

Cambodia Mission Report - October 2009

It's good to report to you again although rather later than I intended for which I apologise.

The Elim Mission in Phnom Penh, Cambodia is busy and I am delighted to report to you that it is enjoying significant growth. Ann and I sense God's blessing upon us as we serve him in this amazing place. For this positive increase, we give God the glory. Despite our weaknesses - physical, mental and spiritual, God seems to be using Elim to expand his Kingdom.

Time is flying by. Recently, I had been teaching in the English Bible classes, on the life of Jacob. I am reminded at how he eagerly awaited his marriage to the beautiful Rachel. The Bible says the seven years wait seemed like but a few days. I have to say we can identify with that. Ann and I are here almost three years now - it seems much, much shorter.

I should say at this point that Ann and I plan to return to Northern Ireland at Christmas to rest, restore and recuperate and to meet some commitments we have, not least of which is for my return to my school, Sullivan Upper School, to teach for a while. The Sullivan Head Teacher and Board of Governor's have been so gracious and generous allowing me a three-year career break from the classroom. It's time to return to fulfil my obligation. However, at the moment it seems unlikely that we'll be away from Phnom Penh for long.

Phnom Penh is well and truly into the wet season now. Recently, there has been torrential rain each evening. I don't think I'll ever get used to these spectacular thunder and lightening storms. They are so awesome and beautiful. Mind you there is a danger to these. A few days ago, a makeshift petrol station on the outskirts of the city was struck by lightening and there were several deaths and casualties.

Recently, Typhoon Ketsana, one of the most destructive storms in years, extended its deadly path across Southeast Asia, blowing down wooden villages in Cambodia and crushing Vietnamese houses under mudslides after submerging much of the Philippines capital. Its powerful winds and pummeling rain left a snaking trail of destruction. In Cambodia, 43 people died, 67 people injured, and dozens of bridges, hundreds of kilometres of rural roads and over 50,000 hectares of rice fields, just weeks before the rice harvest, have all been damaged.

Ketsana's storm winds and torrential rain left a trail of destruction just 80 miles north of our home in Phnom Penh. We had some extremely heavy rain and a canal close to our home known as the "smelly water", overflowed, flooding a considerable area around our home. God blessed us with our third floor apartment so we were safe and sound well above the flooding.



At the core of everything we do - presenting Christ to the people of Cambodia.



The destructive path of Typhoon Ketsana. Four nations affected - The Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos



The Church Centre under water again.



Our football team - 'Elim United'. It has proved to be an effective attraction for young men to the Khmei church service on Sunday mornings.

Our peak visitor season has just ended. We welcome our visitors wholeheartedly. A young couple Jonny and Jill Hamill stayed with us for a while. They are unconnected with Elim but belong to a Presbyterian church in our hometown of Newtownards, Northern Ireland. They were a blessing to us and were a considerable blessing to those with whom they worked. So many missionaries here, like us, are in their fifties so when a young couple comes to the mission field, even for a short time, with such energy and passion for the Lord's work, its quite uplifting, heartening and encouraging.



Jonny and Jill in their element.

We gave accommodation to a young Taiwanese woman, Supei who has lived in New York for most of her life. The arrangement came about through some of our church members who manage a Christian handbag factory here. Supei is a Christian graphic designer who was here to help them venture into new markets with new product ranges. Isn't it amazing how God puts his people with their expertise in the right places at the right time? Who would have thought God would use clothing and accessory designers in the mission field?

What do you do and what gifts do you have? Perhaps God could use your skills, knowledge and experience for His Kingdom? Pray about this. I recently read that God needs people for the mission field who are F.A.T. - Faithful, Available and Teachable. Are you F.A.T.?



Sharon, Claire and Libby arriving in Phnom Penh

The first of our home-church mission teams joined us recently. The team consisted of Sharon Millar and mother and daughter - Claire and Libby Erskine. They were blessed as they served here and they were a blessing to us. It was tears all round at the airport when they left. Perhaps a health warning should issued to anyone coming to the mission field - **"Mission may well transform your life!"** I know Cambodia has had a deep impact upon their lives and they will never forget what they saw and experienced here.



Sharon, Isa and Nancy at one of our recently flooded villages.

Nancy Lee, Isa and Sharon were the second Ulster Temple team to visit us. They had a brief but packed 10 days of ministry. It was a blessing for Ann and I to show them as much as possible of what God is doing in this small corner of Phnom Penh. It was good to see them form relationships with the Khmei staff and students in their brief time here. It's our job to expose our visitors to all that we do here. The things we do, as missionaries, are all about people and relationships and it is the local people that impact upon our visitors. Friendships and relationships are formed even in a short time and they are significant. Most people here are so easy to befriend and love.

