

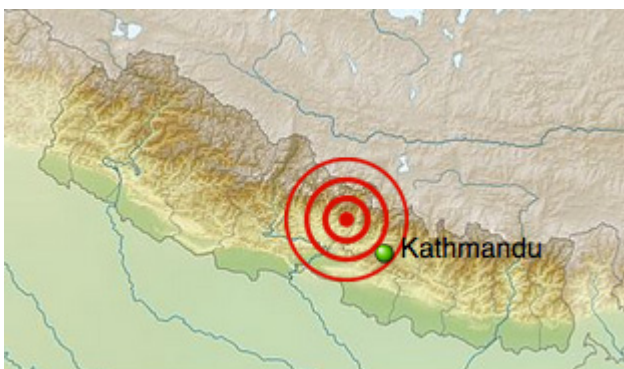
# Updated: Baptists respond to needs in earthquake-ravaged Nepal

April 28, 2015

KATHMANDU, Nepal—Baptists in Nepal and their global missions partners joined in urging prayer and disaster relief for a nation devastated by a 7.8-magnitude earthquake that claimed more than 5,800 lives and left thousands of others injured or displaced.

The quake hit April 25 about 50 miles outside the capital city of Kathmandu and reached as far as India, Bangladesh and Tibet.

At least seven Christian church buildings were destroyed or severely damaged, including two Baptist churches, and Baptists were among the fatalities, the Baptist World Alliance reported.



Location of the April 25 earthquake in Nepal. (Image: Wikipedia) Jirman Rai, general secretary of the [Nepal Baptist Church Council](#), noted many severely affected areas.

“Gorkha, Lunjung, Tanahun, Kapre, Sindhupalchowak, Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur districts are badly hit,” Rai reported to the [Baptist World Alliance](#). “Many houses, temples and one old tower of Kathmandu were

broken totally by the earthquake.”

Aftershocks—some severe—continued to rock the country, he said.

“While writing this email, another earthquake has struck,” Rai said. “I think this earthquake may bring more disaster to Nepal.”

Travel and communication in the country remain difficult, since roads and communication systems were damaged badly, he noted. Government officials estimate 80 percent of the houses in some inaccessible rural areas may have been destroyed.

### **Baptists a small but growing presence in Nepal**

The Nepal Baptist Church Council is one of the fastest-growing Christian groups in the predominantly Hindu country, with about 20,000 members in more than 150 churches. The council—affiliated with the regional [Asia Pacific Baptist Federation](#) and the global Baptist World Alliance—is seeking to assist anyone in need, regardless of religious affiliation.

[Baptist World Aid](#), the relief and development arm of the BWA, is coordinating the response for Nepal. [Texas Baptists’ Disaster Recovery](#) has been in contact with partner entities worldwide, working particularly with Bonny Resu, general secretary of the Asia Pacific Baptist Federation, and Rothangliani Chhangte, director of Baptist World Aid. The Nepal Baptist Church Council is slated to receive \$15,000 this year from the Texas Baptist Hunger Offering.



A survivor surveys damage from the April 25 earthquake that shook Nepal. Baptists there asked for prayer and relief aid. (Photo: Wikimedia Commons / Krish Dulal - Own work) Baptist Global Response, the Southern Baptist humanitarian organization, sent a team to assess and work with a local coalition of churches to meet the needs of victims in Nepal. Terry Henderson, state disaster relief director for Texas Baptist Men, said TBM volunteers stand ready to respond if requested by Baptist Global Response.

### **Working with local Christians**

Francis Horton, Baptist Global Response area director for Central and South Asia, met with a disaster relief committee formed from congregations in the Kathmandu area. Several members received humanitarian crisis training from Baptist Global Response and were eager to work with the agency and with other national and international organizations to conduct response work.



Quake survivors salvage material from the rubble. (Photo: Baptist Global Response) Coalition members planned to travel with an assessment team as they examined heavily affected areas outside Kathmandu. As locals, the members were helping the team navigate the area.

Horton and other relief workers expected to spend several days in areas near the earthquake's epicenter. Members of a disaster assessment and response team plan to make contacts with local officials and leaders, determining the major needs that other organizations haven't targeted, as well as focus on building local relationships.

