

A LETTER FROM THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN THE KINGDOM OF

CAMBODIA



PHOTOGRAPH CREDIT: TROY ZIEL

One Year Later by Jonathan Edwards

When Europe's great powers declared war on one another in the Great War of 1914-1918, almost all sides thought that the war would be over in a matter of months. Each side was confident in their military prowess. Legions of men volunteered to fight, quick to answer the call to serve. As the months wore on, grim reality set in: this war was not to be won in a few months. It would grind on, and the toll of the war would weigh heavy on those who fought.

Without being too melodramatic in comparison, I would like to contrast World War I with the work of the Lord's church in Cambodia, and give you a window into our heart. When we moved here, we were ready to conquer the world. We thought the five congregations consisted of converted souls who were willing to learn. We felt like we busted down the doors into the devil's house and gave him a black eye. Before we knew it, he was up again and gave us a bloody lip! Since then, it has been a fight for the kingdom of Heaven in Cambodia against the kingdom of darkness.

Over the past few months I have explained the struggle that some of the churches have been facing. The time has come to report that three of the churches have either died or have compromised their faith. We have studied, prayed, and reached out to these for close to a year. While we can-

not judge hearts, the Lord Jesus said that we can know people by their fruits.

Phnom Sampov is effectively dead. One member moved; one refuses to meet to study; and the other has disappeared. *Baray* has compromised her faith through legal squabbles and ties to denominations. *Kampong Sdaach* has denied opportunities to study, and apparently is aligning with a local denomination. While we hope to reach out to these people as they are willing, we are moving our resources to focus on the two churches who desire to study and grow.

To sum up a year of struggle is a challenging task. We are convinced some were not truly converted. Their actions align not with those of babes in Christ, but rather with those who have been converted through human allegiance. They appear to serve a man whom they admire and respect deeply, and he has replaced Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Although his intentions were noble, the response of the people was not.

All is not lost. On the contrary, we are being refined by a spiritual fire. The church in *Steung Trang* is faithful and growing. Just last month, organic growth culminated in a baptism. The church in *Phnom Penh* is growing. Our potential for growth is great indeed.

What next? Our success will not *continued on page 3*

Glad Tidings From Cambodia to Myanmar

by Jonathan Edwards

When Denton County sent us to Cambodia, one long-term goal was to build a brotherhood of churches with ties across South East Asia. Early June brought about the next step toward this goal, when we traveled to Myanmar (Burma). We were able to meet, teach, exhort, and worship in spirit and truth with the Christians there.

Brother Michael Bolton received a lead on a pastor in Myanmar, named Daniel. He converted to the gospel after completing an online correspondence course. The decision was made for Michael and I to fly in for a visit with Daniel and the church there. Our mission was to preach the truth of the Lord's Supper, as well as offer resources and encouragement. Since we did not know their standing with our Heavenly Father, we were interested to observe their practices.

In the home of Daniel we studied with his family and the five teenage boys who live with them. Our studies included:

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Prayer Needs in Cambodia

Please consider the following in your prayers.

(B)=Ballard's request; (C)=Chan's request; (E) Edward's request

- ◆ wisdom for the next step in our work here (B)
- ◆ safety and success in our summer trip home (B)
- ◆ patience for Sopeak (C)
- ◆ funds for schooling for his brothers (C)
- ◆ to share the gospel with friends and neighbors (E)
- ◆ our children's health: fevers lately (E)

THE FERVENT AND EFFECTIVE PRAYER OF A RIGHTEOUS MAN AVAILS MUCH.

sowing AND WATERING



Dear Church of Christ by Chan Vanny

This month also the same as last month, except we did not have many trips to go. Most of the time we just spent time working on bible study and reading the bible at home. This month I have met Mr. Jonathan's parent and have the opportunity to listen to the sermon that Mr. Doug preached. In this month we have only one trip to Steung Trang. We have few bible studies and spent time worship with the Ken family. The

rest of the month I just spent time working in the office (home). Sometime I went to help other people moved their house. Sometime doing thing that they asked me to help. Some time I just spent time reading book and bible.... Me and Mr. Jon spent some evening study the bible together... I teach him khmer bible and he teach me English bible lesson. Sometime I spent time chat with other people and tell them about Jesus Christ.