After an emotional farewell the ladies left to return to Ulster to share what God had shown them.



The hard working Jacqui gave me a much needed break.

Very recently we had a great visit from Jacqui Vanderputt of Barnsley Elim. Jacqui is a lovely lady who was prepared to try everything. She enjoyed working with the children, teaching

English and giving support in the Bible classes. She was a pleasure to host.

Computer Training

Through generous giving by our home church, the Ulster Temple, and friends we have been able to fund the much anticipated computer ministry. We have purchased and installed 14 new computers in the Elim Training Centre. They are being used daily by the first groups who are eager to learn fundamental typing skills.

Phnom Penh is a growing city. It is still quite underdeveloped but there are clear signs that things are beginning to move. The cities' first skyscraper is being built and a few familiar names in the banking and commercial sector have appeared

For this reason we in Elim have chosen to support young people by offering English and computer training. There are several commercial computer schools around Phnom Penh but the Elim teaching and training is fundamentally different in two respects. Firstly, we target existing Christian NGO's (Non Governmental Organisations) who already work with disadvantaged people with identified needs. Secondly our computer classes are free. Money, the desire for it and the lack of it, is central to most lives here and those who take money through greed and corruption are intensely disliked. The poor are left to fend for themselves, as there is no social security system. We believe that "free" makes a statement about what we do, who we are and what we are all about. We give and want nothing in return. A central truth about our God. He gave His son, Jesus who suffered and gave His life on the cross as a result salvation is available to us all and costs us nothing. However, we are overtly Christian, we openly share our faith, and God's free love. The students are perfectly comfortable with this honesty and openness and I am pleased to report that several have responded to the gospel. For example four young women have become Christians in the past 10 days

Our Elim staff are avid attendees at evening computer classes and soon they will have their first assessment and certificate awards. An NGO whom we work closely with, send along a group of school dropout young people for daily computer lessons. A group of 12 rescued and reformed sex industry workers attend daily classes giving them fresh prospects for a new life of dignity and self-worth. Recently a small group of young people from one of our villages have been attending.

Along with the computer lessons everyone is invited to attend English Bible lessons I am pleased to say most of them attend these with equal eagerness. We thank God for the opportunities this new ministry has provided. I'm not a computer teacher but I am learning to teach Computers and Information Technology. (Remembering that I need to be F.A.T.)



The first tranche of computers immediately put into use.



Daytime English and computer classes now possible at the Training Centre on Street 135.



It pays to advertise



A generous donation of a Nintendo Wii adds to the fun and fellowship of some of the church young Christians.

Our immediate future plan for the computer ministry is to acquire some more equipment and find a capable Christian computer teacher. Could that be you?

The Steung Meanchey ministry

We continue with our Steung Meanchey ministry. For readers who are unfamiliar with this ministry, Steung Meanchey is a notoriously poor part of the city. There are numerous pathetic villages located around and near the city municipal dump. Thousands forage for a living in the city waste. So Elim minister to the children and their families there. Our medical ministry at the village has developed because of the clear need. A missionary nurse, Pam Lucas, retired from the UK and who is on our church leadership team, along with Ann oversees the medical ministry. Occasionally, a doctor and other nurses join us. Pam trains our Khmei staff and on our bi-weekly Saturday morning visit the medical team is presented with all sorts of medical needs and conditions - headaches, toothaches, scabies, Swine Flu, Tuberculosis and sadly even terminal cancer. We have just lost one of our young village men to cancer. His wife is now a widow at 26 and with a little baby. We were able to arrange hospital treatment for the young man and then a connection with a wonderful missionary organisation called 'The Healing House', where he received Christian palliative care in his remaining weeks. I'm happy to report that both he and his wife came to know Jesus Christ as their personal saviour around one month ago. We are keeping an eye on her now, to ensure that she and her baby are looked after.

At the opposite end of the spectrum of life we have rescued a starving baby from one of our villages. The story began on one of our routine visits in May. The village chief took some of our medical team to a distressed mother and her 5-day-old baby. The baby was born with a hair lip and double cleft palette, consequently she had been struggling to feed, and now was in danger of starving to death. Despite monitoring and supporting the mother within a week the baby was in a coma in hospital and on life support in a rather primitive ICU. A team from the church now look after Chantee and I refer to the before and after photographs here. God is good. You can read the moving story about the rescue of little Chantee on our Blogsite - www.johnann460.blogspot.com

The Steung Meanchey medical ministry is a tremendous and very challenging ministry but it is quite expensive and time consuming. Your generous giving helps us enormously and your prayers help to uphold the team.

Church

I am happy to bring good news about the Elim Churches, and for this we give God all the glory and all the credit as we are just willing tools in his hands.

