



## November 2022, Part 1

Dear Partners, Friends, and Family,

Believe it or not, this is our third attempt to write an update! Mark's computer has several folders with photos, stories, and beginnings of updates. We've been thinking that "less is more," but we've been getting stuck trying to find a way to summarize what we've been experiencing and the things that God has been doing in and through our local partners in Cambodia in a way that was "less." So, we've decided that while "less is more," we're going to go for less and more! Mark is going to attempt to write more messages with less content beginning with this message, **Part 1**, which is more personal and will be followed by Parts 2 & 3 which will focus specifically on our Cambodian partners.

And while we've sent you our Year in Review letters at the beginning of the year and a spring update by video, so much more has happened, especially our return to Cambodia! By the way, if neither of those updates reached you, we apologize! You can still find them at [www.rca.org/wilson](http://www.rca.org/wilson), or Mark can send them to you.

### What's Happened?

#### As planned, we've both remained active in ministry.

According to the plans we shared with you, we did our best to say our goodbyes, pack up our lives, and relocate to the U.S. at the end of 2021. Because the pandemic was still going strong, most everything was socially-distanced and mostly behind masks (though we all held our breath and took off masks for a farewell photo at the Bible School, photo to the right). We also began setting up new lives in **Oregon** (near Zachary and Mark's Mom) and both managed to get COVID; Deb lost her sense of taste for months and Mark still has problems, still deals with some "long-COVID" symptoms that affect his throat and voice. We did learn from the pandemic that some things could be done online and so ministry in the first part of 2022 was all online (how many of us wish we had bought stock in Zoom two years ago?). However, we also learned that not everything could be done



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online. And so, **as planned, we headed back to Cambodia**. While Deb had hoped to visit Cambodia twice this year, the logistics and expenses related to COVID made it nearly impossible, so she canceled her first trip.

**As planned, we both traveled back to Cambodia.** We both had an amazing and action-packed three months in Cambodia with our Local Partners at the Garden of Life ministries (GoL) & the Phnom Penh Bible School (PPBS). Highlights for Deb included lots of time with GoL staff and members of the GoL Board during their Strategic Planning Retreat which Deb co-led (pictured right). There will be more specific updates on the GoL ministry starting with Part 2 coming to you soon.



**As planned, Mark continued to coach, write, and teach.**

While settling into life in the U.S., Mark continued work on his textbook, completing another chapter that he was then able to use a few months later when he was finally able to teach in person while in Cambodia! Mark also continued walking with two former students (including Siela in the photo to the right with his family at graduation) as their “coach” via Zoom and then later in person. It is truly a privilege to coach these young leaders as they continue their walk with the Lord, seeking to live into their calling, in real-life situations after graduation! As noted above, Mark was able to teach in two courses, in person, and spent time with the school’s leadership. There will be more updates on PPBS in Part 3, so stay tuned!



**As planned, Deb retired.** Well, the time finally arrived when it was right for Deb to retire. For those of you who have been praying for and encouraging Deb in ministry since her “BM” (before Mark) days, you know that she began her work in 1994 through a partnership between the RCA and the CRC. Most recently, through your support, Deb faithfully ministered in helping establish Garden of Life center for counseling and training. Thank you!



### Something New!

Something that was discussed but not formally planned was the idea that Mark might continue to work with PPBS in a new way after our relocation. And so, in April the Board formally asked Mark to join them. We were also pleased to hear that Mark’s nomination was fully supported by the school’s local leadership as well. Mark is now the only Board member to have served as a member of the Faculty and they are looking forward to him bringing this perspective. Mark attended his first Board meeting in the days before the PPBS graduation. More on this new work in Part 3!

### Prayer Answered

In terms of our family, your prayers for strength, wisdom, and grace as we navigate our relocation and transition continue to be answered. I (Mark) will say that our relocation and transition have been more challenging than I envisioned, especially as we returned to Cambodia before we were completely settled in Oregon (after all, we lived in Cambodia for a very long time). We take great comfort in knowing the heart of God and our past

experiences of His faithfulness so that we faithfully live into His call for our lives in this new chapter. He is faithful to provide all that is truly needed to accomplish His will.

### **Please Keep Praying**

While Deb has officially retired, she continues her involvement with Garden of Life as the Board Chair and on the Leadership Team. Pray for settling into new rhythms and work patterns. Deb's retirement is something to be celebrated as it opens avenues for new adventures and service and will likely have its share of challenges as well! Pray for her as she takes time to both reflect on her time in Cambodia as well as discern how God is calling her to serve Him in this new season of life. Pray with us for Mark in this coming year; this will certainly be a new, challenging, and wonder-filled adventure for him as he continues in some of his previous work in writing and teaching and steps into the new and exciting territory of joining the work of the PPBS Board!

In Christ Alone,

-Mark and Deb Wilson

*In Christ alone our hope is found, He is our light, our strength, our song! This cornerstone, this solid ground. Firm through the fiercest drought and storm. What heights of love, what depths of peace. When fears are stilled, when striving cease. Our comforter, our all in all. Here in the love of Christ we stand! – “In Christ Alone” by Keith Getty & Stuart Townend*