

EMU⁺

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PROCLAIMING THE TRIUMPHS OF THE GOSPEL

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Assistant Director*

ALONG THE WAY . . .

This has got to be the weirdest holiday season of all time – worldwide. But with Thanksgiving and Christmas so close together, I fear we Americans feel the weirdness to an even greater extent. Here in South Carolina, we have fewer restrictions than most states, yet many of our friends and family truncated Thanksgiving gatherings this year. And Christmas appears to be the next casualty to lock-downs and social distancing warnings. And the fear of COVID-19 is still palpable throughout extensive swathes of our society. Even for those who are doing in-store shopping, the experience is alien to our former way of life – masks, floor marking for distancing, and tamped-down interpersonal greetings. And in most municipalities, school children are not looking forward to being out of school for Christmas since they have scarcely been in school for much of the year. The times in which we are now living are a good reminder that Thanksgiving and Christmas are not traditions, though, for most of us, each is packed with individual customs and rituals. Rather, they are holy-days commemorating what God has done for us. And those gifts can never be taken from us.

On Sunday, November 15, while driving to Greenville, Mississippi, Joan and I received notification of a special Thanksgiving present. **Joshua and Amy Jensen** called from Phnom Penh, Cambodia, to let us know of the birth of our eleventh

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THE CHANGE CHRIST MAKES

by Marco & Gwendolyn Nuñez, church planters in southern Mexico

A few months ago we met a couple with three children, and the mother was pregnant with twins. At birth, the baby girl didn't make it, though the baby boy lived. The family lives in a shack behind the in-laws' house. They began coming to church, and the mother was saved. That afternoon the father wasn't happy with her, and he demanded that she could either choose him or the church. She chose Jesus. Subsequently, the man packed all his belongings and left her. The couple was not married, and he basically spent his time getting drunk and sleeping. Now we, the church, have the joy of helping this family.

The two older boys are about 7 and 8 years old and still don't know the alphabet or their numbers, so we are teaching them. One day the youngest arrived here with no shoes. Assistant pastors Toño Alvarado and Daniel Hernandez took them to a local outdoor market and bought them some shoes. They had to wash the little boys' feet before going, since they were caked with dirt and grime. Please pray for all of us to



*Young mother of twins
with daughter*



*Two brothers the church
in Cancún is helping*

have wisdom, love, and discernment to do the best thing for the needs at hand. Pray that the boys will learn to read, add and subtract, but especially that one day they will take Jesus as their Savior. Each school day we have Bible class to which they are very attentive.

Another couple who was not married but had a baby on the way, started coming off and on to church services. After the baby was born, they kept living together, and the young lady kept coming to church. Finally, the dad also started coming. Marco often reads Revelation 21 and I Corinthians 6 about fornicators and unbelievers not inheriting the kingdom of God, but rather will have their place in the lake of fire. God's Word and Spirit brought conviction, and the young mother was saved. They are now married. The father is not antagonistic to the Word. He grew up hearing the gospel and at one time made a profession of faith.



*Young mother who is
now married to her
child's father*

A third couple, who came from another city and are Christians, started coming to church, but independently each of them came to the conclusion, after hearing what God says about fornication, that they wanted to be married legally. They were married about two weeks ago. Their son gave a testimony that he is glad that his parents are married now.

Both of these couples stood before the church and gave testimony to the fact that they are now married and want to do things God's way.

Since tourism here in Cancún came to an

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(l-r) Micah with his siblings Ezra, Clara, Anna, Isaiah, & Becca

grandchild. (We've been collecting these for over one-and-a-half decades.) **Micah Ebenezer** is the sixth child, third son, of Josh and Amy. (Their first child, Becca, was our first grand-Thanksgiving-present.) Micah is their first child to be born in Cambodia, though still not in a hospital! Josh and Amy moved their family from the village of Oyadao in northeastern Cambodia to the capital at the beginning of November to have the baby at a birthing facility there, rather than travel to Thailand where two of the children have been born and where the medical care is superior. The Jensens have been staying at the Christian and Missionary Alliance guest house, which is their usual home while in Phnom Penh. (Josh is seconded to CMA in order to secure a passport to minister in Cambodia, though he is still an EMU missionary.) About a week before her due date, Amy's water broke. A medical doctor and nurse – husband and wife – were also guests at the guesthouse, and after being summoned to Amy, the pair recommended that she was too far along to take a taxi to the hospital. An empty bedroom was secured at the CMA facility, and Micah made his appearance soon thereafter. So, once again, Amy is keeping everyone on their toes with her deliveries! The Jensens are still at the CMA guesthouse (early December) as various official document had to be secured while in the capital. (Incidentally, **Becca**, who weighed right at two pounds at birth, turned eleven on Thanksgiving Day.)

