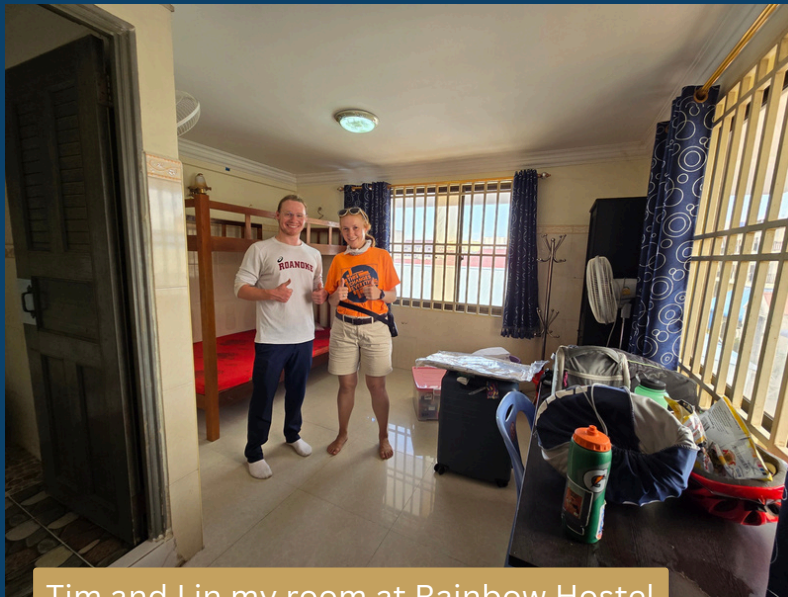
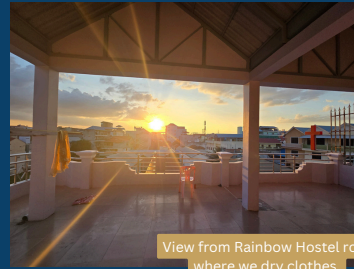


WITNESS & WONDER

THE BIMONTHLY MUSINGS OF A YAGM IN CAMBODIA



Tim and I in my room at Rainbow Hostel on the day we moved in.



View from Rainbow Hostel roof where we dry clothes.



Dropping Tim off at LCC Kandal.

December Edition

Average temp:
32 C/ 90 F
still hot, windy, no
more evening rain

Insta: @yagm.kh

Where'd we go?

Now that we are at our sites, the YAGMs serving in Cambodia spread out over the country. We are volunteering with two organizations:

LCC: Lutheran Church of Cambodia

LHCO: Lutheran Hope for Cambodia(NGO)

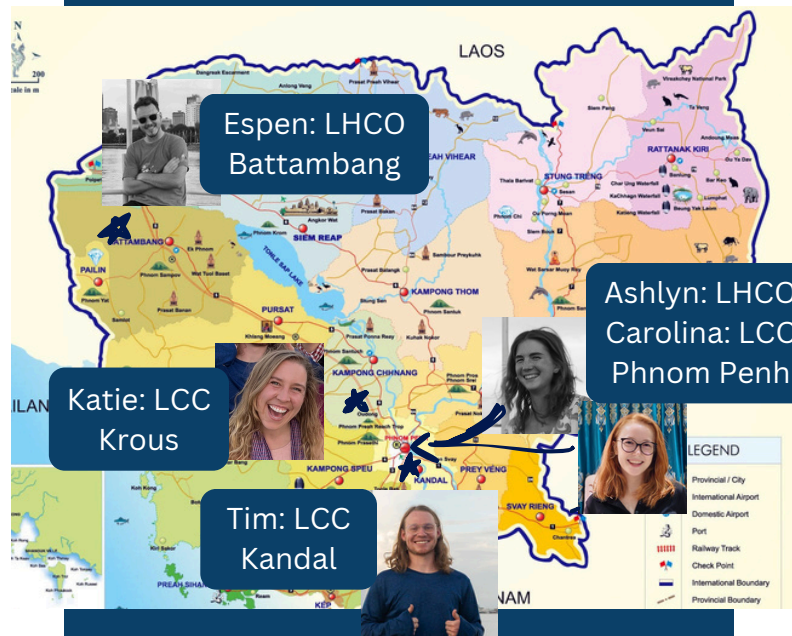
What have I been up to?

At the beginning of the month, Tim and I moved into Rainbow Hostel, a dorm that provides safe lodging and Christian community for students who come to the capitol for high school and college. The first people I got to know were two little girls who are among the many children who play in the church every day. We played hand clapping games and they brought Tim + I small candies.

YAGMs are flexible: The initial plan was for Tim to split his time between City Church + the Kandal Outreach Center 40 minutes away. Within two weeks, we knew that it was going to be too much hassle and Tim moved to Kandal.

Students began introducing themselves to me as I saw them around the hostel. My language classes have concluded. Now, it's up to me to keep learning Khmer. It's hard to know what to say in a new culture and whether to lead with English or Khmer. But almost two months into living here and I sense relationships forming.

I teach three separate classes on Saturdays: piano lessons, English for Sunday School students, and English for RH residents. I also watch resident's teach Sunday School on Sunday afternoons. I love learning the songs, motions and games we play. Every Tuesday and Friday, I join students for meetings and Bible Studies.



