

WITNESS & WONDER

THE BIMONTHLY MUSINGS OF A YAGM IN CAMBODIA



February
Edition

Average temp:
Lows: 73F Highs: 90F
Strong wind, cooler
weather, even chilly
2 days terrible air
pollution

Insta: @yagm.kh



Evening English class! Level 6
**Photo used with students permission



Serving communion with
the Bishop last Sunday



Chinese New Year
Krispy Kreme's



ELCA visit!

What have I been up to?

New Year. New Schedule. That's what my site supervisor kept telling me in December. She warned me I would be much busier in the new year. That is certainly true!

On January 8th, I had my **first day of English classes**. One of my site's ministries, after school English enrichment, starts with the new year.

Monday to Thursday I teach:

- Phonics, 5-6pm
- "Let's Go" Level 6 the highest level here, 6-7pm

On Fridays we teach a Bible lesson.

Talk about an adjustment! Going from only a few piano students on Saturdays to 5 nights a week for two hours is a lot. Plus, I am trying to learn the curriculum as I go. *How do you teach squirmy 8 year olds how to read in their second language?* I'm not sure, but I do know we are playing a lot of games.

I am grateful to have two students from the hostel who translate/co-teach my classes.

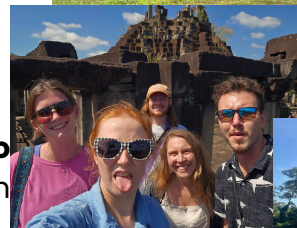
In February, I will begin teaching **an additional piano class** on Saturdays, traveling to LCC Krous to teach members of the village churches.

I decided to crack open the **Uno** deck a few weeks ago and have been surprised by how often people ask me to play both younger English students and older residents. Happy to have this game to break 5 month old ice, but no more than 2x groups a day. 😊

++ I have accepted an offer to start my MDiv. at Luther Seminary in the fall! Following the Holy Spirit!

Retreat 1: Siem Reap

In my December newsletter, I shared that we were on our way to Siem Reap to visit Angkor Wat and the surrounding temples. We started with sunrise at Angkor Wat and continued from there to visit many, many more temples over three days.



It was great to be together as a cohort!

Evening cultural performances:
Traditional Dance & The Circus! Phare



Medical Mission

The Lutheran Church of Singapore's
Mission Trip to Cambodia

This was a really challenging week for me.

For 3 days we traveled to a school, a church left by American Baptist missionaries, and an established LCC church bringing medicine, bread, milk, and Bible stories/games for kids.

This was the very type of activity I was hoping to avoid with YAGM. People who show up for a week, do not know the culture, and share the Gospel, play games, hand out stuff and leave. "It's like a carnival!" Is how they describe it. Tim and I mostly packaged the snacks and helped with the children putting our Khmer to use.

The snacks and games were enjoyed. Medicine distributed. I found the images used to support the sharing of the gospel intimidating. How do you get children to understand their own sinfulness and that a man who doesn't look like anyone they've seen is God and died for them in a place and time far removed from them in an hour across a language barrier? I brought a lot of skepticism into this week. At the same time, these missions were how the Lutherans of Singapore started LCC 14 years ago.

We are called to share God's love, and there is so much nuance to the Christian faith.

It's important to teach with care. I thank God for missionaries who invest years and language and cultural learning to share the faith mindfully. It is really hard work.

Christmas!

Christmas is the biggest event of the year in Cambodia Christian churches as Khmer New Year overlaps with

Easter. Christmas is not a public holiday in Cambodia, but on the day a church chooses to celebrate it's a big, loud party. We celebrated on the 25th. All the LCC churches came together to celebrate. Check my blog post for the LCC website. :)

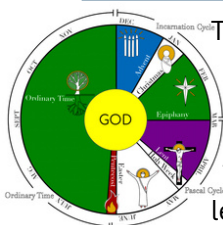
I was asked to **choreograph** two dances for the Sunday School Christmas celebration in Phnom Penh. I chose:

The simple: **"Lord, I Lift Your Name on High"**

The challenging: **Pentatonix's "O Come, All Ye Faithful"**

I had a lot of fun teaching and rehearsing. Some hostel residents even learned it with me and that was LCC City Church's talent contribution to the 25th.

**He's.... my.... rock, my sword, my shield,
He's the hub in the middle of my
Liturgical Calendar!**



This week LCC had a training on the **Church Seasons** reading through an excellent book put together by the Lutheran Church of Malaysia. The Lutheran Church Cambodia is learning about **what it means to be Lutheran**. They want to know who they so that they can be more confident in their interactions with other Christians. It's

exciting to be a part of this learning process. I love being Lutheran and I love the liturgical calendar! It was especially fun to get to share one of my favorite camp songs as a devotion on our final say of training.

****Shout out** the documentary on the Reformation translated into Khmer that featuring many a Concordia professor, some familiar.



Tim and I joined the Christmas set up crew. The youth at LCC-Tang Krang helped us make decorations. The glitter was everywhere!



YAGM @ LCC
Christmas



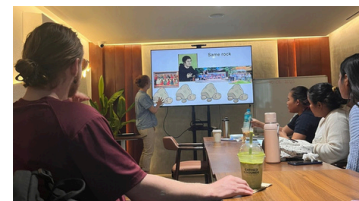
Didn't get many pictures of me in traditional dress, but here's my playing piano with LCC-CC Praise Band.



LCC-CC Dance Crew
*Image shared with students permission.



LCC-CC Sunday School
Christmas



Quotes I've sat with

"May you find **the Almighty** waiting in the **conversation** you can have **only by being in your current situation.**"

Scott Erickson's *Honest Advent*

I really loved this Advent devotional it spoke to a lot of the challenges of YAGM.

"I want to go home a little bit different. A little **less afraid**. A little **more thankful**. A better citizen of the planet."

Rick Steves' New York Times Interview

For when this work feels like it's not doing anything. This is reality travel. Not escape travel..



<< Dance Class Joys

When I met this student at my English conversation table, she immediately struck me as a girl boss. She is studying to become a geography teacher and is doing the equivalent of student teaching this year. She has done a variety of classes around the city to learn various skills and invited me to join here for a community Khmer folk dancing class at the Royal University of Fine Arts (est. 1917) This class meets over the next few Saturdays allowing members to brush up on their dance skills before Khmer New Year in April.

LCC-CC staff at morning Bible study.



All I've got this month is **That's So True**, Gracie Abrams —It's really just a catchy tune. Happy to be hearing less of **APT**-That song ruled the neighborhood for a while.

Boy with Luv, BTS came on in a store. Throwback. Yikes!

Any recommendations?



Seafood Pizza ^^ with a mini hotdog crust eaten with ketchup. Cambodia with love. Staff fellowship.



^^^ We are almost to the halfway point!



Thank You

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

Here's my address:

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c/o Hannah Kurtz
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Phnom Penh, Cambodia 120000
Tel. 086 622 335

New Years Trip to Kampot

YAGM Cambodia girls take on Bokor National Park.



Cliffs views!!!

Monkey troops by the road.



Met some monks at this waterfall



Oh the juxtaposition! Buddhist goddess Lok Yeay Mao sits across a valley from an abandoned French Catholic Church.

New Years in Phnom Penh!

While I was in Kampot for 1/1, I stumbled across dress rehearsals for the parades by the Royal Palace a few nights before and saw the art work with my friend the next day. So cool.

