

September 5th, 2024

Dear Praying Friends,



### **A Wonderful Christmas Season**

We enjoyed a wonderful Christmas season celebrating the birth of our Savior! Our annual food offering went very well and we were able to provide rice, noodles, and other non-perishables to over 20 needy families in the community. So far, one elderly lady (Yeay Long) has come to faith in Christ as a result of the love and kindness shown to her through the food offering, and many others have had the Gospel shared with them.

On Christmas Sunday, we had a unique opportunity to be both be a blessing to another church and receive a blessing ourselves. Some of the folks from Mt. Calvary Baptist (the church I've been helping for many months and for which we are currently praying for a pastor) approached me with an idea that they would all come over to our church on Christmas Sunday morning, instead of me going out to their church on Sunday night. I loved the idea of a little break on Christmas Sunday; however, I wasn't sure it would work space-wise. We were already anticipating about 80 on Christmas Sunday, and 80 has always been, in my mind, kind of the limit to what that building could hold. (After all, the width of the church building is only 16 feet!) I told our church about their idea and that we would need to make a few changes to our day and to the structure of our service, and even to how and where we would serve lunch. I also told them that we would also need some extra help to make these changes. I wanted their input before I made a decision. One of our ladies said, "Pastor, there is a Khmer proverb which says 'Better to not have enough room in your house than to not have enough room in your heart.'" Every other person said, "Yes...what she said!" I was so proud of our folks for their heart of hospitality and willingness to be inconvenienced and serve others. Anyway, to make a long story short, we had 110 people on Christmas Sunday!

### **Update On Search For New Building**

Though we discovered on Christmas that 80 actually is **not** the limit in that building, we still continue to look for a bigger building. We have looked at several places in person and have made phone calls on many more, but thus far have not found a suitable place for a suitable price. However, I do have a specific prayer request for you to pray for regarding our need of a building. This is going to sound really weird to Americans, but not that weird to people who have ever lived in Cambodia. The house next door to us is identical to ours and the two houses actually share a wall. We have approached the owners of both houses about whether they would allow us to rent both houses and knock down the middle wall (at least on the auditorium level). They are open to it. So right now we are praying and considering this option. There are many good points to this idea, but there are also some complications, not to mention having two separate landlords for what would essentially be just one building. I would greatly appreciate your prayers for God's continued leadership and direction.

## **Update On The Church That Is Needing A Pastor**

I know that many of you are praying for this situation which I shared in our last letter, so here is a brief update. There have been two encouraging developments recently. First of all, while there was some talking of closing the church if a pastor was not found soon, that talk has been put to rest. The people of the church have decided together that they desire to keep the church open with or without a pastor. I think that is a very good thing, as they are expressing their commitment to the church and their understanding of its significance both in their own lives and in the local community. Also, key people are stepping up in new ways to take responsibility, which is always good. Second, there is a potential pastor currently talking with the pastor who started the church. Although that solution would still be a few months away (if it ends up working out), the light at the end of the tunnel is encouraging all of us even now. Meanwhile, I continue to go out every Sunday night to preach and try to encourage them to stay faithful through this time of uncertainty. Please continue to pray for all of the various people involved in this situation.

## **Upcoming Travel**

Our third daughter, Emma, will be graduating from West Coast Baptist College on May 5th, so we will be traveling to the US for that special occasion. After the graduation, we will spend 2 months in California reporting to some churches we were unable to be in during our last furlough back in 2021. This will not be a full furlough as the timing is just not right for that. A fuller and more complete furlough may happen in the next year or two, but we will of course keep you posted regarding that.

As we begin this new year, our 25th year in Cambodia, we want to express once again how much we value each of our praying friends and our financial supporters. We are honored to be your partners in the Gospel, and we are praying for a great year in 2025!

Sincerely,

Stephen Benefield  
Phnom Penh  
Cambodia



Christmas Sunday, 2024



Invitation time on Christmas Sunday  
(minus all the children, who had  
been dismissed earlier)



Some of our faithful people, after the majority  
of the crowd had left.



Apparently, none of the boys heard the joke!



We had several special numbers on Christmas, but this particular group had the highest percentage of barefoot singers!



Couldn't resist sharing this precious picture of our assistant pastor, Brother Ta, with his daughter Kanika. She turned 4 last week.