

January 31, 2024

Dear Praying Friends,

Happy New Year! We trust 2024 is off to a wonderful start...especially since the first month of it is already gone! There is more to say in this update than should probably be put into a single letter, but let's just jump right in and see if we can cover it all without going too long.

### **Virtuous Women Conference**

In late October, we rented a 25-passenger bus to send our ladies up to Siem Reap for the 2nd annual Virtuous Women Conference. It was great to have more of our ladies go this year than last year, and once again, they all returned with wonderful reports of spiritual refreshment, developing friendships, and growth in the Lord. We sincerely appreciate all the effort put into this conference by the Schrock family and Victory Baptist Church of Siem Reap.

### **Faithful Men Conference**

In mid-November we hosted our 4th annual Faithful Men Conference. This was our biggest year so far with right at 80 men in attendance. We added several speakers this year for a total of 14 different men teaching and preaching, and for the first time we offered a track of split sessions specifically geared for teenagers. As I walked around listening in on each of the split sessions, it was such a joy and a blessing to hear godly men imparting truth, wisdom, and instruction to their brothers in the faith. Every year, the singing at the conference is a real highlight, and this year was no different. For the past three years, I have translated a new song each year to teach the men, and these songs have become some of their absolute favorites to sing. Two years ago was "Faithful Men," last year was "I'm A Soldier Of The Cross," and this year was "The Banner Of The Cross." Lord willing, next year we'll teach them "Stand Up, Stand Up For Jesus." We're very excited about how the Lord is using this conference, and we look forward to seeing it continue to grow in both numbers and effectiveness.

### **Special Guests From The United States**

In the 2nd half of November, we had 2 very special visitors from the states. My brother and his oldest son have wanted to visit for years, and it finally worked out. What a joy to have them here! We greatly enjoyed playing host and showing them all the sights. It was also wonderful to have both of them participate in our ministry for a couple of weeks. My brother and I were raised in the ministry and learned and served in ministry together from childhood, through our teen years, and through our college years. For the past 30 years, although we've both served in the ministry, we rarely even see each other, much less get to serve together, so their visit was a very special time. I loved getting to translate for him to preach and teach, and I also appreciate my nephew playing the piano several times during their visit.

### **Christmas**

In December, as always, we enjoyed times of worship, fellowship, and outreach with our church people. Our annual food offering went well and we ended up with enough to give to 15 different families. So far, 2 elderly ladies have trusted Christ as Savior as a result of the food offering, and there are several more families or individuals currently being taught the Gospel. For the 2nd year in a row, we had a special Christmas tract printed just for the month of December, and our people distributed several thousand of those. In fact, several other missionaries in various provinces asked for our Christmas tract this year. I ended up sending the file (with our contact info swapped out for theirs) to 5 different missionaries in 3 different provinces. I don't know how many tracts they printed, but we are always happy to see our materials used by others, as we are all fellow-laborers in the harvest

of the same Lord. On the last Sunday of 2023, we enjoyed a time of extra singing and testifying of God's goodness in our lives. The testimonies that day really stirred my heart in a special way. Two testimonies in particular challenged me, as both of them were from people who came to our church many years ago, then got away from the Lord, and have recently returned. These kind of testimonies underscore the importance of longevity and faithfulness. I'm so grateful that when each of these two individuals decided to get right with God, they found the church waiting for them with open arms.

### **Prayer Request**

Please pray for an elderly couple and their granddaughter to whom I am currently teaching the Gospel. The man (Ohm Yuen) was first invited to church by some of our people who were going door-to-door. He claimed to be a Christian, but there have been some indicators to the contrary. He has been coming faithfully every Sunday, and even started bringing his granddaughter (Raeksa). I recently began teaching both of them (and the wife, though she has not yet attended church) in their home. They are listening very well. Please pray for Ohm Yuen and his wife and Raeksa (she's 11 years old) to be saved soon.

### **Family Update**

In our last letter, we reported that our daughter, Candace, was recovering well, but still not back to full strength. I'm very happy to report that she is now back to work full-time, essentially doing everything she was doing before her hospitalization this past August. We talked to her on Christmas for awhile and I was so struck with how good, strong, healthy, and happy she looked! From where she was to where she is now is truly nothing short of miraculous, and once again we want to say just how much we appreciate every one of you who prayed for her and gave special offerings to help to meet the needs. One other health situation and prayer request relates to our third daughter, Emma. She recently had a surgery on her arm to remove a cyst that has been causing much pain and discomfort. The surgery appears to have been a success. Please pray for her for full healing and for her to be able to resume all of her many piano-playing duties in college and church.

### **Home Church Update**

Another important update to share with each of you is in regards to our home church, Sequoia Baptist. After starting the Sequoia Baptist Church in 1976 and pastoring it for the next 47 years, my dad resigned the church in late October, 2023. Our new pastor, Eric Tharp, arrived in December, and we are excited about all that God has in store for Sequoia's future. We are thankful that God provided the right pastor to bring new vitality and fresh vision, while still maintaining the same doctrine and direction. Please pray for our home church as the new pastor and his wife settle in and begin to lead the church forward.

Also, please be in prayer for my parents as they are still making decisions as to their future. As the pastor who preached me to Christ, baptized me, taught me, trained me, encouraged me, counseled me, ordained me, commissioned us to Cambodia, and supported and prayed for us for these 23 years, I want to publicly thank both my dad and my mom for their unwavering faithfulness throughout all these years.

Thank you to each and every one of you who send your support faithfully and/or pray for us regularly. We are indebted to each of you for your investment in our lives and ministry. May God bless each of you in 2024 as you serve the Lord.

Sincerely,

Stephen Benefield  
Phnom Penh  
Cambodia