

"It is Simply A Chance to Die" These were the words that Amy Carmichael gave in answer to someone who asked her what it meant to be a missionary. Die to what? I have especially been thinking about that question this past week.

After a couple of months of fairly strict isolating, and very low hospital patient numbers, our lives started to resume a more "normal" routine. Patients started to come back in large numbers. (Not covid patients, but many other illnesses and injuries). Maternity ward has been overflowing. The shops in the bazaar and even the restaurants started opening again to give us a feeling that life was going to get better. Even though we were not able to make our scheduled trip to the U.S., we had made other plans and enjoyed celebrating our anniversary and my birthday here in other ways. Then - for me - last week happened.

Wednesday morning, I was heading to the administrative section prayer meeting at 9. I was actually early, and walking slowly, as it was raining, and the paths and rocks get very slippery here. I came to the steps which I had slipped down 3 - 4 weeks previously, and started down slowly. In spite of my care, my feet went out from under me again (No handrail is there). This time, I realized as soon as I stopped moving that my right leg was broken. The foot was at an odd angle. Fortunately, a hospital housekeeping staff saw me and came right over. He phoned for a stretcher. Another friend saw me and came, and I managed to get Les on the phone and he came, as well. The stretcher was a wooden board with no straps. There were holes along the edges so after moving painfully onto the board, I held on for dear life as I was carried down another set of steps going around 2 corners and through a gate and down more steps before reaching a trolley (with wheels). I was wheeled into the Emergency room and very quickly all 4 of the senior orthopedic surgeons showed up to see me. We felt very blessed to be here where our orthopedics dept is first rate. They had to pull on my leg to get the bones lined up and put on a backslab (splint) to hold things in place for x-rays. These showed (for the medical among you) a spiral fracture of the distal 1/3 of the tibia as well as a fractured lateral malleolus of the fibula along with a proximal fibula fracture. In other words, I broke my tibia badly, and also managed to break the fibula at the top and bottom. I was admitted into the hospital and on Friday I had surgery in which a rod (nail) was put into my tibia with screws to hold it, and a plate was put onto the lower part of the fibula to help keep the ankle area stable. After several more days in the hospital, I



Figure 1 Just after admission. What? No internet??



Figure 2 This is the road I was pushed up.

noticed another difficulty that had befallen the hospital. The old wall between the hospital and the road had collapsed! Perhaps it had been weakened in the earthquake, or perhaps it was just old and the original mud and stones at the bottom just couldn't bear the load anymore.

returned to our house. This was another interesting journey - I was pushed in a wheelchair by 3 men up the road (think broken up pavement with holes and a steep angle up) to the top hospital gate. From there, I very carefully maneuvered with my crutches - with Les on one side and Ganesh on the other to make sure I didn't fall on the rocky and uneven path. On the way up the hill, we



Figure 3 Maternity ward suddenly visible.

So - I have up to 12 weeks of no weight bearing allowed on my leg - which means most of that time will be spent in my house! This was



Figure 4 My current sitting place - for the next 2 months or so...

not a part of my plan!! So many people came to visit and brought us food and showed great love and support. And thanks to many of you who learned about the accident and emailed or sent support on messages.

One other incident really topped off this week for us. The day after we got home, we saw that lots of black dirt was falling from the A/C unit that had been installed in our wall previously. When Les opened it, literally thousands of black ants with their eggs started falling out. It was dreadful - Les was trying to vacuum them up, Ganesh was spraying insect repellent in the machine, and our househelper was sweeping the piles up on the floor... The biblical warning to not store up treasures on earth means so much more here in Nepal where the battle against insects is very real!!

Meanwhile, the number of covid patients and deaths has been rising here in Nepal, and the government has once again postponed all flights and locked down things more tightly. People are hurting - many are starving as they cannot work and therefore cannot buy food. Kids are out of school - and without the ability to access online classes. People have lost homes and land from the torrential rains. And people needing medical care for other illnesses are often denied access to local hospitals until they show up with a negative test for covid.

We are thankful to be here where Les can continue to serve many ill people. He has written the story of M. - a young girl who came to our hospital and was able to receive life giving treatment.

14-year-old M was awakened at 2 am in total darkness in her bed by a sharp pain on her second toe. She called out to her parents, who came with a light from the next room. They could see a small bloody wound, but nothing else. But knowing that the poisonous Krait snake sometimes comes into houses in their area and bites people, they were worried enough to immediately hire an ambulance to drive them 2 hours to the mission hospital. (Ambulances in Nepal are just cars with a driver, a bed, and sometimes oxygen, but no health workers.) By the time they arrived at 6 am, it was apparent that this unseen snake had injected its venom; M was very weak and not



Figure 5 M on ventilator

breathing very well. When she did not improve with simple oxygen, the on-call team quickly started artificial ventilation manually with a bag and mask. Her color and heart rate immediately improved, but she was still almost totally paralyzed. She could no longer lift her head or even open her eyes, let alone breathe. The only sign that she was not unconscious was that she could slightly move her toes on command. If she had been even 10 minutes later in arriving at the hospital, she would have been dead. It was clear that in addition to the antivenom, she would need mechanical ventilation to keep her alive. Although our

anesthesiologist was away from the project and having trouble returning because of the lockdown, there was one other doctor who had had some ICU experience, and several of the other senior GP doctors had taken a short course on managing the ventilator. Les and the ICU experienced doctor were able to keep M alive on the ventilator for 4 days, until the antivenom had worked enough for her to be able to breath on her own. She did get pneumonia while on the ventilator, and had to stay several more days. But in the end she was able to be discharged alive and well to her parents.



Figure 6 M and her mom at discharge

Thinking of the quote above - I think that living the Christian life wherever we are each day is a chance to die. To die to ourselves and to learn how to better love and serve others around us. To die to fears and to be willing to step out in faith. I still have a long way to go in this way of living.... And dying!

Thanks so much for your ongoing support and prayers for United Mission Hospital Tansen.

Les & Debbie

We know that everyone is struggling these days - and we have so appreciated those who have given above and beyond to support us and God's work in Tansen. Thank you! Please - no pressure to give. Most important are your prayers!

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