

September 5th, 2024

Dear Praying Friends,

New Members Of God's Family

Let's start off this letter with the best news of all: two more precious people have been born into God's family! Thank you to all who prayed for Ming Samun (the mother of one of our faithful church members, the wife of the man who got saved on Thanksgiving Day in 2022, and the woman who has been traveling 2 hours one way to come to church). As I was thinking about Ming Samun and the way that God has been working behind the scenes for many, many years to bring her to Christ, the Lord laid it on my heart to write out a more complete testimony of her story. I am sending it separately from this email, as a special edition prayer letter. It will be labeled "Testimony From Cambodia" in the subject line. I hope you'll read it and be encouraged.

The second person to get saved was a teen girl named Nana, who after coming to church for the past several months, and being taught the Gospel for several weeks, trusted Christ as Savior. Some of our people met her and her 2 younger siblings while out passing out tracts, and the three of them have been coming very faithfully for months. Pray for Nana's little brother and little sister, as well as her parents (who have not yet attended church at all).

Recent Visitors

We've had several first-time visitors recently in our services. Please pray for the following two men for salvation: Kaleen (a single young man...work keeps him pretty busy, but he just keeps popping up at church, as if something is compelling him) and Hai (a middle-aged husband and father of 2...brought to church recently by one of our men). Please pray also for Sinang. He was a Buddhist monk in his youth, then heard the Gospel at our church and made a profession of faith in Christ many years ago, but in recent years had completely disappeared. He showed back up a few months ago and seems to be desirous of getting right with God and getting his life back on track. Last Sunday, one of our men brought a visitor to church who spoke only Chinese, and lo-and-behold, Sinang speaks Chinese! We never knew that, but after church they were chatting away.

Welcoming A New Missionary Family To Cambodia

If you have ever prayed to the Lord of the harvest to send forth more laborers, you'll be glad to know that in less than two weeks we'll be welcoming a new missionary family to Cambodia. Please pray for Joel and Valerie Scupham and their two young children as they are in the final days of preparation for this big move. It's no small thing to move your family permanently to another country. Pray for them as they deal with all the final loose-ends and details and the tearful goodbyes, and then begin the adjustment of living in this country. We pray that the Lord will use their lives mightily in His service!

Family News

By way of a family update, we are now down to 2 children left at home, as our oldest son, Stephen, has just begun his freshman year studying Criminal Justice at Pensacola Christian College. Please pray for God to meet his needs both physically and spiritually, and for him to successfully make the dual adjustments to both college life and American life. Our 3rd daughter, Emma, is just starting her senior year at West Coast Baptist College. Children 5 and 6 (Gabby and Seth) are starting 11th and 10th grades respectively, and our 2 older girls are both doing well and faithfully serving the Lord. (By the way, we just passed the one year mark since our oldest daughter's hospitalization, and she is doing terrific!)

Two Special Prayer Requests

Let me close this letter with a couple of additional special prayer requests.

First, our church is growing, and we are really in need of a bigger place. There are a lot of complicating factors and extenuating circumstances, so I'll just simply ask you to pray for wisdom and clear leadership from the Lord regarding this issue.

Second, I am currently writing a curriculum and preparing to record videos for a personal evangelism class for the online Bible institute of a fellow missionary. This course is to be taught starting in January, and that will be here in about 2 blinks of the eye. With the numerous other projects on my plate right now, I really need God's help and guidance to get this done and to get it done right. I desire it to be an effective course, and to help many people come to know Christ in the years ahead, so please pray with me to that end.

Several have asked recently for an updated family picture, so I am attaching our latest one. Your prayers mean the world to us, and I trust our letters will encourage you to keep praying. Your prayers and giving have made a difference to so many!

Sincerely,

Stephen Benefield
Phnom Penh
Cambodia



September 6th, 2024

Note: This is a special edition prayer letter. I have told bits and pieces of the story contained below in past prayer letters, thus you may find some of the names and details familiar. I apologize in advance for the repetition; however, after a dear lady was saved recently, I felt compelled to write up a longer version of the story, a full (and hopefully not yet finished) testimony of God's grace in one family. I hope it will bless you to read it, and I hope it will remind you of the grave importance of the work that God has called all of us to do. On behalf of every person mentioned in the story below, I thank you for caring enough about the souls of the men and women of Cambodia to send our family to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with them.

Dear Praying Friends,

About 20 years ago, my wife and I parked my moto on a narrow, back alley in downtown Phnom Penh and climbed the steep, unlit stairs to a 5th floor apartment, to teach a lady who had recently visited our church. A shrine to Buddha and various spirits and demons was the largest thing in the shabby, dimly-lit apartment, and thus we sat on the floor in a small corner. The apartment belonged to the woman's aunt, and while the aunt was a hard-core Buddhist, the niece was searching. She didn't know what she was searching for, but we did. After going and teaching her several times and answering her questions, Karona placed her faith in the Lord Jesus Christ! She quickly began to grow in the Lord and before long it became evident that God would use her in a great way.

