

## An Important Update

# What's in a name?

By Glen Coleman

Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do people say I am?" Replies varied from John the Baptist to one of the prophets. But Peter said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Names are important. They give deeper meaning, a sense of identity and purpose.

The name Keeping In Touch also reflects its purpose. For over 25 years, it has kept you updated on The Leprosy Mission's activities and how you can pray for its needs. **Your faithful prayers have been an essential part of the vision to defeat leprosy.** You have made the difference in the projects you support. Your prayers have improved the lives of many people affected by leprosy.

Every day you join with people around Australia and the world in prayer. You bring dignity to those facing discrimination, lifelong disabilities, and lost dreams.

You have always been our partners in prayer. Now we want to reflect this in our prayer focused newsletter. **From next month, we will call this newsletter Prayer Partners Devotional.** By changing the name, we highlight how important you are as we work

together in prayer. This is a reminder of our commitment to you as you help change the lives of individuals living with the effects of leprosy. You stand united to defeat leprosy and transform lives.

As one of our Prayer Partners, you share our goal of advocating for those in need. The name change reflects your strong bond with other like-minded supporters. It encourages deeper engagement in our mission. You help strengthen our resolve and together we can all amplify our impact.

As one of our Prayer Partners, we want you to invite others to join us. Together, we can create a sense of belonging and shared responsibility. Nurturing this community helps us create a space where prayers and actions match.

Moreover, the new name serves as a reminder of the power of prayer. Each prayer offered is a beacon of hope for those struggling with leprosy. It reflects a promise to stand with people as they face their challenges.

The tone of the newsletter will become more devotional, helping you to see God's hand in the work of His Mission. Your Daily Prayers will continue

to be part of the Devotional newsletter. I hope they will encourage you into deeper prayer for specific needs and express our gratitude for breakthroughs and successes along the way.

What's in a name? You are a follower of the Christ, the Son of the living God. And you are a Prayer Partner! **Thank you for being an integral part of this vital mission.**

**If you would like to share your prayers for people affected by leprosy and for The Leprosy Mission, please email [engage@leprosymission.org.au](mailto:engage@leprosymission.org.au) From time to time we may ask permission to use your prayer in our newsletter so that we can continue to build this community of compassionate prayer.**

**If you want more content, there is a new digital newsletter on its way! This newsletter will bring the latest information, podcasts, videos, stories, and much more. We are looking to engage with new audiences around Australia and would love for you to share this with others. If you are already signed up for the Prayer Partners newsletter email you will receive this newsletter as well!**

