

## FOLLOWING WMI TRIP PTS STUDENTS CONTRIBUTE TO NEPAL EARTHQUAKE FUND

This past spring seven Pittsburgh Seminary students traveled with Don Dawson, director of the World Mission Initiative at PTS, on a transformative cross-cultural trip to Nepal. There the group—Brian Lays, Jane Larson, Marty Neal, Rebecca DePoe, Maggie Smith, Ben Rumbaugh, and Karyn Bigelow—met with the Koinonia Patan Church, a young and vibrant church plant. They participated in unbridled worship, hearing the testimonies of believers and seeing their outreach to a country hungry for the good news of Jesus. Just 60 years ago there were no Christians in Nepal and many have suffered significantly to follow Jesus today. The group's "work" in Nepal was to encourage believers and pray for them.



"When people make irresponsible statements such as 'the church is dying,' it reveals a view of the church limited to the PCUSA or mainline Protestantism generally," says Brian Lays '15. "The church is certainly not dying! All over the world it is growing in number on account of the work of the Spirit through passionate disciples who live out their faith publicly."

While in Nepal the team met a number of those Christians in the village of Bhirkot. They worshipped together, sharing the word and praying. Rebecca Depoe, a senior MDiv student, preached while others laid hands and prayed. Marty Neal, a middler MDiv student, says, "This trip made clear other parts of the world have much different views of the power for prayer. They expect to see miracles not simply hope for them." Both groups committed to praying for the other after their time together.

Shortly after returning from their trip the students—and the world—learned about the earthquake that killed nearly 9,000 people and injured another 23,000. It was the largest natural disaster in Nepal in more than 80 years. Rebecca says, "For me, the Nepali earthquake was personal because my friends were hurting." All the church leaders they met with while in Nepal survived the earthquake though sadly some church members perished in the disaster.

To help their new friends, the seven students on the trip, along with the broader PTS community, sent more than \$2,400 to Nepal for the earthquake relief efforts. "Because the trip was less expensive than originally planned, there was a refund for each student," explained Don. "They individually decided how much they wanted to receive and how much they want to send to Nepal. They contributed \$2,000 to the Seminary's goodwill offering. Impressive!"

Additionally, the students committed to weekly prayer meetings. "Some mornings only a few of us could pray because the rest of us could only bear the weight of our sadness in silence," says Rebecca. "It was through the weekly discipline of our Nepali prayer time where I experienced the transformative role community plans in the midst of suffering."

Reflecting on the trip Brian says, "I never thought four short days would be sufficient time to develop such a strong bond, but it was more than enough for brothers and sisters in Christ to realize that in Christ, we are one."

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