



Christ for Cambodia

A ministry of the
North Brevard Church of Christ



Andrew & Natalie Hayes

Dear Friends and Family,

January 09 Update

The new year has begun with more opportunities and blessings from our God! In His great creation of this world, he designed ways for us to mark time, and blessed us with these times of renewal...new days, new months, and new years are all ways He has blessed us to see that we have a fresh start that comes from His perfect planning. We hope you're enjoying this gift of 2009!

Missional Church Discussion

We were privileged to be part of a discussion in Chiang Mai, Thailand in the earlier part of the month. Robert Reagan, a local missionary, hosted several people in his home for this discussion. At least five countries were represented in those who attended. We were able to discuss the idea of a “missional church,” and what that looks like in our various fields of ministry. There were specific times set aside to “Dwell in the Word,” and share our ideas of what we see God saying to each of us through scripture in terms of our mission. It was encouraging to hear others who have had many more years in ministry share some of their experiences and insight with us. We were also encouraged by the effort that was made by those who came in order to attend and reflect on what we believe is a crucial topic. As we continue to be in learning mode, we pray that God will guide us to greater wisdom through opportunities such as this one.



How many New Years do you celebrate?

This year, as with last year, we will witness this nation celebrate New Years in three different ways and at three different times. The first two have already been observed in this first month. The Universal New Year is January 1st as we all know, but we also saw many people celebrating [Chinese New Year](#) at the end of January this year (in accordance with the Lunar calendar). Because there are so many Cambodians of Chinese descent, this holiday is a big one. To look at the shop and market closings in the city, you wouldn't know that this is technically not considered a national holiday. Although there is an element of fun that comes from learning about culture here and other places, there is also the sadness that comes with knowing that some of the traditions of men, including the ancestor worship of this particular holiday, are in stark opposition to what God wants for our lives.



Chinese New Year cakes given to us by our landlord

Medical Mission Team

Andrew went for three days to another province called Svay Rieng to work with a short term medical mission team upon our return to Cambodia. He was able to help with some translating and eye glasses distribution there. During that time, he enjoyed getting to know the others who came to serve the Cambodian people in this way. We both had the chance to spend a little more time with this group as they stayed a couple days in Phnom Penh, and we pray their visit was a blessing to them as they blessed the people here.

Being Frank, Not Rude

I (Natalie) recently got my hair cut pretty short. When I arrived at language school the next day, one of the teachers who knows me well said in Khmer, “Oh, I’m sorry, you must have come to the wrong school. Let me help you...the elementary school is not far from here.” I played along with her joke and thanked her for helping me out. Long hair is pretty much the norm here (especially for women my age...late 20’s), and so as I got my hair chopped off, I knew it would get plenty of comments...especially from Cambodian friends. I was surprised to get compliments from Cambodian people as they generally tend to see long hair as more beautiful, and short hair as more appropriate for either very young children or much older women. I was glad I didn’t have to hear any negative comments. Cambodian people can be fairly blunt about things that would seem taboo to most Americans. If you looked like you’ve gained weight recently (as I did on our trip to the U.S.), they will gladly tell you upon meeting them again that you are “fatter than you were before,” but no more gladly than they will tell you how much skinnier you are when that statement applies as well. I guess they just like to talk about any changes they observe in a person over the course of time. American friends, consider yourself warned that when you come to visit us, it is highly likely you will be told that you are fat, and it is not necessarily a bad thing.

Conversation with a Buddhist Cambodian

On a recent bus ride to another province, I (Andrew) had a conversation with a Cambodian man, and this is some of what that man shared with me as we talked about our faiths. Some passages from the Bible came to mind and I’ve included them below:

“How much do you believe in Jesus? I believe in Buddha only 30%. Buddha said that if you ask me to cut off my arm, I should do it. I cannot do that, so I say only 30%.” (See Matthew 5:38–42)

(When passing by a Cambodian Mormon on a bicycle wearing the quintessential white dress shirt with bicycle helmet.) “You see that man; if his salary gets cut he won’t continue doing that. No one will listen to him anyway. They know he is just doing it for the money. If you believed in Jesus 100% you wouldn’t be taking the bus to Kampong Cham or riding a bicycle either. You’d be walking. If you believed in Jesus 100% you wouldn’t take any money with you because you’d know you would be taken care of. How much do you believe in Jesus now?” (See Luke 10:4–8)

When I asked, “How do I help the needy in Cambodia?” The reply was, “Do you have time? If you have time you must go to their house and spend time with them. Then you will know their situation clearly and can help them. I have money enough to help two of my cousins study, but I only helped one because I knew that one would study and the other was not a serious student. Actually the parents of the cousin I didn’t help sent him to school and he dropped out very quickly. If you want to help poor people don’t write a proposal to your church to spend lots of money on hiring staff and buying big cars. You will spend a lot of money and won’t help. Most organizations spend all of their money on hotel rooms, cars and salaries. If you want to help the poor people you must have enough time to go to their home and then you can understand their situation clearly.” (See Matthew 6:1–4; Luke 10: 33–35)

Grace and peace to you all,

Andrew and Natalie

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Prayer Requests:

- Thanksgiving for God’s healing hand on Robert Reagan
- Unity among Cambodian brothers and sisters in Christ
- That the faith of young Cambodian Christians will be strengthened
- That Cambodian Christians and seekers will commit to attending the “Angkor of Faith 3” camp this March
- Preparations for the camp in March
- Progress in forming a larger mission team here