

## PARTNER PLAN

# Joel Hafvenstein - Nepal June 2017

United Mission to Nepal  
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KATHMANDU  
Nepal

Dear friends in Scotland,

Thank you all so much for continuing to journey with us and support us in prayer, and special thanks to everyone who has been in touch by letter and email. Our top prayer requests this time:

1. **“Let us build a house!” (and more than one, please)**
2. **For a good relationship with the government of Nepal.**
3. **For Nepal's ongoing elections and the new local governments.**
4. **For our physical health.**

Joel spent ten days in April visiting the remote north of earthquake-affected Dhading district, in villages you can only reach after a day's bumpy drive and 2-3 days' walk. (You can see pictures and stories online at [joelandfiona.wordpress.com](http://joelandfiona.wordpress.com).)

Dhading is where UMN is doing earthquake response work. It was wonderful to personally witness the schools being rebuilt, to walk on the trails and bridges UMN had repaired, to drink from the new community water systems, and see the various livelihood work - goats, mushroom huts, shade-grown cardamom fields - that will help people recover economically.

As you can guess from our top prayer request, though, UMN *still* does not have permission to contribute to rebuilding houses for the poorest. In our last letter, we asked for prayer that district officials would approve house-building for disabled villagers. Sadly, their answer remained the same: Any disabled householder who got aid from UMN would not get the government relief package. And we don't want to use our limited relief money in a way that only saves the government a bit of money!



**New drinking water system in Dhading**

We're now looking at the case of displaced people whose old villages are uninhabitable, likely to slip away or be buried in a landslide at any time.

We might be able to help them resettle, building them houses, in a way that doesn't displace government aid. Please join us in praying that the government would at long last “let us build a house” - using the money raised by churches all over Scotland as originally intended.

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Meanwhile, it was great to see that many people across Dhading were using government funds to start rebuilding their houses – and that the masons doing the building had been trained by UMN in earthquake-resistant techniques. UMN also helped many people from remote villages register for that government help who otherwise couldn't have done so. So we've contributed to many quake victims getting safe houses, even if not so far in the direct way we'd hoped, planned, and prayed for.

A few other prayer points: UMN's generally good relationship with the government has faced some challenges recently. In May, some visa privileges that UMN has enjoyed for 63 years were withdrawn. This could lead to every UMN overseas worker having to pay much more every year to serve in Nepal. Please pray for us as we work to develop a new visa arrangement with the government, and for our relationship in general to be positive and strong.



**Three of the 513 masons trained by UMN**

We're soon going to have to develop new relationships with a whole lot of new government bodies! Nepal is having local elections for the first time in twenty years. If these go ahead successfully, they'll result in dozens of democratic local councils whose boundaries have been completely redrawn and which have more power than any local government in Nepal's history.

This is all a part of the peace agreement that followed Nepal's long civil war in the 1990s-2000s. After so much regional conflict in the last few years, it feels like a minor miracle that elections are happening at all! In the end, the government had to split the elections into two phases. The first phase went well in May; the second, more controversial phase is scheduled for 28 June. Please pray that these elections go peacefully, and that they result in a local government that will be genuinely accountable to local people.

On a personal note, all of us have had health problems lately – notably a case of whooping cough that went through the whole family and has us still coughing weeks later. Please keep praying for our health; the pollution in Kathmandu leaves us all more prone to migraines, coughs, and eye infections!

We'll soon be visiting Scotland to visit Abernethy Presbytery (with another visit to Stirling Presbytery planned for next summer). Because of Joel's responsibilities as director, we agreed to take two short deputations rather than a single, longer one that would keep us out of Nepal for longer. We can't wait to see many of you in person and share more stories than will fit into this letter.

Thank you all so much for your prayers – for us, for UMN, and for Nepal.

Joel and Fiona  
Caleb and Isaac