

EMU⁺

INTERNATIONAL

Evangelical Mission to the Unreached

Evangelical Mission to Uruguay

PROCLAIMING THE TRIUMPHS OF THE GOSPEL

Volume LXV

January 2022

Number 1



*Ken & Joan Jensen
Assistant Director*

ALONG THE WAY . . .

Welcome to 2022! (Though I don't know if this newsletter will get to you before or after New Year's Day, I'm certain it will *not* arrive on New Year's Day!) Two-thousand-twenty-one was our first full year with COVID, and many of us witnessed family and/or friends succumbing to this disease. The hardships of lockdowns, lost jobs, closed churches, virtual schooling, mandates for vaccinations, masking, distancing - and the list could go on - characterized this most unusual year in our lifetime. The tendency is to sigh, "Good riddance," but there was much blessing that was reaped in 2021, some of which is presented in this current issue of the newsletter. Our only real encouragement for 2022 is knowing that our God can bless in times of adversity. So, again, welcome to 2022 and hang on!

COVID continued to touch EMU families and friends at the end of 2021. The week after the **Ratanakiri Pastors' School** in northeastern Cambodia, **Jeremy Farmer** and **Joshua Jensen**, who both taught at the school, developed symptoms of COVID and tested positive. **Bonnie Ruth**, Jeremy's wife, also, came down with the virus, but based on her test, **Amy**, Josh's wife, and none of the kids in the two families were affected. All three of our missionaries were vaccinated. Joan and I talked to Josh in the first week of December, and it seems that his case was no worse than a seasonal

(continued on page 3)

FAR BEYOND WHAT WE COULD ASK OR THINK

by JD & Kim Crowley, missionaries in Ban Lung, Cambodia

We are as those who dream. Three weeks ago today we were still planning on holding an extremely complicated Pastors School session at eight satellite locations in order to stay under the Covid meeting limit of ten. Then the news came that Cambodia was returning to a semblance of normalcy, so we decided on a long-shot attempt to get government permission for a three-day meeting of 75 people in the brand new Pastors School venue. Seven days later we had all five signatures in hand, and we sent out the last-minute invitation to the students by cell phone, wondering who would attend. On November 18 sixty-four church leaders and Bible translators showed up, including four from other provinces! Only two tested positive for Covid on the first day, and another 2 on subsequent days.

The True and the Counterfeits

Just as bank tellers spend hours studying genuine bills before ever looking at a counterfeit, we spent the first 12 lessons studying verse-by-verse through 1 John, which was written to help Christians recognize the true gospel and diagnose counterfeits. After that we spent 12 lessons studying cults and aberrant religious movements that are invading churches around the world, especially in places like Cambodia where the gospel is having

great success. The glorious, true gospel of Christ was set in contrast to the tawdry and burdensome imitations, and God received much glory and praise. More than one church leader told us that this session was just in time, as their own church members were being harassed by these groups, mainly through Facebook and phone calls.

A Book That Cambodia Needs

We were able to put a draft copy of our new Khmer book, *True Religion and Counterfeit Religion*, into the hands of each student. It's a verse-by-verse commentary of the Apostle John's three letters, with a focus on using the many diagnostic statements in them to recognize and counter the cults. Part two contains articles on each of the major cults in Asia (and the world), including aberrant religious movements like the Prosperity Gospel and Liberal Christianity. We need your prayer as we do the final checking and editing of that book to get it ready for printing in December and distribution all over the country. Frontline Mission has provided the funds to get a free copy of the book into the hands of every pastor in Cambodia. Here's a story I think you'll like:

Shaking our Heads

Pastor Chomrouen is a friend of ours

(continued on page 3)



November 2021 Ratanakiri Pastors' School

To the Advance of the Gospel

by Jeremy & Bonnie Ruth Farmer, church planters in Stung Treng, Cambodia
and Brooke Illsley, homeschool teacher in Stung Treng, Cambodia

Jeremy & Bonnie Ruth:

I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. (Philippians 1:12)

As we bounced our way down the road back from Na Ong village this past Sunday, I was reflecting on this testimony of Paul and the way it is playing itself out in our own experience here in Stung Treng ...

Six months ago, when Covid first really made its presence felt in Cambodia, we mourned the lost opportunities for the gospel in Na Ong village. For several months at that point, we had been meeting with crowds of about 50 villagers (20 adults, 30 children) to tell them the stories of creation, fall, redemption, etc. They were eager, and we were striving to communicate the gospel as clearly as we could. Then came Covid and its restrictions, forcing us out of the village for months at a time. So, we asked you to pray the parable of Mark 4:26-29 — that the seeds planted would sprout while we slept. Specifically, we asked that our Lao friends would be diligent to listen to the Bible recordings that we had left them.

