

## PARTNER PLAN

# Malcolm & Cati Ramsay - Nepal February 2017

from 16 February 2017  
19 Abercorn Road  
Edinburgh  
EH8 7DP

Dear Friends, ***Our final Partner Plan letter***

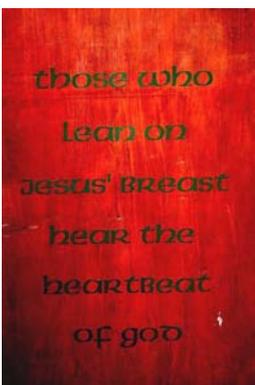
*Malcolm writes:* We said we'd send out a final Partner Plan letter once we knew what the future holds for us. We now know, so here it is!



Wonderful welcome back to Edinburgh!

Our news is that I have been appointed to a five year post as 'Transition Minister' of a church here in Edinburgh. It is a new union between two congregations. One of them had very sadly suffered a split when its minister and a large percentage of the congregation left the Church of Scotland. The other was small in numbers for other reasons. Together they form what is now known as 'Willowbrae Church.' I have been given the task of trying to serve, lead, and pastor the congregation as they try to rediscover some sort of 'normality.' But over and above this, like nearly every Church of Scotland congregation, we will also need to seek new ways of being 'church' that enable us to connect with people in the community in a manner that is attractive and meaningful for them.

What a hard task this will be! We feel daunted. But at the same time we feel very grateful and excited about this tremendous opportunity. And, of course, we will not tackle it on our own. Although the newly united church is small in numbers it contains many dedicated people who are working and praying hard. We look forward to becoming part of that already-existing team, and that already-begun work.



Inscription at chapel door of Nether Springs

In our pastoral work in Nepal one of the common factors for everyone was that of 'transition.' In fact, the comings and goings of people there were so relentless that when UMN asked us for the second time to lead its annual Retreat we chose as our theme, 'The Revolving Door.' We hope and pray that what we learned there will be very relevant and applicable in my new calling as 'Transition Minister.'

For those who know Edinburgh, the church building that Willowbrae now uses was formerly known as 'New Restalrig'. For those who know Edinburgh only slightly it is very near Meadowbank Stadium, (the *athletics* stadium, not Murrayfield the *rugby* stadium!)

The manse will be at 19 Abercorn Road, Edinburgh, EH8 7DP. It is in a lovely position backing onto the grounds of Arthur's Seat. We move there on 16 February, and then I will be 'introduced' as Transition Minister in a service in the church at 7pm on Thursday 2 March. Anyone is welcome to attend that service, so if you are free and would like to come, please do!

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Evening silence after our retreat,  
broken only by birdsong

Cati also has exciting news on the work front. She has returned to her great love of Community Nursing, (previously known as District Nursing). She is now serving a compulsory probationary period on the 'Bank' of Community Nurses. Once this period is completed she will be able to opt to do shifts on days and times that suit her. We anticipate she will work part-time in this way, as she wants also to be very involved in the life of Willowbrae church.

Of course many details of our lives and work will only emerge gradually over the next several months. But we are very grateful that we both now have the prospect of taking up new roles after the fairly long gap since we left Nepal and UMN.

*Cati writes:* The in-between period! Between returning to Scotland in May 2016 and writing this letter with definite news of our future, it is amazing just how much has happened.



A beautiful birthday present.

For the first three months we were committed for much of the time to travelling around our two partner Presbyteries: Dunkeld & Meigle in Perthshire, and Duns in the Borders. We gave approximately forty presentations in churches, schools and various community gatherings. Everywhere we went we received a really warm welcome from folk who have been following our work in Nepal over these past four to five years. It was both a challenge and a wonderful opportunity for us sharing some of the many experiences we brought back with us, the lessons we learned and the hopes we had for doing something more, now that we were back home.

Coming to the end of a very specific period in our lives inevitably involved saying a lot of goodbyes, not only to the people whom we had come to know so well in Nepal but now to people in UK whom we had met purely in the context of our work in Nepal. Since 2011 I have benefitted hugely from the support of the Methodist Church, and Steve Pearce in particular, in sponsoring me throughout



Living at peace with one another- Liwonde

our time in Nepal. We had to say goodbye to them last summer in recognition of reaching the end of this overseas commitment. That was a mixture of positive appreciation of all their encouragement, combined with the sadness of knowing we may not meet again under normal circumstances.

Meanwhile we also had to say goodbye to World Mission in the Church of Scotland who have been playing a major role over our years in Nepal, keeping in touch and ensuring that we were cared for particularly after the earthquakes in 2015. Given that Malcolm is now being appointed to Willowbrae by the Church of

Scotland, our goodbyes are not quite so black and white; simply a move from one department to another! But we have both appreciated very much all the support from Sandy Sneddon, and from Nikki Skinner who ensured the prompt distribution of our partner plan letters every two months – totalling 25 in all.