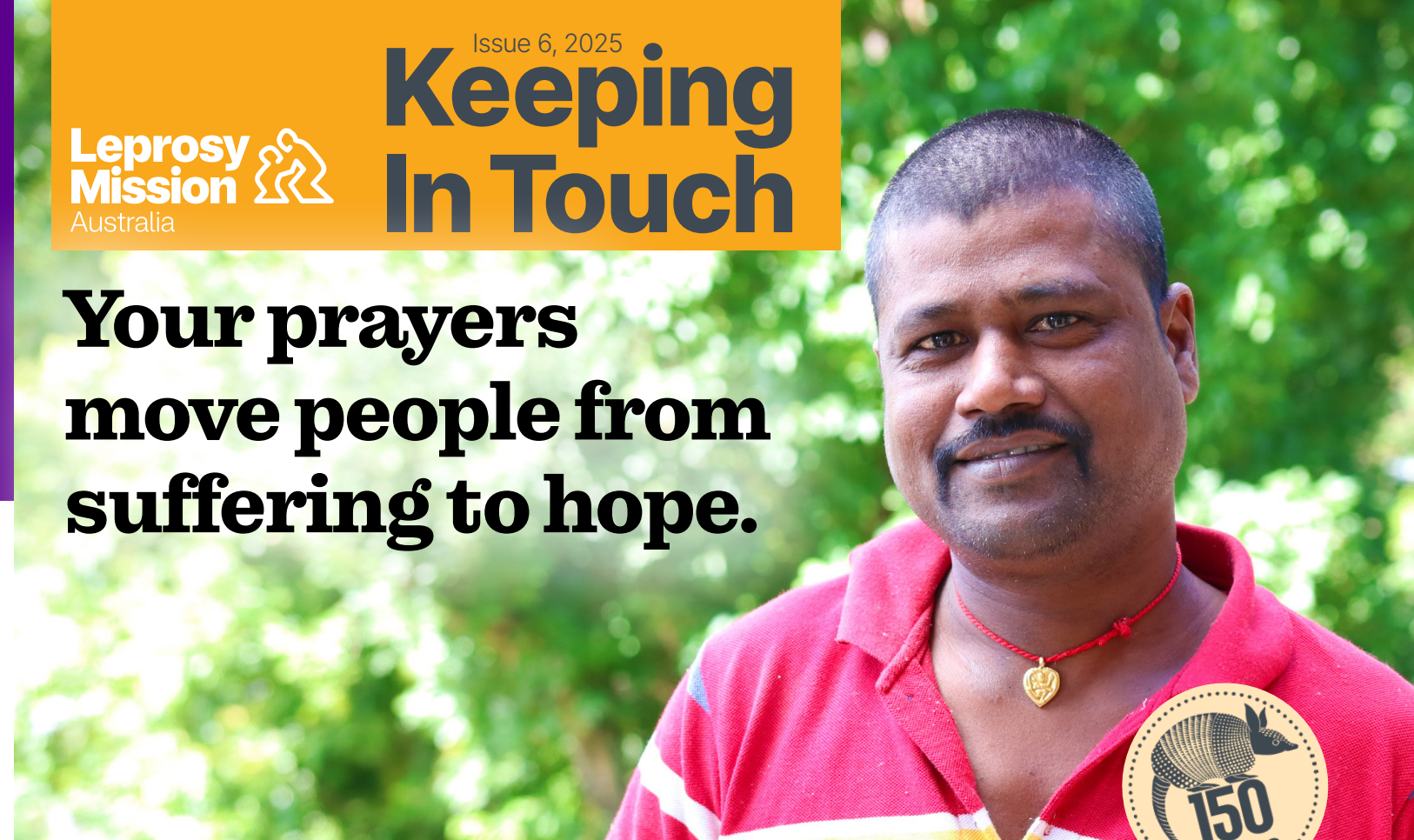


Leprosy  
Mission  
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# Keeping In Touch

## Your prayers move people from suffering to hope.



**"... we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope..."  
Romans 5:3b-4**

It's hard to see hope in the middle of suffering. In fact, it's almost impossible. Pain and suffering shrink our world to what is most immediate – survival.

Bibek, from Nepal, felt hopeless when doctors diagnosed him with leprosy at just 15. Upset and tearful he recalls that "although my family was supportive, my friends and community left me alone and did not want to associate with me. I felt like I wanted to be alone and didn't want to live because of the stigma I knew surrounding leprosy."

Paul wrote to the Roman church, knowing from experience what suffering can do.. Just one more step, one more breath. But over time, this develops maturity and wisdom. Suffering still hurts, but now we have the resources to survive. Only then can we recognise hope and a sense of assurance about the future.

We cannot move from suffering to hope by ourselves. For Christians, trust in Jesus and support from those around us help on this journey. In Bibek's case, it meant listening to his family who loved him and his doctor who knew the best way forward.

"My family and doctor told me that leprosy can be cured and encouraged me to persist. So, I persisted and kept going. I am so grateful for their support. If even my family had discriminated against me, I don't know what I would have done."

25 years later, Bibek is still living with the effects of leprosy. Stigma drove him to hide his diagnosis from his wife. An infected wound on his foot revealed the truth. Although frustrated that Bibek hadn't told her sooner, she stood by him and encouraged him to seek help. Bibek's wound was severe. He needed surgery to remove the heel of his foot to prevent the infection from spreading.

Bibek moved to a community that offers more support. His family and friends provide comfort. Many children like Bibek are receiving their first diagnosis, which is a tragic situation.

Pray Bibek and his family continue to find hope out of the suffering. Pray for children receiving their first diagnosis to have the love and care they need to persist like Bibek.