Glad Tidings continued...

- Authority for Religion;
- Overview of Communion;
- A Case for the Cup.

Although we were prepared for opposition, Daniel and his family happily received the truth.

Sunday morning, I was asked to lead the communion. Since there were those who had not been at our previous study, I explained why Christians observe the Lord's supper with 1 loaf and 1 cup. There was a certain excitement about this act of worship. I could see it in their smiles and feel it myself. It seemed like everyone was really happy to share in

the bread and the cup for the first time. I had goosebumps! To share with them in this way was an honor and a privilege.

Thank God for sincere hearts. Since our return, Daniel has communicated via Facebook Messenger that they continue to worship in spirit and truth, regarding the communion.

Lord willing, I will be returning in the fall and every four months for the foreseeable future. We hope to build a stronger relationship and continue to teach the truth, so that the goal of a brotherhood across South East Asia can become a reality.

My Experience in Cambodia by Doug Edwards

Debbie, my sister Wanda Dalto, and I arrived in Phnom Penh on Wednesday morning, June 10th. The first one to greet us immediately upon disembarking from the plane was the heat. It was a rather warm welcome, pardon the pun. We enjoyed a wonderful reunion with Jonathan, Marissa, and the grandkids. It had been over a year since we had seen them all, so you can imagine the swelling excitement that we felt.

Jonathan lost no time in getting me out into the villages to see the Lord's work. Early Friday morning Jonathan, Bradley, Vanny, and I left for Steung Trang to conduct a weekend of studies. We stayed with brother Thearit

and sister Yari in their home. The church meets in their home, so the studies are conducted there as well. I can remember Jonathan telling the story of the conversion of this couple from his first trip to visit Cambodia. Both brother Thearit and sister Yari lost a leg to landmines from the dark days of a previous regime. It was so rewarding to meet this humble, sincere couple. One of the great thrills of doing mission work is meeting the wonderful Christians who are found around the world.

It was a blessing to be able to participate in the teaching during the study. Jonathan asked me if I would present some thoughts on the home and also on the identifying

characteristics of the Lord's church. But the greater thrill was observing Jonathan and Bradley present lessons and interact with this Christian family. Both have gone to great lengths to learn the Cambodian language and fit in with the Cambodian people. Bradley returned home on Saturday to assist with the Phnom Penh congregation while the rest of us remained at Steung Trang to worship on the Lord's Day with the church.

There is so much that I could write about, but I will try to limit myself. This visit has rekindled my memories of previous mission works in Africa, India, and other places. I have been reminded of the difficulties, frustrations, and rewards

of doing work outside of the United States. The Ballards and Edwards are doing a great work in Cambodia, and we should really stand behind them. The Denton County congregation should be commended for their vision to take the gospel to the Asian world.

The work in Cambodia is a difficult one. Please do not compare it to any of the works in Africa, Mexico, India, or any other place. Each place is different and presents its own complex challenges. Over 95% of the people this country are Buddhist. That belief is not like the denominationalism or cups and Sunday school groups we find ourselves encountering in our foreign works. It will

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take time, effort, prayer, and God's grace for the church to grow. However, the Cambodian people are warm and friendly, so there should be optimism that church will grow here.

I must also say something about the two wives (Marissa and Brandi) who work side-by-side with their husbands. I have a special place in my heart for preachers' wives, especially those who labor in foreign places. I have often thought that the missionary wife has a harder job than the missionary. These two have established new homes, endured a new culture, and coped with loneliness with great grace and dignity. "Her works praise her in the gates."

I am amazed at how Marissa has been able to juggle a delightful mother-in-law along with a cantankerous father-in-law along with taking care of her family at the same time. That is one talented girl. I have seen Marissa grow from a young girl to a confident, effec-

tive wife and mother. What a blessing she has been to the Edwards' family.

