



# The Khmer Chronicle

The Cambodian Ministry Newsletter  
of George and Shary Frahm  
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As we are busily packing and tying up all those last minute loose ends on this side of the pond, this note below seemed appropriate for the month of October. This is a recent (partial) summary about/from Pastor Vannarith on the ELCC (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cambodia) to his North American counterparts. Some of this is in his own words and some compliments his initiatives. It was a collaborative article written earlier in the year.

## **From the desk of Pastor Vannarith: Christ can take Cambodia ‘from killing field to living field’**

The Rev. Vannarith Chhim, president of the five-year-old Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cambodia, believes Christianity can have a profound effect on the well-being of his largely Buddhist country.

“Keep praying for us,” he urges North American Lutherans. “You know the history of Cambodia from the killing fields — our last generation, what happened to our parents, our grandparents, 40 years ago,” from 1975 to 1979, during the reign of the Khmer Rouge who systematically murdered up to 2 million Cambodians, nearly a quarter of the country’s population at that time.

So, today, “we are a new generation,” said Vannarith, “looking from a Christian perspective, looking from Christ’s perspective, Jesus’ perspective, with the hope of the generation from the killing field. ...

Now Cambodia could be a *living field*, based on what Christ has done for us on the cross.

“The term we use is ‘from the killing field to the living field,’ I think it’s a great comfort, great answer to us, one [that] our generation will have to provide [through] counseling to our traumatized parents who have gone through the killing field [and ask] what are the answers for their lives?”

“I think Christ is the answer to their lives,” he said. “Christ is the answer to the problems that the world faces [now] and that Cambodia faced 40 years ago, during the killing fields.”

The Cambodian church president said he considers it a “great blessing” for his “small church, from a small country” to have a formal working relationship with confessional Lutheran super powers like the LCC and LCMS.

As a result of the agreement, Vannarith said his church body is “looking forward to theological training” from its two North American partners. It is, he adds, “our main need — for our church in Cambodia to have trained church leaders, pastors and deaconesses.”

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cambodia (ELCC) has some 3,000 members in 32 congregations, but only six ordained pastors — 14 others who are helping to lead ELCC congregations need additional training

before they can be ordained, according to Vannarith.

The ELCC operates one elementary school — with 68 students — in Kampong Cham province, close to the Vietnam border. “We thank the Lord that last June we have baptized 56 children,” Vannarith said.

Offering that Christian education during weekdays — along with Bible studies on Saturdays and worship on Sundays — the ELCC is reaching out to children, their parents and entire communities “to produce,” with the power of the Holy Spirit, he said, “our next Lutheran generation” in a country where only 3 percent are Christian.

The new, three-way agreement updates two individual agreements between the Cambodian church body and the LCC and LCMS in 2010 and 2013, respectively, and “unites the three churches in a common bond of faith and confession, and in joint collaborative efforts” in specific areas, such as theological education, emergency relief/mercy ministries, and Gospel proclamation/education/social ministry.

It recognizes the significance of the Cambodian church’s current efforts — with support from the Lutheran Heritage Foundation in Macomb, Mich. — to translate the *Book of Concord* into the country’s Khmer language.

Vannarith is “a very enterprising young man [who] immediately went to the Cambodian government and got the ELCC registered so it is able to function as a licensed religious group and is permitted to do evangelistic and outreach work (January 2015) — which is really saying something in a country that’s

dominated by Buddhism and other eastern faiths.”

## Knee Thoughts



Prayers for a smooth transition back to Cambodia on November 1st as we bring closure to our lives stateside for our time there.

Praise for the continued growth of the church in Cambodia as they march forward to share the gospel message in the rural villages.

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