



Update from Mark and Deb Wilson August 2021

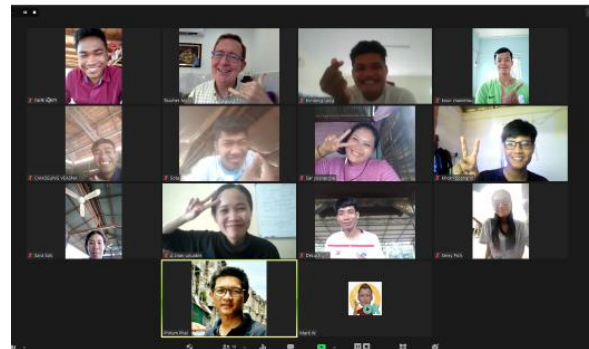
Pressing On

As many of you and much of the world have needed to find new ways to interact, we too have needed to find new ways and continue our work and personal interactions. For a video update from us this month, visit www.youtube.com/watch?v=hzF3vzBQj7Y&t=2s



Garden of Life (GoL) is the local partner with which Debra works. It is a Center for Christian Counseling and Professional Training in Counseling. They are adapting to the COVID-19 limitations by figuring out "what CAN we do" instead of focusing on what "we can't do." They have been able to serve small groups of people online, helping them understand and cope with the fear and stress of living through this continuing pandemic. They have conducted debriefings, education on stress with coping skills, and individual counseling mostly online. Recently, many of you prayed for two of their counselors as they ministered to a community in a rural province that was shocked and grieved by the attempted suicide of an elementary teacher. The teacher died after several days in the ICU and the GoL staff mourned with those who mourned and are helping them with grief and loss in addition to the impact of trauma. Please continue to pray for this rural community and especially her two sons, ages 11 and 12. See below for an urgent prayer request for Mey's husband who is now in the hospital with COVID-19 and having trouble breathing. Mey is under house "lock-down" for her fourth time.

At the Phnom Penh Bible School, they opened, closed, opened, then closed, and have remained closed since. Sadly, this will be the second year without a graduation ceremony. However, we do thank God that his work continues and that interactive communication tools like Zoom are readily available here. We're grateful that, for the most part, our local partners have quickly adapted to life online. For some of Mark's students, however, the internet is too weak for "live" classes, so Mark pre-records his lessons for his *Biblical Leadership* and *Integral Mission* classes by doing voiceover narrations and animated PowerPoints which are then uploaded as YouTube videos. This is followed by an hour of live Question and Answer. While it was "fun" for everyone at the beginning and some students learn better this way, this has taken a toll on Mark. Trying to keep things fresh and interesting takes much more time, including the time needed to render and upload the videos to YouTube.



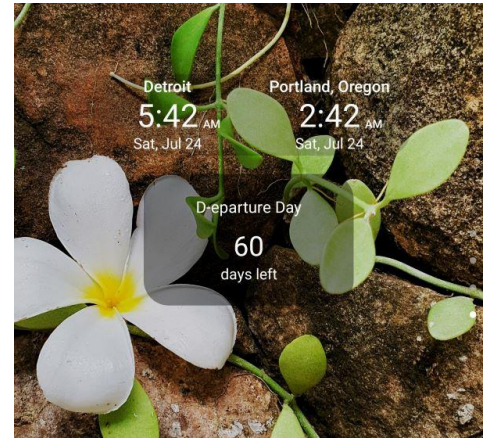
Would you like to receive these updates digitally? Please email Kelli at kgilmore@rca.org to be added to the email list. You will receive more timely updates from the missionary you support and help us be good stewards of our resources.

Home Assignment

It is difficult to believe that two years have gone by already, but the photo to the right is a screenshot from Mark's phone of the number of days remaining before we return to the U.S. for our regularly scheduled "Home Assignment." This time will be a bit different in that we will be based in Oregon near Mark's Mom but will use Michigan and Iowa as "hubs" for visits (thus two clocks).

This time, we think, is likely to be different in terms of traveling in the "era" of COVID-19 (what they say here in Cambodia now—សម័យ COVID); COVID-19 is still raging throughout Asia. For example, the day after we bought our tickets, our first flight was canceled! Thanks to the RCA travel agent, it is all fixed now, but we are holding our travel plans lightly. Another irregular part of our travel is preflight COVID-19 testing; we must have an official negative test result within 72 hours of our departure. Some travelers have been surprised two days before their travel with positive COVID-19 test results and, not only had to self-quarantine (or go to a government quarantine facility), but they also had to rebook all of their flights.

For those of you unfamiliar with "Home Assignment," it is a time that we make personal contact with about half of the congregations and individuals supporting the work here in Cambodia (every four years we see everyone!). If we have not contacted you yet, or you already know it's "your turn," please contact Deb to arrange a visit (dwilson@rca.org).



