

Great CHALLENGES and Great JOYS in RURAL CHURCHES



In November, J.P. traveled with leaders from the Cambodia Lutheran Church (CLC) to [Prey Veng Province](#). A picture is starting to form regarding the blessings and challenges of rural ministry in Cambodia. While visiting [Pastor Phanna's church](#) in Prey Veng, for example, J.P. learned that the middle-aged are the hardest to reach. Many churches are filled with young children and their grandparents (see pic a), while parents are busy working (often at factories) to earn more for the family. Moreover, J.P. learned that most pastors, including Pastor Phanna, do not only serve one main congregation, but also smaller house churches. The distance between these can be great over [awful roads](#). Moreover, being a pastor is a hard and lonely life. There is no social prestige and congregations often cannot afford to pay their pastors. This shows the deep commitment and sacrifice of pastors to care for those God entrusts to them. But even in the midst of great challenges, there is great joy in seeing how God's people creatively reach out with the Gospel. One example is Pastor Hel Va, who not only pastors a [congregation at his home](#), but is also principal at a school established by [The Garuna Foundation](#) (a Recognized Service Organization of the LCMS). [The Garuna Christian School \(GCS\)](#) (see pic b) is a service to the local community while also reaching out with the good news of Jesus. In Cambodia children in rural areas only attend school for a half day. The GCSs are designed to receive students the half day they are not in the government schools. The GCSs supplement the children's education by providing classes in the Khmer language, math, English, and most importantly, the Bible. As the principal of the school, Pastor Hel Va has an amazing opportunity to connect with hundreds of kids and their families while also receiving needed income for his family. Another pastor in Prey Veng, Pastor Sao Eam, has a different approach. In partnership with a Danish organization, he has set up [a dormitory for local children](#). About 25 kids stay at the dormitory during the school



week since their homes are too far away. Pastor Sao Eam provides beds and meals for each kid. Each of these examples show God's people acting creatively to "advent" the Gospel of Jesus for Cambodia. During [Advent](#), we are reminded of Jesus who "advented" to the world and endured all things for us. His love for the world motivates each of these pastors and ministries to work creatively to reach out in mercy and witness to their communities. We are thankful to learn from them and serve them in the ways we can.

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PRAYERS:

For the Cambodia Lutheran Church and its leaders as they seek to do more visits like this (there are many pastors and churches that need to be visited); for J.P.'s as he teaches a class in December on Stewardship in Mission for Cambodian students of Concordia Theological Seminary in Hong Kong; for a planned Christmas party for our neighbors, that we might be salt and light for the Gospel.

See [here](#) for a comprehensive list of current prayer requests.

IN OTHER NEWS:

- J.P. traveled to Myanmar to attend the [Mekong Mission Forum](#), a yearly gathering of Lutheran mission agencies working in the Mekong region.
- During a public holiday, our family took a long weekend to Kampot province. We enjoyed [beautiful sunrises](#), a [seafood market](#), and a "secret" [waterfall](#).
- Language studies continue for J.P. It feels slow, but he is making progress. His Khmer teachers say he sounds less like a Vietnamese every day!

Wanna help us impact the people of Cambodia? We need your help! Give online [here](#), or mail a check to P.O. Box 66861, St. Louis, MO 63166-6861 (checks payable to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, memo: Cima family-Cambodia).

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