Your prayers and support bring the love of Jesus to people just like Bibek. Move them from suffering to hope by providing monthly TLC.  
<https://www.leprosymission.org.au/projects/tlc/nepal/kit6>







# A day in the life of a student at the VTC

**It's 5 am. The students at the Vocational Training Centre (the VTC) in Faizabad, India are about to start another day.**

This is no ordinary training program. Students here learn more than a trade. When they leave, they will be equipped to take on life with new skills, new hope, and a new purpose.

Classes operate Monday to Friday and on Saturday until lunchtime. Saturday afternoon and Sunday are free time. Don't think there is nothing to do though! Students must do all their own washing and have several uniforms, some for different days of the week. The VTC offers weekend outings, with students alternating Saturday afternoon outings by

gender. On Sundays there is an optional church service.

Yawning, the students prepare themselves for their daily physical education session. Healthy minds need a healthy body, and all students are encouraged to participate in sports and physical activities during their stay.

Following their physical education and breakfast the students are required (although not forced) to attend a time of devotion. Next is the daily assembly where a time of prayer is held, a quiz on current events and a 'thought of the day'.

Now it's time for classes to begin. But who are these students? Aged between 14 and 32 most have a lived experience

of leprosy and/or disability. They may also be children of people with leprosy or disability. Others come from marginalised backgrounds.

The VTC employs several methods to identify potential students. It receives information from the Leprosy Mission Hospital about new leprosy patients. Staff visit government hospitals to gather similar details about newly diagnosed individuals. They check in at local leprosy communities and consult with the District Leprosy Officer for possible registrants.

Graduates of the VTC fulfil three significant roles. They offer referrals of potential students, share job opportunities for new graduates, and help raise

awareness about leprosy.

The VTC sorts the collected data by age. Next, it reaches out to families to share details about courses, support options, and opportunities. They check potential students' backgrounds, including whether their parents have leprosy or disabilities. Interested candidates then enter a pre-admission stage. This includes counselling on the application process, help with forms, and an admission interview at the VTC. At least one parent must be present for the interview.

A panel made up of an Occupational Therapist, a physiotherapist, a medical doctor, and the Principal of the VTC holds the admission interview. They also verify any claims about a parent's leprosy or disability.

While they avoid outright rejections, they have specific guidelines in place. Approximately 80% of available spots are set aside for applicants with leprosy or disabilities. In a class of 25, the school allocates 20 to these students, leaving 5 for others. Students who need to rethink their course choices might get extra counselling. Once places are set, the VTC sends a message to the student with starting date and any other requirements.

Back to the day... Classes begin in earnest now. From 9 until 4 students will take part in both theory and practical classes. They study their chosen trade as well as other parts of the curriculum. For example, IT is a compulsory class as tests are taken on-line so students must become familiar with computers.



A group of students helping out with the VTC farm — helping sustain the project!

At their residential centre, trades on offer include diesel mechanic, refrigeration, electrical, computer operator and cutting and sewing courses.

The centre also offers community-based education in villages. Courses such as tailoring, beautician, candle making and basic electronics are available.

Following classes students will help contribute to the life of the centre through activities such as gardening. This is also the time that students with leprosy and disability conditions go to self-care classes for wound and disability care.

Students also help in the kitchen. Learning to cook and manage a kitchen is important preparation for working away from home in the future. A mess committee of students and staff monitor and organise kitchen activity.

From 5pm students have free time, although they are encouraged to participate in sports. Evening classes (or

homework) from 7-8pm, are followed by dinner and free time. Then it's lights out at 10pm for a well-earned sleep before another big day begins.

**Give thanks for the Vocational Training Centre in Faizabad. Pray for students as they begin a new life. Pray their time at the VTC will improve their quality of life and open opportunities for sustainable livelihoods. Pray this will also become a blessing to their families and communities. Give thanks and pray for the teachers and staff as they offer high-quality training and support, bringing dignity and hope to the students. Pray for the business community to be inclusive of people affected by leprosy and disability.**

Your compassion towards these students won't just change their day, it will change their life. Give to support the VTC to make a life-changing difference!

<https://www.leprosymission.org.au/projects/vtc-faizabad/kit6>