We as a team here were also praying about other matters related to the gospel's progress in Na Ong:

- That God would open the way for us to preach there more often than just twice each month. In the early days of our outreach, our primary contact in the village, Sali, had invited us for bi-monthly visits, and we had not felt the freedom to go more often.
- That God would open the way for us to preach and teach in other homes. To that point, we had only ever gathered in Sali's home. While Sali and his wife have always received us warmly, we were concerned that the future church might come to be viewed as "Sali's church," a place for his family and friends. We would prefer a more "decentralized" view of the church if possible.
- That God would enable us to manage the inescapable chaos that comes with a crowd of 50 villagers. Holding the attention of such a crowd in the face of frequent distractions can be a tour de force for even the most fluent speaker, but given my own inexperience with the language, it was often overwhelming.

Following several months of lockout, we began making weekly visits in the homes of some regular attenders. Crowds of ten or more were prohibited, but visiting a home was fair game. Our first goal was simply to maintain contact, hoping they wouldn't forget us or, most importantly, the stories

we had been teaching them. But rather quickly, almost inexorably, some of these visits turned into ideal opportunities for evangelism. A small group of adults and children would gather, eager to listen to another story from the Bible. By this time, my own Lao had improved a bit, and the smaller group sizes have proven to be just right for my current ability.

And so again, this past Sunday, as soon as we arrived at Von's house, he fetched his wife and brother-in-law from the rice paddy, then called two neighbor ladies and their children to come so they could hear from the Bible. Five adults and eight kids—sitting with rapt attention as I told the story of creation/fall/promise. Perhaps most exciting of all was Von's personal involvement—he repeatedly stepped in to help explain or review some part of the lesson. Von listens regularly to the Bible with his family, and we pray that he might become a pastor in the future church in Na Ong.

God has answered your prayers, brothers and sisters: I am frequently surprised (though I shouldn't be) to find that many villagers are indeed listening to these Bible recordings. And He's answering many other prayers, some of which we've been praying for twelve years (perhaps another update on that soon). So in spite of Covid—or rather, because of Covid—we feel that the gospel is advancing more deeply, more widely, and more understandably in Na Ong village. Praise God!

I could write much more in this already lengthy update, but two more events deserve notice ...

New Home



The Farmers & their new house



First, we are in our new home! The year-long building project was stressful, just as we knew it would be, but now we are settled and overflowing with gratitude for God's kindness to us. The house is a perfect fit for our family—complete with a schoolroom for eight students and two teachers, an office, two acres to run and play (and plant!) on, and a passel of energetic neighbor kids to play with. Thank God.

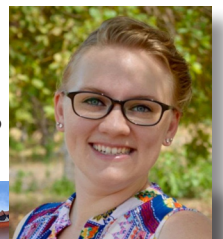
New school year

Second, amid the final finishes on the house and the move, Bonnie Ruth and Brooke have managed to successfully engineer and inaugurate yet another school year for our brood. We often thank God for the resources He has provided us here in the northeast corner of Cambodia! Please pray for both teacher and student—that the end of all the learning would be a saving knowledge of the God whose world, ways, and Word we are studying.

Brooke Illsley:

Joy-filled Prayers

Over the past year, I have had countless occasions for joy-filled prayers! Many of you have followed along with the sporadic updates about the Farmers' and my transition from town to countryside. Almost every waking moment of this past summer was filled with moto rides back and forth between house and building project. The entire month of September was spent slowly moving each room over as different sections of our houses finished. Endless cleaning and boundless yard work filled many weeks. But finally, on September 20, we spent our first night in our new homes. It took a little while to settle in, and there are still multiple small projects left. The yard work is still boundless, but it feels wonderful to have space and quiet.



Brooke Illsley & her new house

MOST Joy-filled Prayer!

God faithfully answered so many prayers, but one of the most prayed for requests was for good relationships with neighbors, primarily kids. It is always very difficult to leave behind people you love, and

(continued on page 3)

To the Advance of the Gospel (continued from page 2)

even moving 15 minutes away changes relationships with previous neighbors. The Farmer kids knew they would miss their friends, and we all prayed for new friendships to form quickly and easily. God has answered abundantly! Each afternoon, we have 12 or more neighbor kids riding bikes, playing soccer or volleyball, or just hanging out. The gospel is being shared, and we are so excited for the future opportunity to start a Bible Club!