While the Josh Jensens were celebrating Thanksgiving in Phnom Penh, the other in-country EMU missionaries were gathered in Stung Treng, Cambodia, where the Farmers live. Because the Kanes are still in the USA, the traditional festivities



Crowleys, Farmers, Hancocks, & Brooke celebrating Thanksgiving in Stung Treng

this Thanksgiving included the **Farmers, Crowleys, and Hancocks**, which is still a respectable crowd. We do not have a report about this get-together, but no doubt the activities included an outing to the new home building site where the Farmers and Brooke Illsley are putting up houses. Earlier this year, the Farmers got new neighbors in their compact community. Unfortunately, the new residents each run metal chop-shops – seven days a week, twelve hours a day. The noise is horrendous! These conditions were the impetus to look for land outside the city and build their own house. The land is about a fifteen-minute drive from Stung Treng. Brooke decided, with the Farmers' permission of course, to contract the erection of a ground-level bungalow on the same property to be closer to her job of teaching the Farmer children. (Brooke has been living in an apartment in town.)

JD and Kim Crowley spent their first Thanksgiving without any of their own children since, well, since they started having children! I can imagine this was quite an unwanted milestone. JD has been suffering from back pain for many months now, and he finally got medical attention for the problem in Phnom Penh. The doctor says there is no permanent damage to his back, but an inflamed disk needs rest and stretching exercises to heal. That is so much better than many possible causes.

I mentioned in the last newsletter about **Becky Hancock's** fatigue problem. A cause has yet to be found and her condition does not seem to be significantly improving. Please continue to pray for this family.

Lydia Kane had another MRI in Charleston, SC, the day before Thanksgiving. The tumor on her brainstem has not changed, so the doctor continues to prescribe a wait-and-see path. Lydia is taking medication to mitigate the seizures she has on occasion. Brian and Lydia may postpone their return to Cambodia a little longer. It seems that the Cambodian government has tightened up regulations on incoming visitors, so hopefully that will change before the Kanes' set a return date.

The work and ministry situations in Beijing, China, continue about the same, though the government seems to be putting more regulations on the churches. The seminary at **Steve and Charity's** church is back in session, but the campus is closed to all visitors, and the students are not permitted to leave the premises. So that outreach continues to be closed. Steve and Charity are again able to have a few friends into their home, but their church remains closed. An unexpected opportunity opened up for **Caleb, Luke, and Jacob**, though. Steve and Charity's prayer letter has mentioned a little boy with cancer, En Ci, and his mother who is a Christian, that Steve and Charity have been helping. Through this relationship, Steve and Charity were introduced to a national pastor who ministers to Christians



*(l-r) Luke, Caleb, pastor's daughter, Chinese friend, & Jacob
(It's best not to name the girls)*

in the hospital. This pastor has a teenage daughter who met the three American boys, and the boys were invited to a meal at the pastor's house. While there, the boys and the girl learned that they all have an interest in music – the boys all play the guitar, and she plays the violin and keyboard. She, along with another girl, help with the hospital outreach with music. The pastor's daughter talked the boys into joining them in this ministry. I'm sure this musical ensemble is quite eye-catching in a Chinese hospital. We are not sure if this opportunity will remain open or not, but for now. . . .

At the beginning of the last week of November, Joan received a call from **Liz Cole** asking for special prayer for **Michael**. Michael was finishing up a woodworking project on the girls' bunk bed when his hand accidentally came in contact with his table saw blade – which was spinning. The index finger of his right hand, just above the end knuckle, was cut through the bone, with only the fingernail holding the finger together. His middle finger received a deep cut, but on this finger, the bone was only broken. Liz rushed him to a local hospital, which thankfully has a hand surgeon on staff. Because of COVID, Liz was not able to stay at the hospital. But later that day, after a half hour operation on the fingers, Michael was able to return home. The bandages have to be changed every couple of days, which is painful in itself, but there has also been plenty of ongoing pain, especially at night. The doctors seem to be pleased with the healing, but Michael needs our prayers. The Coles are scheduled to begin their previously postponed furlough the beginning of January. Pray that Michael's fingers would be sufficiently healed to permit him to travel comfortably. The church in Bordeaux, France, has been allowed to meet in-person again, but only a third of the congregation can be in the building at one time – with masks and social distancing.