A few years later, Karona got a job working for an NGO that helped girls who had been rescued out of all types of bad situations. In fact, not only did Karona get a job there, but so did two other ladies who had been saved in our church as well (Seyha and Sopiép). Those three ladies had a great testimony and were bold to share the Gospel with the girls with whom they were working. I remember many times that Karona (who by that time was helping in our children's ministry) would ask me if she could borrow a lesson, a game, or some other resource, and they were often holding everything from private conversations to Bible classes with the girls at the facility. By the time that center closed down and all three ladies moved on to other jobs, they estimated that they had led about 70 girls to the Lord!

Karona's next assignment with the NGO that ran the girls' center was to be a house mother in a sort of "halfway house" for young ladies who had completed the program and were re-entering society. At one time, most of the 8 or 10 young ladies in that home were attending our church weekly. They all called Karona "mom." Today, some 15 years later, 3 of those young ladies are still faithful, active members of our church. Two of the girls from that group were twin sisters named Chanthy and Chantha. Eventually many of the ladies moved away and we lost contact with them, but Chanthy (one of the twins) stayed in touch from a distance. She ended up working in Korea for many years, but every once in a while she would return to Cambodia for a brief visit (and she usually attended church while in town). Occasionally she would send some money to Karona (her spiritual mom) and ask her to put it in the offering for her. When COVID-19 forced us to begin live-streaming our services, she began to watch regularly from Korea.

About 2 years ago, she returned to Cambodia for good, and very quickly we discovered that part of the reason she had returned was that her father, Savut, was suffering kidney failure and she wanted to be near her parents during this time. Not only was she concerned for their physical health, but she was even more concerned for their eternal souls. (At this point, those of you who have read our prayer letters over the past couple of years will begin to recognize this story). I searched for

a missionary or pastor in her area to go meet with Chanthy's dad. While I was searching, I began making plans to go see him myself. First, I recorded a video introducing myself and tell him how much his daughter loved him and wanted him to make peace with God while he still could. I then introduced some elements of the Gospel and said I would see him soon. She showed him the video and he expressed interest in hearing more. The next day, he took a turn for the worse and she brought him to Phnom Penh to the hospital. The doctors said they could do nothing more for him and sent him home. But although the doctors could do nothing for him, Jesus could! I met with Savut that day for a long time and explained the Gospel to him, and there sitting on the floor of our church, on Thanksgiving Day, he trusted Christ as Savior. 5 days later, he went to Heaven. When I went to the funeral, I of course met all the family. Both his wife and his elderly mother made a specific point of telling me that when he returned home after meeting with me, he told them that Jesus had forgiven his sins and he was no longer afraid to die. We began to pray then for the rest of the family to also be saved.

Sometimes (well okay...most of the time) when I try to type Khmer names, auto-correct tries to correct me. Mostly, that's annoying, but the time I'm going to tell you about right now...it didn't annoy me. It actually made me cry. A few days after Savut had passed away, I was trying to type his name into a prayer letter, or a twitter post, or something...I don't remember. I typed "Savut" and then hit the space bar. It instantly changed "Savut" to "saved" and I began to weep. That annoying auto-correct finally got something right!

A few months ago, Chanthy texted me and said, "Pastor, my mom's really opening up to the Gospel, and she's coming to church this Sunday!" Sure enough, she came! Two hours to get there, and two hours to get back home. That Sunday afternoon, I sat down with Chanthy and her mother, Ming Samun, and began to teach her about the Gospel. After teaching her for 2 Sundays, I turned her over to...you guessed it...Karon! The same one who led Chanthy to the Lord many years ago. A couple of weeks ago, Ming Samun trusted Christ as Savior! A few days ago, I saw a Facebook post from Chanthy that instantly filled my eyes with tears. It was a picture of her parents along with a testimony of her gratitude to God for saving both of them. She wrote it in Khmer, but here is essentially what it said: "Thank you, Lord, for saving me and for saving my parents. I am so very thankful. How great is your love! When dad got saved, he told mom that he had gotten saved, and he wanted her to get saved too because he loved her so much. And now she is saved too! I love them both. I miss you, dad. I'm going to keep praying for the rest of our family, and my brothers and sisters."

Would you pray with us for Chanthy's family? Especially pray for her grandmother and her 11 year-old daughter, Panya. Pray that God will continue to work in this precious family and that more of them would come to Christ for salvation. I've attached some photos to go along with this story. Missions is about people, and people have faces. Look at these faces, and remember...there are more than 17 million faces in Cambodia, and over 8 billion faces in the world. Most of them are still waiting for someone to tell them about Jesus.

Sincerely,

Stephen Benefield
Phnom Penh
Cambodia



Chanthy's baptism in 2009



Thanksgiving Day, 2022
Praying with Savut



Thanksgiving Day, 2022
Savut asking the Lord to save him, with daughters
Chanthy and Chantha sitting nearby



At Savut's funeral,
meeting his mother



At Savut's funeral. Ming Samun is the woman in the middle



At Savut's funeral



Chantry on the left. Karona in the middle. Da on the right (Da is one of the 3 ladies I mentioned who were saved through the girls home and is still in church.) This photo was in January, 2024. All three ladies quoted 52 memory verses in 2023 and earned a Scripture picture to hang in their homes.



Chantry and Ming Samun, June 30, 2024, the first day she came to church.



Savut and Ming Samun. I don't know the date of this picture, but it's the picture that Chantry posted with her heartfelt message of thanks to God for saving her and her parents.