We will be meeting up for 3 retreats during our year to explore more of the country and be in community with each other. Our first meeting starts Dec.1 in Siem Reap home of the famous temple Angkor Wat!



Getting To Know LCC

LCC's Annual General Meeting on Reformation Day!

On October 31st, Lutheran Church of Cambodia (LCC) leadership gathered to discuss ministries and challenges, worship, share fellowship, and plan the next year. People came from **City Church, Kandal, Krous, and Tang Krang**. These four churches and 2 outreach centers make up LCC. **LCC's ministry** includes: computer, English, and Khmer classes, preschools, family/relationship counseling, and running a student hostel. They named familiar struggles like youth's time/attention and building updates as well as who takes care of the church cow and what to do with the mushrooms they have grown! I am so grateful to be a part of the joy and dedication of this church!

Verse of the Day: Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." Acts 3:6

Installation

The first week, Tim and I traveled to Tang Krang where, new pastor, Srey Yeap, was installed. It was moving to watch this young woman be prayed over by her church family as she formally begins her ministry and for me to vocalize the ELCA's support of her vocation. We met four Finish Lutherans connected to FELM who support LCC as well. YAGM Katie danced with three other women from Krous after ONLY 2 rehearsals! She did a great job. :)



Worship Team



Croix's Scavenger Hunt: piano

LCC graciously welcomed me to play with the praise band. This is my first time playing keyboard for praise music and it is a challenge. The songs are new, the lead sheets lyrics are in Khmer, and we are communicating style and tempo with a language barrier. Music is not always a universal language. Still, I love that I get to be a part of the music making. The worship songs are really fun. When I am not playing, I put the lyrics in Google Translate to sing with the transliteration. I hope to continue to play from time to time.

This piano is also what I use for piano lessons. My first class had 15 students! (We expected 5) Everyone came to see what was happening. The next week attendance had already dropped in half and students who were there were late. I am curious to see if anyone sticks with it through the whole year and how much progress we can make.

This week Tim and I joined LCC for their medical mission with the Lutheran Church in Singapore. We traveled to different church plants with nurses and doctors handing out medicine. There was also a children's program with songs and games and people giving haircuts. This was a challenging experience for me to participate in and observe. It opened my eyes to the challenges of mission work especially for the people who are moved by the Gospel that was shared and continue the work here long term. I hope to write more about this in my next newsletter.

Quotes I've sat with

"May God bless you with a **restless discomfort**...

May God bless you with **holy anger**....

May God bless you with **the gift of tears**...

May God bless you with **enough foolishness** to believe that you really CAN make a difference in this world, so that you are able, with God's grace, to do what others claim cannot be done."

-A four-fold Benedictine blessing
edited for space.

"God protects me from nothing, but **sustains me** in everything"

- I heard this first from Father Greg Boyle

Both of these were from Kate Bowler's *Everything Happens* podcast which I love.

"**Wonder** is an interesting phenomenon, because it's that moment when all of our narratives and stories about life disappear in the rapturous experience of actually being *here*. Actually being alive. Being present with the glorious now. Like when you can get really close to some street musicians playing a song. Or when you pet a horse. Or when you see a solar eclipse. Wonder is **most accessible in new situations**, because we don't have a narrative about what's happening."

-I'm starting Scott Erickson's *Honest Advent*.



^^ No two experiences are alike.
Praying for your joys and frustrations.



Thank You

for supporting this program financially as well as with your curiosity & prayers.

And for encouraging responses to my last newsletter! It is so good to hear from you!

The last newsletter's address is not going to work out. :(However, country coordinator Hannah just got a P.O. Box! Here's that much more reliable address:
Carolina Bowen
c/o Hannah Kurtz
PO Box 1134
Phnom Penh, Cambodia 120000
Tel. 086 622 335



Music in my head

Father Abraham-but in Khmer from Sunday School+ **Somethin' Stupid, Frank Sinatra** - resonates because I'm saying a lot of stupid things with this language barrier + **Coldplay's Moon Music** - the whole album, really helps me relax + **Khmer rap! Vannda + La Cima Cartel** - Guys! It's so good. I'm taking RH resident's recommendations to learn Khmer pop music.

Cooking with the students

I have never cooked for myself consistently and buying ingredients at the local market takes a strong dose of courage each time I go. The hostel residents have been generous, sharing their rice, dried fish, prahok, etc. Sometimes I've eaten 2 dinners or even 3 because the generosity keeps coming. This picture is from when I learned to cook lok lak with the Bishop and Eang who works at LCC. This was a really fun lunch.



Ice cream sandwiches done right.
-> on sandwich bread!



Water Festival / Bon Om Touk

Celebrating rice harvest & the end of the rainy season

YAGM split our time between:

Krous Village (2days) & Phnom Penh (last day)

- made flat rice
- biked through beautiful rice fields.
- joined the village dance at the pagoda.
- City YAGM took in the Village cows and pigs
- So crowded! Wow.
- Watched the boat races from the tourist area
- Walked around concerts and carnival games
- sat in the glow of barges with huge light displays at night.

< Ate good food! >

Thank you to the Bishop and LCC Krous for hosting us!