Tim Bixby and the church leaders in Sarcelles, France, had an amicable meeting recently with the owners of the building that the church is planning to buy. Without going into details, which get rather complicated and would need explanation, the church is

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still in need of about \$400,000 to purchase the building. About \$100,000 has been offered to the church as no-interest loans in France, but the more the congregation can raise for the outright payment, the better it will be in the long run. There are some difficult decisions that the church leaders need to make in the coming months. Pray for wisdom and the supply of funds to buy this building, which they have already renovated for their use.

FEBU (the Bible college) and the **EMU Bible Institute** have concluded another year of classes. There were two graduates from the Bible Institute, and they both happen to be members of EMU: **Marcos and Tali Gomez**. Congratulations to them for



The FEBU staff families and many of the students at a popular photo sight in Montevideo, Uruguay

finishing their degrees. Marcos continues to be a vital help to Pedro Donzé in the Uruguay office and at Camp Emmanuel.

With classes having concluded at FEBU, the **Steel** and **Espinel** families are both coming back to South Carolina for short furloughs on December 17. The Espinels will have Myrtle Beach as their terminus, where Kristine's parents live, while the Steels are coming to Greenville where John Mark's parents reside. The Steels are slated to arrive back in Uruguay on February 11. The Espinels return about a week later. It will be good to see these two families again while they are in the upstate of SC. They will all have to quarantine for two weeks in Uruguay before they begin their new semesters.

The "**Rick's Projects**" at **Camp Emmanuel** are still not all completed. The main goal is still to finish the caretaker's house. Almost everything has had to be replaced from floor to roof. **Henry Castro**, the new camp caretaker, has put much of his own money into materials to complete the house. Also, the new dorm room for staff and the pavilion/snack shop still need to be completed.

And as a reminder, we are still accepting donations towards the three funds mentioned earlier in the fall: Rick's Projects at Camp Emmanuel, the Camp Sponsorship Fund, and the Christmas Fund Offering.

We have had the privilege of having some "fresh air" from Uruguay here in Greenville, SC, for the past few weeks. **Maria Teresa "Chicha" Rodriguez** arrived in Greenville to begin a two-month visit with her family who live here. Besides a huge Uruguayan style cookout at her nephew's house, Joan and I took Chicha to visit her and our dentist in Greenville, MS, just shy of the Mississippi River. Drs. Jim and Jamie Parkerson have been taking care of all three of our mouths for many years. It's a long way to drive for dental work, but the work is superb, as is the fellowship! And this has been a tradition for my parents, my family, and Chicha for over 40 years. The Parkersons have been a blessing to many of our EMU missionary families over the years, for which we are profoundly grateful. (As it turned out, Chicha and I were in dire need of more than just teeth cleaning.)

Tim and Cheryl Chapman's church in Lima, Perú, has begun having services again. The building they had been renting as a sanctuary is still not open on Sundays, but it was discovered that the owners of the building where the church previously rented space has a very large parking area that was not being used. A large tent (without sides) was set up, and now almost 70 people are able to congregate at one time. Livestream brings in over 30 more viewers. Social distancing and masks are still required, but the people are rejoicing about being together again. Also, **Alexis Shoemaker** is "attending" church and ladies' classes over the internet from her home in Pennsylvania. She is at about 80% support and still hopes to be going down to Lima early in 2021. As an added prayer request, Tim Chapman and

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The Change Christ Makes

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almost complete halt earlier this year, many of the residents have gone back to their hometowns, since it is cheaper to live in the small towns. Some of Pastor Vicente's relatives, a young couple named America and Sergio, left Cancun and went back to their hometown of Valladolid. There they started having contact with Pastor Vicente and his church. America was saved, and we are still praying for her husband to be saved.

Quite a few of the families in our church have had Covid. One faithful man in the church passed away with it. He had lots of other complications and conditions, too. But the blessing is that even the last time we talked to him on the phone, through his coughs and shortness of breath, he said he was trusting in the "glorious hope" of eternal life. His wife and three children and four grandchildren are still here in Cancun. Some are saved and some are not. We pray they will all come to repentance.