The first ever neighborhood baseball field in Stung Treng Province, Cambodia!

School Days

My last update had our last days of school, and now this update includes our first days. Every start of a school year has brought its own challenge. Each time I think I know what to expect, a new surprise arises. I knew that we would be pushing to start school right after we moved, but I didn't realize we would still not have internet access. Starting at the beginning of August, I transitioned out of my previous internet plan and started the process for a new line to be run to the new houses. That process took almost three months. Three months with spotty data and no access to wi-fi! Let's just say, it's been a long time since I've had to figure out how to do life without internet, let alone plan and start a school year without it. Many mornings were opened with prayer for the "wi-fi guys" to come. Finally, two weeks ago, we connected to the outside world again!

Henry and Elisha have fully joined the school day! Bonnie Ruth spends her mornings teaching them in the loft school room, and then they join me in the main school room for math. Days are full, and it seems that every free moment is filled with taming the yard and finishing small projects around the house. Living here has already brought great peace and joy. †



The 8 Farmer children & their 2 teachers

Far Beyond What We Could Ask (continued from page 1)

and the president of the largest and oldest Protestant denomination in Cambodia, the Khmer Evangelical Church (started by the Christian and Missionary Alliance one hundred years ago). Six weeks ago, he was at the monthly meeting of denominational heads. They were all bemoaning the invasion of aggressive cults from Korea, China, and America, but didn't know what to do about it. Finally, they said to Pastor Chomrouen, "Your denomination is the older brother of us all, so we think you should take the leadership in helping us battle these cults." He went home shaking his head, asking God how in the world he was going to do this. He mentioned the problem to his C&MA missionary counterpart who said, "Call JD. I hear he's working on something." So, he called me.

That very morning, I had been shaking my own head in prayer, saying, "Lord, you helped me write this book, and you gave us enough money to give it to every pastor, but

how in the world am I going to distribute it to 2500 people? I have absolutely no way of doing that."

Thirty minutes after that prayer, the phone rang, and Pastor Chomrouen and I found out that we had the solution to each other's problem. EMU Cambodia would produce the book, and the CMA denomination, with churches in every province, would make sure that it got into the hands of every pastor in every denomination.

We're also preparing a version in easy English that can be used around the world and translated into other languages. The Logos Bible study platform wants to offer both the Khmer and English versions as a free resource to its hundreds of thousands of users around the world. Pray for us as we prepare both versions for digital and physical publication. And pray that they would be useful and encouraging to Christ's church around the world.

Many of you prayed for this recent miracle session of Pastors School, and we thank you deeply. †

ALONG THE WAY... (continued from page 1)

bad cold. Although Josh did lose his voice for a day or two and missed the required quarantine days working in person with his translation team.

Many of you know **Brad and Peg Lapiska**. Brad has been on the EMU Board of Directors for many years, and he and Peg have been to Uruguay several times to speak at Camp Emmanuel. They have been close family friends since Brad was the youth pastor at Hampton Park Baptist Church when our children were teenagers. Though being fully vaccinated, Brad caught COVID in late November. It progressed to pneumonia in December, and he was hospitalized a couple of times. (As you might remember from an announcement several years ago, Brad also has leukemia, which has exacerbated his bout with COVID.) At this writing, the week before Christmas, he is home and slowly recuperating. Peg also got COVID, but her case was mild. However, and I write this with Brad's permission, for the past five years, Peg has been suffering from the onset of dementia, mainly affecting her speech. Her deteriorating condition led to Brad's decision to move to New Hampshire to live next to his nurse-daughter and her family. The move was supposed to take place before Christmas, but Brad's illness has postponed their departure date. Although Brad's full-time job is now caring for Peg, he always stresses three things: 1) The comfort of knowing that God is lovingly in control. 2) Caring for Peg is a privilege, not a burden. And 3) he and Peg still enjoy their time together and worshipping at church and Bible studies. I mention the Lapiskas mainly

so you can pray for Brad's full recovery.

In early December, **Stan McCune**, the father of Uruguay missionary **Kristine Espinel**, was hospitalized as a result of bacterial pneumonia, complicated by his long-term MS. It was recommended that **Matias**, Kristine, and their kids return to the States. The Espinels traveled to North Myrtle Beach, SC, on December 20 to visit the McCunes for one month during their summer school break in Uruguay. (Stan was one of my youth pastors in Marietta, GA, when I was a young teenager. Wonderful man!) Pray for strength and encouragement for Stan, his wife, **Miriam**, and the rest of the family.

