

EMU

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Evangelical Mission to Uruguay

PROCLAIMING THE TRIUMPHS OF THE GOSPEL

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Ken & Joan Jensen
Assistant Director

ALONG THE WAY . . .

We trust you had a blessed Christmas season and that the Lord will grant you each a spiritually prosperous new year. Our EMU missionaries were involved in many venues these past weeks celebrating our Lord's incarnation.

From the paper copy of this EMU Newsletter, you can understand why "Along the Way" is greatly shortened this month. So it is a little different that I now write briefly about someone who is not "officially" connected with EMU, though this family has had a long interaction with the mission. **Brad Lapiska** joined the Board of Directors of EMU in 1999 and served faithfully until 2021. He and his wife, **Peg**, visited Uruguay a few times where Brad spoke at the Family and Workers' Camps. And they have both been close family friends of ours for many decades. Brad resigned his board position in order to concentrate on caring for his wife, who was suffering from *Frontotemporal Dementia*. Peg passed into the presence of the Lord on December 23 with Brad and their 2 daughters by her side. Please remember this family in prayer in the coming weeks and months.

January travels include the **Espinels** returning to Uruguay on the 7th and the **Steels** arriving Stateside on January 1.

Joan and I will be visiting the EMU Cambodia team beginning January 18. We plan to be there for a little over two weeks. We would appreciate your prayers. †

ANSWERS TO YOUR PRAYERS

by Jeremy & Bonnie Ruth Farmer, church planters in Stung Treng, Cambodia

We've been back in Cambodia for two months now, and the answers to your and our prayers are almost too many to name. Here's an overview . . .

The church in Na Ong village (Lao language)

First, the infant church in Na Ong village is doing remarkably—indeed, miraculously—well. While we were in the US, I shared with you some stories of the temptations these young Christians are facing and of their persevering faith. In our six-month absence, both the temptations (life-threatening illnesses and the overwhelming pressure to seek help from evil spirits) and victories have continued within this body. The reunion with these dear people has been one of the greatest joys we've known. Every missionary fears seeing years of labor washed away during his necessary absence. So thank you for upholding your younger brothers and sisters in prayer. And praise the Lord that He is keeping them.



Christmas meal with Na Ong Church

Reunion with Pro-in and Vanda (Lao outreach)

We have introduced you to our two church-planting partners, Pro-in and Vanda and their families. Both families are well and have faithfully continued the work in Na Ong during our absence. The Lord can work through whatever means He chooses,



(l-r) Abigail, Judson, Isobel, Elisha, Henry, **Bonnie Ruth, Jeremy, Salem, Eden, & Gloria Farmer**

but His normal M.O.—as witnessed both in Scripture and Church history—is to use people to accomplish His purposes. So it's not an overstatement to say that the fruit we are enjoying among the Loa would not have happened had Pro-in and his family not joined us four years ago, and then moved into Na Ong village two years ago (our family lives an hour south of Na Ong village). So as we plan for the future of the Lao mission, we keep running into a wall: it simply can't be done without more Pro-in's. But Pro-in's are scarce (to my knowledge, this family is the only Cambodian family currently serving as cross-cultural / cross-linguistic missionaries). And again, I would defend my thinking as thoroughly biblical—Christ himself assumes that the mission will not be accomplished apart from human labor: "the harvest is great, but the laborers are few." And Christ's prescribed solution to the problem of scarcity is first to pray. So please thank God for His answer to many years of prayer in sending Pro-in to work with us, and please pray that Pro-in's tribe will increase.

Vanda also continues to be an invaluable asset, particularly in his role as a language helper and cultural guide to me and Pro-in (while Lao is the third language for both me and Pro-in, Vanda is first-language Lao).

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Answers to Your Prayers (continued from page 1)



(l-r) Pro-in & Si-ma, Farmer family, and Pou & Vanda

Vanda is also a humble, capable teacher-preacher (he lives in the same town as we do and makes frequent trips with me to Na Ong).

