

Anjali's story

“When I first met Anjali, I saw intense sadness and pain in her eyes. I couldn't believe that at such a young age, Anjali had already known such sorrow.” Gillian Whitley (Executive Director, Leprosy Mission New Zealand.)

Anjali lives in India where the winters are bitterly cold and temperatures regularly drop to freezing. Anjali's family, like so many others, have to try to keep themselves warm and dry through the winter months with a single, open fire.

One winter's morning, Anjali was trying to warm herself by the fire in her home when she glanced down at her feet and saw with horror that they were horribly burned and blistered by the flames.

Her flesh was burning, but she could not feel it.

Leprosy had spread through Anjali's body, destroying the nerves in her system and numbing her feet.

Terrified, Anjali's parents rushed her to a local hospital but she was turned away. The nightmare continued when the hospital staff told them Anjali had **leprosy**. They refused to even bandage Anjali's feet, believing leprosy to be a spiritual curse.

Anjali's parents spent their money on bus tickets, in order to make the long journey to find a hospital that they had heard would help Anjali. On that crowded, dirty bus, Anjali was petrified that she would need her feet amputated in order to save her life.

Cured, Cared for and Restored.

Anjali arrived at The Leprosy Mission Hospital where she was welcomed with open arms.

Thankfully, her feet did not need to be amputated. Anjali's burns were cleaned and dressed every day, protecting them from infection and she received protective sandals.

She was given multi-drug therapy, the cure for leprosy, counselling, and school lessons to catch her up on her education.

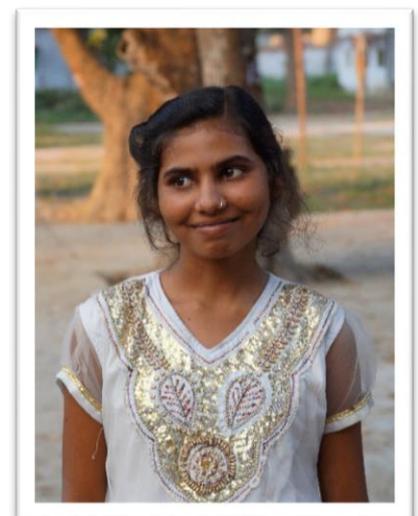
“It is much more comfortable with my slippers and easier to walk,” Anjali declares.

**Anjali now has hope and a bright future.
This World Leprosy Day, you are part of the story of helping
someone like Anjali.**

Thank you for standing with us.



“My mother and father started crying... and then I started crying. I felt very bad about this sickness. I didn't know what leprosy was, just that it was a terrible disease,” says Anjali.



Some reflections on World Leprosy Day

Finding Acceptance and Hope for the future

'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.' Matthew 19:14

We know from biblical times that leprosy-affected people were shunned and rejected because of the terrible stigma surrounding leprosy. Thousands of years later, it is heart breaking to know that Anjali, a mere child, had to face the same fear and rejection in her community.

We know that Jesus never turned anyone away and that he healed the leprosy-affected people that came, in faith, to him.

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11

In faith, Anjali went on the long journey to The Leprosy Mission Hospital where she was welcomed with open arms.

We know that we too can come to Jesus and lay down our burdens, trusting that we will be welcomed and accepted, just as we are. We can have confidence that we can find a hope and a future in him.

God has a bright and wonderful future for Anjali, just like he does for us. We can trust and rely on those promises.

'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.' Matthew 25: 40-45

'You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book.' Psalm 56:8

Jesus, the Saviour of the world, is comforting, healing and helping children who have been devastated by leprosy today. What is so wonderful and humbling is that He uses normal people like you and I to continue his ministry of mending small hands and feet, to cure little ones of leprosy.

This World Leprosy Sunday we have an opportunity.

No child should have to go through Anjali went through. With your prayers and support, we will spread the truth about leprosy and make sure that no child ever has to feel the rejection and pain that Anjali felt.

By 2035, no more tears need to be shed because of the transmission of leprosy.

Let us stand together in prayer and support for those affected by leprosy.

Let us be a light for Jesus and show his care and compassion this World Leprosy Sunday.