

# Words of HOPE

UPDATE

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## New Broadcasts to Nepal

On February 1, 2009, despite a deepening global recession, Words of Hope launched a new radio outreach to the Himalayan nation of Nepal. “Journey of the Cross” is an indigenously produced 30-minute broadcast in the Nepali language. The programs air twice each week via a network of FM stations based in Nepal’s capital city of Kathmandu.

Arbin Pokharel broadcasts the Bible’s message of hope to listeners throughout his predominantly Hindu homeland. Arbin and his wife Bimala are Nepalese nationals who met while studying in Grand Rapids, Michigan at Kuyper College and Calvin College, respectively.

After graduating from Calvin Theological Seminary, Arbin and Bimala moved back to Kathmandu where they serve Cross-Way Church. Arbin is principal of the Evangelical Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Kathmandu. Bimala founded Higher Ground Crafts which helps underprivileged Nepalese women through micro-enterprise development including a café, bakery, crafts, etc. Arbin and Bimala are parents of two children—Alyssa (age 5) and Immanuel (age 3).

Bordered by India to its south and Tibet to its north, Nepal stretches 500 kilometers east to west and contains eight of the world’s ten highest mountains.

With its rugged terrain and geographical isolation, Nepal was never controlled by colonial powers. Official corruption and subsistence poverty were factors in provoking a violent Maoist insurgency

from 1996 until 2008. With the emergence last August of a Maoist-led coalition government, peace and stability have finally taken hold as democracy displaced Nepal’s corrupt monarchy.

Christianity was officially prohibited until 1960. By 1990, Nepalese believers gained limited religious freedoms. Since then, the church in Nepal has ranked among the fastest-growing in the world. The number of believers has rapidly grown from 29 in 1959 to an estimated 500,000 today (out of a population of 27 million). Words of Hope’s newly launched Nepali broadcasts seek to strengthen young congregations through discipleship, leadership development, and evangelistic outreach. This visionary partnership with gifted young leaders such as the Pokharels represents a remarkable example of the Lord’s abundant provision.



Students of Evangelical Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Kathmandu.

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# Heralding the Prince of Peace Amidst Conflict



*Israeli air strike hits Gaza.*

The violent conflict which engulfed Gaza during the early weeks of 2009 has seriously shaken the entire Arab World. Those who had become more cautiously hopeful

about a peace between Israelis and Palestinians are now, for the most part, very discouraged.

As Arabic broadcaster Victor Atallah observes, “There is reason for such pessimism. Each side now seems more inclined than ever to take hard-line positions aimed at ending altogether the existence of the other. Both sides are culturally religious and yet both reject the true Messiah. He is the only real answer—Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace.”



*Palestinians march in Gaza.*

In response to the Gaza conflict, Words of Hope’s nightly Arabic broadcasts are

focusing on the theme “The Prince of Peace: the Life, Teaching and Redemptive Work of Jesus Christ.” Victor Atallah explains, “These programs provide Biblical teaching about peace, self-giving, and other concepts which contradict the fallacy of relying on religious rituals which lead inevitably to heightened hostility and violence. The life, teaching and redemptive work of Christ sharply contrast with the common Palestinian and Israeli practice of ‘an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’” These themes resonate

powerfully among many of the region’s war-weary people.

A listener in Palestine recently sent a text message saying, “Please pray for our protection as Palestinians, and especially for all who are still in Gaza who are facing this war.” This text is like hundreds of others pouring in every week. The response has been so heavy that additional follow-up staff has been hired to handle the communication with listeners. During 2008, over 6,000 different listeners sent text messages in response to the Arabic broadcasts.



*Nightly Arabic broadcasts are produced by teams in Egypt and in Lebanon.*

Words of Hope partners with the Middle East Reformed Fellowship (MERF) and the Christian Reformed Church’s Back to God Ministries International to broadcast Arabic radio programs 30 minutes every night via powerful stations in southern France and Cyprus to North Africa and the Middle East, including Gaza. The programs inspire

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listeners to re-examine spiritual beliefs they have inherited from families and communities.

Additional financial support is needed to keep these broadcasts on the air.