So please keep praying for these men and their families, and pray that God would send more like them to help with the work.

Bible school (Khmer language)

December 7 was a historic day for us as the Stung Treng Bible School completed its first two-year cycle of classes and awarded certificates of completion to forty-four



Stung Treng Bible School graduating class

students. This day was the culmination of the Lord's answer to over a decade of prayer and hard work. Praise Him for faithfully (and slowly) answering.

The sixty students who participated in this inaugural cycle of the Bible school represent numerous seedling house and village churches throughout Stung Treng province. Our goal at this stage of the Bible school is simple: to develop in our students a love for the Bible, a commitment to daily reading or listening (several students are still non-literate), and to increase their skill in studying the Bible. Their faithful attendance and effort over the past two years gives us great hope for the future of these many churches.

The next cycle of the Bible school begins on January 4. Please pray for me and my two colleagues, Scott and Rafi, as we prepare for the next set of students. Two years ago, we planned and prayed for fifteen students and ended up with sixty. Older and wiser now, we're planning for thirty this time around.

Thirty years of faithfulness and fruitfulness

Last month, we joined our teammates to celebrate the thirty years of Cambodian ministry God has given to JD and Kim Crowley. Apart from parents (who kind of have an unfair advantage, or maybe they would argue a disadvantage!), no one else has had the level of influence for good in my

family's life as JD and Kim.

"If it weren't for JD, I wouldn't have come (to Cambodia); if it weren't for JD, I wouldn't have stayed."

This sentiment was expressed more than once as we all testified to God's grace in and through the Crowley family. So thank God for the unique team situation He has placed us in, and pray for continued unity and fruitfulness together.

On the home front: a house (and heart) divided

The division within our house continues to grow as three of our members remained in the US attending college while the other seven of us returned to Cambodia. Thank you for praying for our family on both sides of the ocean, that we would know the Lord's strength and presence, even as we feel so strongly the absence of vital members.

Here in Cambodia, Bonnie Ruth, Brooke, and the five kids who remain have finally settled into something of a rhythm for this most-interrupted school year. We all need strength and wisdom as we manage our busy schedules.

Thank you, pray-ers and givers, for yet another year of faithful labor with us. May the Lord fill you with joy and hope as you begin the new year. †

The New and Old In Ban Lung

by Brian & Lydia Kane, translator of the Krung Bible in Ban Lung, Cambodia

In October, we officially launched our new translation team! Although we've had two guys helping with checking previous drafts of Old Testament books since early this year, our new team is now drafting translation work themselves. Lib Sareun has been part of the team since early this year recording Scripture. Naay Teah just joined our team in October, and it was a huge answer to prayer. Some of you might remember Chaan Naay, one of the most influential Christians among the Krung. Teah is his son, as you might notice from his name (the Krung take their father's name as their family name, which is listed first as it is in many Asian countries). They've already drafted the small book of



(l-r) Naay Teah, Lib Sareun, & Brian Kane

Haggai and are likely to finish their draft of Joshua this month.

Our daughter Brianna had an exciting start in October, too! She was baptized into the body of Christ along with several other new believers at a local lake. We're thrilled to see her growing love for Christ. Praise the Lord for His grace in her life.

The most recent session of the Pastors' Institute was on the topic of Missions, led

by a group from Phnom Penh. For a few years now, we've been concerned that the evangelistic spirit among the Krung has been fading. After this session, I was really encouraged to hear several churches discussing plans to start new churches in nearby villages.

As the Krung churches started planning for Christmas celebrations in December, the idea came up to use a multi-church

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Baptism in Ban Lung - Brian Kane (2nd from left) & Brianna (center in red shirt) The 3 men on the left & 1 on the far right helped with the baptism. The others are candidates.

Thanksgiving(s) in Koprivnica

by Kornel & Tanja Crnković, church planters in Koprivnica, Croatia

We apologize for the long silence since our last letter to you. Since our return to Croatia on August 20 from our six-week visit to the States, our schedule has been packed.