I feel equally compelled to say something about Jonathan. It is sometimes hard to believe that this smiling, mischievous little boy has matured into the loving husband, father and fearless preacher that he has become. I am amazed at the abilities that he has. He surely must have inherited them from his mother! Brethren, Jonathan possesses great zeal and talents. Do not let his abilities go wasted.

On a selfish note, Debbie and I have had the time of our lives with our grandkids. We have hugged, squeezed, spoiled, played with, read to, and told stories nonstop. I have never eaten so much ice cream as I have the last three weeks. Gabriel, Evie, and Penny are so special. What is the saying? "If we had known the grandkids were going to be so grand, we would have had them first!"

One Year Later continued

depend on raising US dollars for Cambodian preachers or buying the favor of the Christians here with gifts. While the hearts of the Christians who give are no doubt generous, the gift is often a stumbling block. Our strategy is to empower these Christians through regular visits and methodic study of the bible. This is the way forward.

Like the parable of the soils, it takes time to reveal integrity. Some accepted the Word without counting the cost. Others heard the Word, but the cares of life choked it out. We are blessed with two faithful congregations where the Word was planted and now grows. As the parable teaches, the harvest may be thirty, sixty, or a hundred times the amount sown. We are excited about the growth potential in Cambodia!

As our second year begins, we will continue to take the fight into the devil's layer. There are souls here who can hear the Word. There are souls who see beyond the lies that the devil is spinning. There is opportunity to seek and save the lost. Therefore, learning from our first year and with our eyes on eternity, we look to fight hard and fight on.

AMERICAN HANDS IN CAMBODIAN SOIL

Granny's Mission

by Deb Edwards

Three weeks have flown, instead of three days since we embarked on our quest to see our beloved family. I knew it would be very taxing for Jonathan and Marissa to share their space with us for that long, but I completely ignored them, focusing my mind and heart on every word and action of three little jewels.

There is not a price that can be paid for moments like this afternoon as I lay down with Penny for her nap and listened as she sang with me 'You Are My Sunshine' and 'Jesus Loves Me'. This granny's arm has been stroked and hugged by Evie to the point that I told her I may have to buy one of those stuffed animals that I can velcro around my arm to help me make it to 'next time'. Doug and I had the pleasure of sitting in on Gabriel's violin lesson. It took me back 25 years. He was such a little gentleman, bowing and holding his instrument just so.

They all love to have books read to them, and stories from grandpa about Bushy Squirrel. For Father's Day, Gabriel read a book about 'Biscuit' to grandpa. As you can tell, this granny had a mission for her trip to Cambodia. It was twofold. One was to see that my grandchildren are happy. They are.

The other was to see that Marissa is happy. She is. I am so proud of her devotion to church, family and neighbors. She and Jonathan have immersed themselves in the culture here, starting with learning the language. She is better than any tour guide. She is very attentive to not offending her Cambodian acquaintances, and works with the children to be polite as well. Gabriel let us know when we arrived to the house for the first time that we should remove our shoes before entering. Marissa has Cambodian dishes down to an art. She has introduced me to my new favorite fruit, mangosteen, which has a sweet/sour taste. She took me to the market on the back of their moto to buy vegetables, and conversed in Khmer with the vendor about

family and the vegetables. You could tell she has developed a good relationship.

A bonus to my family visit has been meeting the brethren of another culture. I love to learn about another culture from real experience rather than history books. Traveling as we do within the church, always affords the raw view of the culture rather than the tourist vantage point. As always, what a paradox. We have witnessed extremes in living conditions, yet the people, no matter what their position, seem very happy and content.

I do not enjoy the traffic with every man for himself, darting and weaving through bicycles, motos, tuktuks, and vehicles sometimes going opposite directions. I have a definite request to add to everyone's prayer list (please keep my family safe in travel). I love you Marissa. From the bottom of my heart I thank you for taking such loving care of Doug, Wanda, and me these three weeks. God bless you. Jonathan, I love you forever, I like you for always, and as long as I'm living my baby you will be.