Once deputation commitments were behind us, we could focus on looking for what might lie ahead of us in the future, involving travels to various parts of the country, applications and interviews. The

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uncertainty of those months was difficult at times and yet once again we have found ourselves conscious of being in greater hands than our own.



Family altogether again after three and a half years, Malawi

One extremely valuable experience was the chance to go on a Retreat at the Northumbria Community 'mother-house' in Nether Springs. We opted to cycle there and back over four days each way, making the whole experience wonderfully energising as well as thought-provoking. Living with the community and others on Retreat, with focused times of discussion on a one-to-one basis, helped us enormously with being content to live with uncertainty rather than seeing this time as something to be endured. And being made to narrow down the real questions that we were asking ourselves certainly served to focus our minds in a realistic direction, leading us to where we find ourselves today!

Without doubt however the highlight of these months for us has been time with our children and their spouses, Megan and Tim, and Angus and Hannah. We had long planned a holiday together and managed to spend two really memorable weeks as a family in Malawi. It was wonderful to see



Picked Frangipani from Nkhoma garden

where Angus and Hannah have been working in Nkhoma hospital during their year as volunteers; and to see various parts of the country together alongside plenty of catch-up conversations, laughter and the novelty of some very special experiences unique to Malawi: elephants, hippos, warthogs, exquisite birdlife, and learning (once again) to live with unpredictable electricity and water supplies! How privileged we are to be living now in a part of the world where we can rely on these necessities 24 hours a day.

Nepal for us was the distance between us and those we love most. The happiest news now is that we anticipate being a family again who are not only living in the same part of the world but possibly even the same city! Megan and Tim have taken the plunge of deciding to move from Vancouver to



Glorious colours in nature!

Edinburgh in June. Angus and Hannah are, as I write, staying with us here in Edinburgh in order to undergo exams and interviews for their own future, and are similarly hoping to be able to live and work in Edinburgh. All this feels like a dream coming true beyond our imagining! We give thanks to God for his provision in the past, now, and in the future as far as we can see! We are hoping and praying for all the unknown aspects of our children's futures to become clearer as the months go by.

*Malcolm writes:* Our final word must be one of great gratitude to all of you for following our work and lives since we left Pitlochry in August 2011. Being able to work in Nepal was quite literally a life-changing gift for us, and we hope our role was of some benefit to the people there. However, we are very conscious that we would not have been able to do it without your interest, your emails, your letters and cards, your encouragement, your support – and above all your prayers. So may we say a very heartfelt and BIG 'thank you' to you all.

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As all our lives move on please do not forget Nepal, and the countless other places like it. There are so many countries where life can be crushingly hard, and yet the people's spirit can be so vibrant. But above all we have learned this: these countries, like ours, are also places where God's Spirit is at undoubtedly at work.

We close this final Partner Plan letter by quoting again the words of Dag Hammarskjöld that we have often thought of and quoted in previous times of transition:

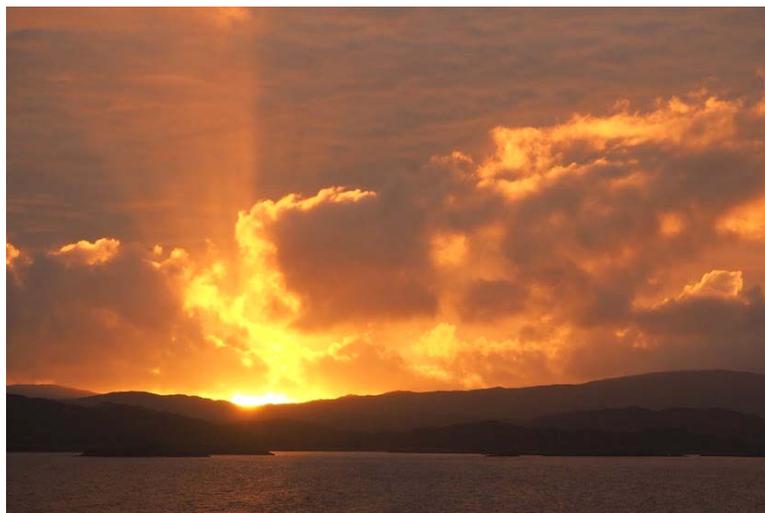
*For all that has been — Thanks. For all that shall be — Yes.*

With love and prayers,

**Malcolm & Cati**



Children playing at the setting of the sun on lake Malawi



Ending of another day