Baptismal service

The planned Baptismal service for Sunday, August 25, was rescheduled for Sunday, September. 8. The service was held at the usual place, the Drava River. Six young people publicly confessed their faith in Jesus Christ and their willingness to serve Him. Four of the young people are from a nearby Baptist church, and the other two are a young couple from our church. Benedikt and Tea came to our church last Spring. Please continue to pray for them as they grow in their faith and walk with the Lord. Both come from strong Roman Catholic backgrounds. Pray for them to be a strong witness to their families. They have a one-year-old son, Samuel, and they are expecting their second child.



(l-r) Kornel, Tea, Benedikt, Nathaneal

A countrywide youth conference

Our 2nd countrywide youth conference took place on September 20 and 21. It was a blessing to see young people fill up our church auditorium, hear them praise God through song and prayer, and listen with them as they were being challenged by the preaching of God's Word. During the two days, they heard three messages on missions and evangelism by a Baptist pastor from a nearby town who has been actively involved in evangelism most of his life. He challenged the young people to go out and share the Good News with their friends, colleagues, family members, and anyone the

Lord brings their way. He told them not to be afraid, but to trust the Lord.

The young people of our church did a great job serving with the talents the Lord has given them. Our church members opened their homes to these young people and fed them well. It was encouraging to see the young people fellowshiping with each other, praying, joining in various sports activities, and just enjoying praising the Lord with their voices and instruments.

Youth Summer Camp

On October 5 our church hosted a reunion for campers who attended our annual youth summer camp. It was a time of reflecting on what the Lord did this past summer during the week of camp. We listened to testimonies of how the Lord has continued to work in the lives of the campers. It is always encouraging to see how the Lord uses the camp ministry to bring some to a saving knowledge of Christ, and also how He changes lives and challenges the ones who already know Him as personal Savior to walk more closely with Him.

Thanksgiving service

Croatia doesn't have a special day set aside for Thanksgiving Day, but we have a special service dedicated to thanking God for blessing us with a good harvest and providing for our every need. Our special Thanksgiving service took place on October 20. We use special services like this as an opportunity to invite our unsaved family members, friends, and neighbors. The Lord surprised us with a good attendance and several new people who came for the first time.

New people

We believe it is solely the Lord's work when someone comes to a saving knowledge of Christ, yet He allows us to have a part as we share the Good News with others and as we are faithful witnesses for Him. Through the faithful witness of some of our church members, we are encouraged to see new people attending our church. We have about 10 new friends who regularly attend our Sunday services. Please, pray with us for their salvation!

Kornel's surgery

Last Spring Kornel experienced pain in his right shoulder as he was putting down curbs around our house.

He thought he pulled a muscle and tried to ease the pain with massages and pain medicine. His shoulder got better, but the pain was still there, just not as bad. Since we spent most of our summer travelling in the States,



Kornel didn't have to use his arm very much. In September he was invited to play in a volleyball tournament. It was during this tournament that he experienced sharp pain again in his shoulder. He had a hard time sleeping and using his arm after that. Eventually he went to see the doctor who sent him for an ultrasound and an x-ray. He was diagnosed with a ruptured tendon and a cracked bone. He had to have surgery, which took place on November 6. He was in the hospital for three days. The recovery has been slow and long. He has an orthosis which he needs to wear for two months, followed by physical therapy. The surgeon told him it will take 6 months to recover. Please keep him in your prayers. He is right-handed and now he is having to do things with his left hand.

25th Anniversary of the Baptist church in Koprivnica

On Sunday, November 24, our church held a special celebration service for reflecting on God's faithfulness throughout the 25 years since the church's first Bible study in the fall of 1999. About 150 people gathered in our auditorium to rejoice with us and remember God's work in our Church. We thanked the Lord for what He has done in our lives and for leading us this far – Ebenezer! We also thanked God for taking care of all our needs throughout the years and for providing the new church building. God is faithful! †

The New and Old In Ban Lung

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celebration to help kickstart one of these church plants in the village of Chaong Chan. Please pray that God will use the gospel message presented during this outdoor Christmas celebration to birth a new body of believers in Chaong Chan village.

