preparing to travel to Brazil to raise awareness, and seek support. Their smiles, joy, love and delight say it all. The journey of restoration is long, and often harrowing. But God's love is brings restoration, one life at a time.



Please click on the link below and view this short video that tells the story of Apple of Gods Eye —

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FQh6X09WtYU>

You might also like to visit their [website](#) to find out more

Reflections from my time away —

Isaiah 54.11-14

“Afflicted city, lashed by storms and not comforted,
I will rebuild you with stones of turquoise,[a]
your foundations with lapis lazuli.

I will make your battlements of rubies,
your gates of sparkling jewels,
and all your walls of precious stones.

All your children will be taught by the Lord,
and great will be their peace.

In righteousness you will be established:
Tyranny will be far from you;
you will have nothing to fear.

Restoration is so essential, whether its physical, emotional or spiritual. The people I met are involved in the process of God’s restoration. The work is immense, and challenging. It requires courage, and an unwavering faith that God goes with them. Their vision is to see Nepal filled with the knowledge of God’s salvation. I came away feeling privileged to have been allowed to walk with them for a couple of weeks. I have been deeply affected by what I saw and experienced, and the people I met.

‘Peace’, again I say, ‘Peace’

Deborah