The churches are doing well. The first service, at 8.30am, is the Elim Khmei Church service. It has, at its core, a strong group of young Khmei, home grown, Christian men and women. We are



Here come the children! The sound of the music and singing is a sure sign that Elim are in the village.



One of our trainee nurses dealing with a case of scabies.



Chantee in intensive care in May



Quite a change! - Chantee a few weeks

particularly pleased to see some young families coming along to the service. We have been praying for this. Ann and I attend to support and sometimes teach but it is a Khmei church. We are very pleased with the team's progress and the services are good. The praise and worship is a blessing.

The second Church service is at 10.30am. It is the Elim International, English speaking church. It seems to be settling into the church landscape of Phnom Penh and has gained a first-rate reputation as a good, sound place to attend to worship God on a Sunday morning. God seems to be using the Elim mission to meet the needs of a significant section of Phnom Penh's Christian missionary and worker community. On a typical Sunday between 100 and 150 take communion in Elim churches.

The churches are a blessing - they're hard work! - but they're a blessing.

English Teaching

The English Classes are burgeoning. Around 100 to 120 students come through the gates of the church centre on Street 470 each evening. Different levels of English along with music and now computer skills are all being taught. I don't believe it is a coincident that the 'English from the Bible classes' have also mushroomed and as I have already mentioned, four young Khmei women have become Christians there in the past 10 days.

Also, I'd like to report one extraordinary development in the teaching ministry. The principal of a local school has invited me into her school to teach some English from the Bible classes to her 400 students. This is an astounding and unprecedented invitation. I plan to start a series of pilot classes after the National Water Festival Holidays in early November. Please pray about this.

The Trainee Programme

We have six trainees in this programme and they all have a story to tell about their lives before they came to Elim. Only two of them have had any education.

Our programme is to train and teach these young girls in day care and housekeeping skills also in English, Khmei and now computers.

The Day Care Centre

The Day Care Centre now has 38 children, 10 staff and 6 trainees.

We could fill several Day Care Centres. There are so many one-parent families the majority, due to fathers abandoning their young wives but many because of bereavements. The mothers main option is to send her child back to the provinces to be looked after by relatives. The conditions there are usually very poor.

We thank God for the sponsors who help fund the Day-Care Centre and for those who continue to sponsor six of our children.



Some Year 9 students from Hope International School, where I sometimes teach, volunteered to give the village water filters a much needed cleaning.



Some of our day-care children posing with some donated cool gear.



Pam, with Vanna, our office administrator, translating in a medical meeting with the village chief, Mr Bon



A Khmei fellowship evening in our home

There are other Day Care Centres in the area but they are beyond the reach of low-income families. We don't advertise. Applicants hear through recommendation. We have a considerable waiting list in fact recently we had our first pre-natal application. Now, that's what I call family planning! Visit our Blogsite www.johnann460.blogspot.com to find out more about the day-care centre.

Ann maintains a connection with other Christian and non-Christian Day-Care Centres in the area. We have a rich pool of Christian Day Care professionals, who visit us mainly from the UK, New Zealand and Australia. We share this high quality this specialized support we have seen noteworthy professional development in our staff. We now operate three distinct groups in our centre - Babies, Toddlers and Pre-School. Each Group has its own leader and four childcare staff and she is responsible for her own group. This new system is popular with the staff and seems to be bringing important benefits to the children.

At Elim all the staff and trainees love Jesus and it is His love we show the children in our care, as we know each one is precious to Him. A recent new appointment, Pirum, a highly qualified delightful young woman shared with us at her interview that she was 60% a Christian. I'm not sure what that means but within a week of her joining the staff and attending church and Bible classes she found the other 40%! I lead her to the Lord after a Bible class. I think her newfound Salvation was almost inevitable given the prayers for her and influence of her new colleagues - she was like a lion in a den of Daniels!

Visit our photo website to view more photographs www.picasaweb.google.co.uk/johnturner460
Please feel free to use them for God's work. You can also read the latest news and issues concerning the mission on our Blogsite - www.johnann460.blogspot.com

Bless you,
John and Ann Turner

To contact John & Ann Turner directly, send to P.O. Box 477, Phnom Penh, Cambodia or E-mail jtsat@tiscali.co.uk.

Donations towards our work in Cambodia should be marked "for the Turners" either personal or ministry and sent to Elim International Missions, De Walden Rd, West Malvern, WR14 4DF. Charity No's 251549 / SC037754.



We were sorry that Wati Longkummer (on the right), our senior member/elder of the church leadership team was called to a new ministry in his mother country of Nagaland, India. We can say that our loss is a gain for others but Wati and his family are truly missed.



Some of the village children having fun with Sarak and Vanna



A fellow day care centre leader during Elim first aid training