We enjoyed having Lydia's mom, Shelia Potts, come to join us for a short two-week trip in September. In October, several EMU families got together to celebrate JD and Kim Crowley's 30 years here in Cambodia.

We praise God for getting to work with these wonderful co-workers. And at the beginning of December, we headed to Siem Reap province where Lydia & Hugh and Sophia & Jackson showed their grit and tenacity running in their first half-marathon and 10k, respectively. †

(l-r) Lydia, Hugh, Jackson, Sophia, Shelia Potts, Natasha, Brianna, & Julia



New Plans, New Decisions

by Matias & Kristine Espinel, Bible teacher in Uruguay



(l-r) David, **Kristine**, Emma, Megan, **Matias**, & Sophia Espinel

In the month of October, our family flew to the States to visit some of our supporting churches we have not seen in many years. We thank the Lord for a blessed time so far, and we look forward to the last weeks here enjoying time with our family in South Carolina. We are planning to fly back to Uruguay on January 7th. Our summer activities take place during January and February, and our school year starts in March.

Paysandú

As you may remember, this past March we moved to a sister mission board's camp in the northern part of Uruguay in order to analyze the possibilities of starting a one-year gap program for FEBU in the year 2026. During our six months of living at the camp and helping at the church connected with the camp, we prayed and sought counsel from other pastors about the new ministry project. At the end of our time in Paysandú, we, along with our Bible College's board, came to the conclusion that March of 2026 is not the right moment to start the new FEBU program. We

observed that there are some necessary aspects not yet in place before starting this new program. As in the past, we thank the Lord for His guidance and direction. He is always faithful, and we'll continue serving Him through the ministry of FEBU in Montevideo.

Iglesia Siloé

We are truly grateful to the Lord for what He is doing in Iglesia Siloé in Montevideo. Pastor Exequiel Parente is doing an excellent job leading the congregation. We are so pleased to receive pictures and reports of the ministry and see new families being added to the church and growing in the Lord. Matias continues to help in the leadership of the church, but now in a different role. Our family will be back in the city of Montevideo when we return to Uruguay, so we are praying for guidance as far as possible church ministries in the city. We are considering returning to Siloé and helping there, but only if we think our presence there is not a hinderance to the leadership of Pastor Exequiel. We ask you to pray for us as we make some future ministry decisions.

FEBU

FEBU recently celebrated the end of our 11th year of teaching. One of our students, Josué, recently finished the four-year requirements and completed his training satisfactorily.

For the past eleven years since FEBU's founding, our focus has been on teaching God's Word faithfully, providing as many ministry tools as possible to each student, and encouraging them to live their lives for Christ alone. We are excited about what the Lord will do in the upcoming school year, which begins in March of 2025. We are eagerly planning for our annual student-

teacher retreat, a possible mission trip for the students, and the second counseling conference in August. We are also excited about a special opportunity that was presented to our school to collaborate with the BJU Seminary in Greenville, SC, to offer a special Hebrew class at FEBU, taught by an adjunct professor in Spanish. We are praying this will be a wonderful tool for the students and pastors in Uruguay. We thank you for your prayers and ask you to pray for all the professors and students that will be part of FEBU 2025.

Pray also for a young couple, Ernesto and Noemí. Ernesto graduated from our school last year (2023), and Noemí is still a student. They are planning to get married in February of 2025 and have asked us to do pre-marital counseling with them. We are currently meeting with them on a weekly basis through video calls, and once we are back in Uruguay we'll continue to meet with them in person. Pray for wisdom as we meet weekly and discuss what a godly marriage looks like.

Family News

Our family has enjoyed connecting with friends in several states and spending time with stateside cousins. We are also enjoying a "winter Christmas" and all that goes along with that! This is our third Christmas in the States in the 12 years we have been in Uruguay, so most of it is very new for the kids - David (13), Sofia (12), Emma (9), & Megan (7). †

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