Pray, too, for the children's and youth camps at **Camp Emmanuel** beginning in January. Pray especially that the government will not impose new lockdowns due to COVID.

Also, **Alexis Shoemaker** will be getting married in Lima, Perú, on January 22.

Our office has received several reports of baptisms in various EMU churches. Next month, I'll endeavor to give an update on those blessed events.

And it seems that ALL of the funds have been promised or given to pay for the church building in Sarcelles, France, where **Tim and Ruth Bixby** have started a church! This is truly a monumental blessing that seemed humanly impossible a year ago.

As EMU International begins its 76th year of service to the Lord, we thank you for your part in helping us to preach, teach, translate, and basically proclaim the Good News of God's salvation to the corners of the earth to which He has called us. May the Lord greatly bless you in 2022. †

The Keeper of the House

by Ken Jensen

The first time I met Julia Piedad was early in 1973 when my parents, George and Marilyn Jensen, took their three children to Uruguay for the first time. By that time, Julia, at forty-seven years old, had already been working with the mission for twenty-three years as the housekeeper for Fred and Seva Dabold, the founders of EMU. It didn't take long after our first meeting to understand that Julia was a special lady.

Twenty-four-year-old Julia began to work for the Dabolds cleaning their house in 1950. She was not a Christian at the time, but she made a profession of faith before two years passed. She was baptized on December 6, 1952.

Not long after Julia began working for the Dabolds, the family moved to Boulevard Garibaldi, where the "mission house" remains to this day, and where Julia would live out the rest of her life until she entered a nursing home in 2020. Mrs. Dabold passed away from cancer in 1970, after which Julia became basically in charge of the mission house.

For someone who had such longevity in one occupation, from the age of 24 until a few years before her death at 95, Julia's life began on shifting sand. She was born in the Department of Salto (in northwestern Uruguay) on an *estancia* in the northern high planes to a woman who was a cook at a series of cattle ranches. Her mother had several "partners," none of whom she married, and Julia never met her biological father. Anyone who met Julia would agree that either her mother or father – or both – had a strong measure of native Indian blood. Julia was a consummate tomboy, and as a young girl her dream was to become a *gaucho*! She was given free rein of the *estancias* where her mother worked. For most of her life, Julia owned at least one



This is the last picture I have of Julia Piedad at the mission house in Montevideo. It was taken in October 2018, less than 2 years before she moved to a nursing home.

horse – and often several – in Salto while working in Montevideo. For some reason that I cannot remember, Julia moved to Montevideo, in the far south, to find work, and it was there that she came into contact with the Dabolds. But she never lost her love of horses.

As a nineteen-year-old on sabbatical from university, my impression of Julia in 1973 was that not only was she older than my mother, but she was a fabulous cook, kept the mission house in perfect condition, and was one of the biggest soccer fans I had ever met. She took us three Jensen kids to meet the players of *Club Nacional de Fútbol* at their training field. Julia knew one of the previous World Cup players in Uruguay, who gave us access to the *Nacional* players. If *Nacional* was playing and it wasn't church time, Julia never missed watching a game on TV.

By the time I met her, she already had considerable experience serving visitors

from North America. And over the next decades, an innumerable stream of foreigners continued to stay at the mission house, all under Julia's care. Of the dozens and dozens of Americans I know who met her, every one of them was impressed with Julia's kindness, thoughtfulness, and, especially, cooking. Plus, she had an uncanny ability to anticipate almost anything an American wanted even before they asked. (Kind of spooky sometimes, but sure a blessing for those of us who were recipients!) She faithfully served the three directors and their families who spanned her employment at the mission house – the Dabolds, the George Jensens, and Joan and me. (By the time Jeff Davis was the director, her labor had ended as a housekeeper.)

This is not intended to be Julia Piedad's biography, though my tendency is to tell you everything I know about her. There are so many other ways she served, not just in the mission house, but at Camp Emmanuel and her church, Templo Calvario de Montevideo. But from a personal view, besides my wife and my mother, no one has cooked and eaten as many meals with me, washed more of my dirty clothes, and kept my living space spic-n-span as Julia did during our 46 years as co-workers with EMU. We had our ups and downs, and disagreements, but they always got worked out. I think I can say, with her approval, that she was my friend. Those of us who knew her, even briefly, will miss her. She quietly passed into the Lord's presence from her nursing home bed on December 14, 2021. †

Email: office@emuinternational.org
Website: www.emuinternational.org
Phone: (864) 268-9267
