



The Khmer Khronicle

The Cambodian Ministry Newsletter
for Immanuel Lutheran Church, Snor Village
Siem Reap Province, Cambodia
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Immanuel Lutheran
Church Snor

Start of the Year

Since we are approaching the end of 2020, we thought it would be a great opportunity to recap the last year. As many of you know, we made a promise to our stateside family to spend every second or third Christmas with them. 2019 was that year. We were fully prepared to leave right after the New Year to rejoin Pastor Samuel, So Phana, Obed, Benjamin, and Esther, and our village Cambodian family.

At least, that was our plan until we unexpectedly heard from other missionary family friends still in Asia who advised us about a strange flu like disease that was circulating around them. They were very decisive as they advised us to postpone our departure to Asia because of our ages and limited medical options in our area. Thankfully we did follow their leads and remained here. The rest is history till now.

The World is Closed

You might remember that we live just five miles from the World Heritage Site of Angkor Wat, one of the most historically important sites in Southeast Asia and the world's largest religious site, covering over 400 square kilometers. This draws many tourists to town

and provides for a bustling economy. In 2018, Siem Reap hosted 2.6 million tourists, but in 2019 the number of tourists already dropped to 2.2 million, especially in the last two months. The numbers for 2020 promise to be a disaster because of the covid-19 virus and shutting down of world economies. When the CDC recommended that we not travel, we contacted Pastor Samuel and informed him of the recommendation and our decision. From that point we have kept pace with the ongoing situation there and check in with him on a regular ongoing basis.

Earlier this fall we discussed with him what was going on and inquired if there was any way we could assist him and the ministry of Immanuel Lutheran Church of Snor, Siem Reap. Samuel informed us that there were no tourists in town and said, "we are hungry." This analysis was confirmed by another Khmer friend with whom we had ministered many times and have a strong relationship. There were no tourists in town, and many people were out of work. (Samuel with Obed, Benjamin and baby Esther (now walking).)



Samuel Feeds the Church

Shary and I discussed and prayed, and responded to Samuel's simple request by sending a care package from the funds you have provided for us and some of our own savings. Our intention was to provide for Samuel and his family, but Samuel had a much bigger and sacrificial vision.

While we were focused on Samuel and his needs, Samuel was focused on spreading the Word. Samuel went out and purchased rice and foods that were culturally acceptable and distributed them to the village families of Snor where Immanuel is located.

Samuel's reasoning was sound. If he wanted them to listen to the good news of Christ, they needed to have their immediate needs met, namely full stomachs. Once Samuel opened the gate, he was able to secure additional food donations from LHM and other churches. It was amazing how he was able to stretch what he was given.



The Rainy Season Comes?

As a country, Cambodia was not hit too hard by the virus itself initially. The lack of tourists due to restrictions on travel had a much bigger impact both early on and even more as time passed. By the time the rainy season came, the tourists had not returned, but the rain meant that rice planting time was here and there was a promise of food for the future.

The rains came and rice was planted. The road to Snor was flooded by some of the early rains, but dried quickly until the heavier rains started later in the season. As September and early October came, the rains were extremely heavy and most of the large province of Siem Reap was faced with flooding. But the Khmer know how to deal with floods.



Infamous road off a secondary one to Snor. One adequate rutted path when it's there.

Samuel has Bigger Plans

The big event on the calendar for this year was a discipleship program for 60 pastors from Siem Reap Province which combined the talents of J.P. Cima of LCMS, Pastor Phin Naro of Lutheran Hour Ministries (LHM), and various other pastors from the Cambodia Lutheran Church (CLC). J.P. had the following to say when he contacted us:

“Yesterday I had the pleasure to be a part of a one-day gathering of church leaders and members in and around Siem Reap. I taught for a half day on worship as dialogue, and then observed the team from [LHM Cambodia](#) as they discipled those gathered through games and dramas. What an awesome day! Many thanks to [Chut Samuel](#), a Lutheran pastor in Siem Reap, for the initiative and for making all the arrangements.”

This event was important because it established Pastor Samuel as a leader in the Siem Reap Province, and encouraged unity between Samuel and other pastors of Siem Reap Province, the CLC, LHM, and LCMS organizations. Shary and I were happy to be part of the support team but sorry we were not there in person. Enjoy the



pictures of this fantastic spread of the Gospel.
Pastor Samuel



Pastor Naro LHM



Merry Christmas

The final event of this year has yet to take place, the celebration of the birth of our Savior. Christmas in Cambodia is always interesting. Homes are not decorated for the holiday, but every Christian church decorates with the message. While in the USA, we celebrate December 25th in unity, Cambodia churches select which Sunday they will call Christmas. So in Cambodia, Christmas may be any Sunday in December or January. Not necessarily a bad idea.

While the Christian community celebrates the birth of a Savior, the rest of the country also celebrates. Unfortunately, the non-churched community celebrates Christmas as an economic holiday rather than a religious cry of preparation for the second coming of Christ. Santa Claus is well known, but we want Christ to be known even more. Covid-19 may well affect the unchurched, but we pray that it will drive people to know the Savior.



Christmas 2018

Knee Thoughts

1- You fill in the blank here as you pray. Each one of us has the single opportunity to take our requests to our Father in all needs. There are so many and as His family of sons and daughters we have the greatest opportunity to pray without ceasing.

2- Our time here to be fruitful in the midst of unexpected challenges involving us and yet it still be a time to share Jesus here as well.

3. Praise for the ability to connect electronically when we can't be there in person, wherever that place would normally be for a time together.

4. Prayers for our family in Cambodia during this time of separation to continue to shine for Him as they all do so well, with a boost of encouraging love during this Christmas season and virus isolation.

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