PPBS Graduate Spotlight

Soheng Hout is a graduate of PPBS. He is married and has two beautiful daughters and one son who graduated last year. Soheng came to PPBS after having already studied all the TEE books and having served in a church in one of Cambodia's western border towns. Now Soheng and his family are following God's call to plant a church in the far northern border province of Oddar Meanchey. This was *the* last "stronghold" of the Khmer Rouge until Pol Pot died and the Khmer Rouge integrated back into Cambodian society. Like many border towns, the place where Soheng and his family are serving God is a bit like the "wild west," even more so given the history of that area. Still, this family follows the call of God to this place. Soheng says *"I know that God called me to be a leader. My life lived to love, serve and obey the LORD my God Jesus Christ and devote myself to reading and studying the Bible in order to make disciples by teaching, encouraging, and enabling them to serve the LORD Jesus in their whole life."* As a church planter with the Khmer Evangelical Church (a local denomination, he receives no regular salary, only a very small stipend to help him get started. Currently, some of his support comes from working with Mark as a translator and editor of the textbook that Mark plans to finish in 2022.



Multiplication Opportunity

Lastly, we are so thankful that God provided a \$5,000 grant to help pay down our seminary loans through the Lilly Foundation and the RCA's Ministerial Excellence Fund. The loans which we began taking in 2006 were so that Mark could attend seminary which would allow him to follow God's unfolding call to encourage and equip young church leaders like Soheng by becoming a teacher at the Phnom Penh Bible School. It's been more than 10 years and over 100 students since that time. We have been faithfully paying down the loans but there is still a

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balance. The Lilly Foundation is offering *an additional \$2,500* in matching funds for every dollar that anyone contributes by the end of August (As explained [in this document](#) —Lilly will “match” contributions up to \$2,500 and the funds will be sent directly to our lender). We have never directly asked for support for the ministry to which God has called us here in Cambodia and will not do so now. As Mark visited people and congregations before we went out, Mark always said *“If the Lord is leading you to support this ministry, great, come join us! If not, no problem. Please support wherever or whomever the Lord leads you.”* So, if the Lord is leading ... please write checks out to Standale Reformed Church and put “Wilsons” in the memo line or indicate the donation is for the “Ministerial Excellence Matching Grant.” Checks should be mailed to Standale Reformed Church, 202 Cummings Ave. NW, Grand Rapids, MI. 49534. We are grateful for one of our supporting churches helping with processing these gifts.

Please join us in praying . . .

... **for healing of Chamroeun**, the husband of GoL staff member Mey (she’s the Cambodia staff in our video update). He was diagnosed with COVID- 19 two days ago and is now having trouble breathing. Join us in praying for both of them, that the peace of God would surpass her understanding and guard her heart and mind in Christ Jesus . . . sadly, due to the area of town where they live, this will be *Mey’s fourth, 14-day house quarantine*. The authorities have now put up “red tape” all around her house so that people know to “stay away.”

... **for wisdom for Mark’s neurologist** as Mark continues with headaches every day. The migraines are less frequent. The downside is that each medication that reduces migraines comes with side effects that make it unsustainable. The latest one, for example, has led to Mark losing almost 15 lbs so that he weighs about what he did when he graduated high school.

... **that we both would continuously “trust in the Lord with all our hearts and not lean on our own understanding”** and “be anxious” about nothing as travel regulations and flight schedules change regularly.

... **for wisdom about choosing whether to self-quarantine** two weeks before our departure to “ensure” a negative test result.

... **the PPBS students as they finish their last week** of regular classes and prepare for final exams and final papers. Pray, too, for wisdom for PPBS as to whether to invite the graduates to come to campus for “photo day” and to take their “Year 4” trip.

... **for Garden of Life** to be able to continue to train more Cambodian Christian counselors to increase their ability to serve more Cambodians and expatriates living in Cambodia experiencing PTSD, abuse, fear, depressions, anxiety, etc.

... **for the husband, the two sons, and the community** hurting from the suicide of their teacher, mother, co-workers, and neighbor.

... **for wisdom for Soheng and his family** as they serve God in especially in the COVID-19 time, especially to know the best ways to help and encourage all churches. Pray for his family and for the education of his daughters. Pray for his wife who will start and lead a women’s group. Pray for the churches in his place and across this land as some of them are very afraid of COVID-19 and have stopped coming to church.

Lastly, pray for wisdom for authorities in countries in Asia being strongly affected by the Delta variant of COVID-19. Cambodia and Thailand, for example, have suffered from great losses of tourist income and were beginning to make plans to reopen. Likewise, for Asian countries like Taiwan through which we will transit on our way back to the U.S. Last year, many countries completely closed their international airports, beginning with transit flights.

With love and in Christ Alone we stand!

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