Two of the national pastors' children graduated from college this past summer. Pascual's son, Javier, finished his law degree and is looking for employment. Vicente's daughter, Lupita, finished her degree in dentistry. She is working as a dentist in another doctor's office while going through the application process to get another specialized degree in dentistry.



*Javier Balam,
law degree*



*Lupita Puc,
dentistry degree*

Marco met with the mission pastors again on August 25 after six months of quarantine. It is always good for them to get together and have fellowship. Only Brother Ciro, who is 16 hours away, did not attend. †



Southern Mexico pastors: (l-r) Vicente Puc, Tomas Noh, Marco Nuñez, Toño Alvarado, Pascual Balam, Daniel Hernandez, & Jose Luis Uc

The Epoch of the Messiah

by Ken Jensen

The word “epoch” has fallen into disuse through the decades, especially for historical events. But this Greek-to-Latin-to-English word still carries the weight of life-changing events today. Though used by various disciplines – history, geology, astronomy, and physics – I prefer its most archaic

application, that of history. An epoch can be either a single event or a group of events, a point in time or an extended period. Sound confusing? Let me give a few examples

The year 2020 is on its last gasp. And for many of us, it’s a long overdue gasp! There are historic precursors of the problems we have experienced this year, but it seems that 2020 coalesced all the upheavals of the past into one year and amplified them to unhistorical proportions. A virus that shut down the economies of the entire world! Churches forbidden to congregate in the USA and other otherwise free countries. The cancellation of Thanksgiving celebrations by many governors and municipalities. Riots, looting, destruction of cities, ripping down statues of American icons, all with the support of the mayors and other elected officials tasked with protecting their cities. An entire major political party labeling itself socialist. The silencing of debate by Silicon Valley’s big business. A third-world voting fiasco in the most powerful nation on the planet. “2020” could be either a blip (an anomaly) or an epoch. Only time will tell.

In the history of the world there have been many historic epochal events – some beneficial to mankind, some horribly destructive. One of the greatest examples of the latter was the Bolshevik Revolution



in Russia during World War II, which ushered in unimaginable slaughter, repressive enslavement, and grinding poverty for more people in the world during the 20th Century than in any century in history. Lenin, Stalin, Mao, and Pol Pot are only the most outstanding of

those communist leaders, but they were certainly not the only culpable leaders. Adding to those myriad-millions, the genocides of the Armenians in WWI and the Jews in WWII, the human toll levied by Imperial Japan in WWII, and the wholesale extermination of professing Christians in many Islamic nations, and the 20th Century became an epoch as a century of death and suffering. And history is replete with lesser periods of war, disease, bondage, and demise.

But not all epochs are negative. In fact, the greatest of all epochs was of crowning benefit to all the world of all ages: the epoch of Jesus the Messiah. Beginning with His incarnation, sinless life, teachings and example, His death, burial, and resurrection resulted in mankind’s only eternal salvation. Obedience to the Gospel of Christ is also the only remedy against the seemingly endless list of destructive epochs foisted upon the world through Satan, his minions, and the wickedness of man’s nature. Hope in the “arm of the flesh” will always let us down eventually and most certainly lead to ruin. Each of us who has trusted Christ as his or her Savior has our own personal historic epoch when we became a son or daughter of God. And someday we will be in the epoch of peace, joy, and love without interruption in the visible Kingdom of God. †

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Pedro Donzé will need to make a decision soon about whether Tim should fly to Uruguay in February where he is scheduled to be the speaker at the family camp and workers’ conference at Camp Emmanuel. These men need wisdom to know how to plan!

In Hyderabad, India, **Billy Judson** is planning for the next Good News 360 Conference in January to be available via Webinar Zoom streaming. There are still many decisions to be made about this conference. Please pray for wisdom and provision.



(l-r) Saritha, Bernice, Keren, & Billy Judson

In keeping with the spirit of 2020, I’m tempted to close with “Merry Christmas – anyway.” But truly the Lord has blessed EMU and our family in so many ways this year, despite encumbrances and disappointments in abundance. The bills are all paid, EMU churches continue their ministries in their communities, and except for some aches and pains – and sore fingers and backs – the health of our EMU mission family is overall stable. May the Lord grant you a blessed Christmas and New Year. †

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