“The DART team is going to be a key part of getting a good assessment ... [and will determine] how the church in the U.S. might be involved in meeting some of those needs, partnering with local folks here in Nepal,” Horton said. “That partnership is a key element—really essential in trying to meet the needs in appropriate ways.

The assessment team will dispense some aid, as needed, before delivering an assessment report that will guide future BGR efforts. Horton also believes that as they travel, team members might be able to instill confidence and hope in local people.

“It’s an overwhelming task, but it’s doable,” he said. “It’s an opportunity that God has laid before us.”

### **Need for food, water, shelter**

The [Cooperative Baptist Fellowship](#) deployed Eddy Ruble, one of its field personnel serving in Southeast Asia, to Nepal. Ruble, who has experience in disaster response, will assess needs and collaborate with the global Baptist network to supply them.

“Initial needs will be for food, water and shelter, but this will transition quickly to the longer-term needs of the victims in the poorest communities that are served by local churches within our partnership,” said David Harding, the CBF’s international disaster response coordinator.

[North Carolina Baptist Men](#) will partner with [Hungarian Baptist Aid](#) to send an assessment and medical team to Nepal.



Baylor University students, alumni and Waco community members held a candlelight vigil on campus April 29 in support of the victims of the April 25 earthquake in Nepal, which killed more than 5,000 people. Ten of Baylor's students are from Nepal, and some have received news of friends who died, are missing or are homeless. (PHOTO / Jeff Brown/ Baylor Marketing & Communications) Other Baptist groups, meanwhile, are encouraging prayer and donations from members in the United States and preparing to funnel aid to Nepal.

The [American Baptist Churches USA](#) posted an appeal for prayer online.

"In tragedies such as this, our faith calls us to compassion and solidarity with those who have suffered loss," said Roy Medley, the denomination's general secretary.

### **Local Christians responding**

A Christian worker in Nepal said local churches and believers are responding as the "hub" for the communities by providing access to shelter, clean water and food. People constructed tents from poles and tarps or anything that would provide protection from the cold night and possible rains. Even a group of volunteers from a North Carolina Baptist

church joined the ranks of those sleeping outside their hotels. The volunteer team is reported to be “shaken up, but fine” and helping with immediate needs around them.



Rescuers scramble to find victims in the rubble in Kathmandu. (BNG / United Nations photo) “Some pastors and discipleship trainers’ homes were damaged and even destroyed yesterday, yet they are taking care of their community,” the worker said. About 30 people are staying in the field near the area where their team pitched tents. “Each time there is a tremor, everyone screams. We had earthquakes all night and much of the day.”

The worker and her husband were at church when the earthquake hit at 11:56 a.m. local time. The power went out, followed by a long and violent tremor. Panic ensued, and people in the church began to pray and cry out to God for their protection and safety. The congregation ran to exit the building.

### **‘Lord, please let us get out of this building’**

“We stood up and had time to hang onto each other but were then thrown to the ground,” she said. “I would describe trying to get out like being on a trampoline with people carrying it and you’re trying to walk from one side

of it to the other—completely off-centered and unsettling, nearly impossible. We both prayed, ‘Lord, please let us get out of this building.’”

Another Christian worker compared her exit from the building to surfing on waves instead of walking on solid ground.

In a rural church miles away, the same thing happened. The quake hit in the middle of the closing prayer. In addition to massive damage, injuries and fatalities were reported.

“I just got an update that 17 dead bodies have been found in this church, which we have trained and supported,” a local discipleship trainer said via Facebook. “We appreciate your prayers for this church. ... Pray for the pastor, his family and the whole church family. The pastor lost three of his own family members.”

## **How to help**

Baptist groups receiving donations for Nepal include:

- [Baptist World Aid](#)
- [Baptist Global Response](#)
- [Texas Baptists’ Disaster Recovery](#)

*Compiled from reports by the Baptist World Alliance, the Baptist General Convention of Texas, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, Baptist Press and Baptist News Global. This article originally was posted April 28. It was updated on April 29 and again on May 1.*