

WITNESS & WONDER

THE BIMONTHLY MUSINGS OF A YAGM IN CAMBODIA



ELCA Young Adults
in Global Mission

April
Edition

Average temp:
Lows: 78F Highs: 96F
Feels really hot
UV extreme
Feels like 105+

Insta: @yagm.kh



Nham bai! - Eat rice!



All set for English class



Ash Wednesday



A picture of the air quality
from the Khmer Times.

What have I been up to?

In February, I went on two retreats. The first retreat was back to Siem Reap with the church staff and the second was our YAGM retreat to Monduliri. *Pictures on pg 4+5!*

In March, I've found myself surprised at how life at my site has started to feel so normal. I feel more at home in the dorm and around the neighborhood. I lesson plan in the morning and teach in the evenings during the week. Then, on Saturdays I teach my piano classes.

Nham bai - This signature Khmer phrase asks people passing by a meal to eat rice with them. I still am not confident on how I should respond. Sometimes I say yes, sometimes I say no thanks, but in this picture are three of the people I see almost everyday at lunch. We only talk on occasion, but community is formed anyway. I look forward to our paths crossing at lunch time.

English class - Coming up with what to teach every day and not always having a translator/co-teacher certainly makes this difficult. Despite this, I really love getting to see my students and try my best to teach them even when they don't listen to my crude Khmer. Looking forward to the break for Khmer New Year.

Ash Wednesday was a somber service, but there no changes to the liturgy or other allusions to Lent since then. I've already fallen short of my attempts at Lenten discipline, but that's the point right? Try, try, try again.

Air quality - This week the sky has been really hazy again. It's scary to look out, know the air is bad to breathe, and have nothing you can do about it. The hostel, like many buildings here, has no air con and slats in the wall to let breeze through.

I get to fly away in three months, but what about my students who may breathe this air throughout their life?



I've started teaching more piano classes! I switch between teaching in Phnom Penh and Krous village. It's exciting to start, but I know I do not have much time left to really make progress with these students. They are learning fast!

The gov't started blocking traffic downtown on the weekends, so locals and tourists could walk around. Enjoying "walk street" in front of the Royal Palace with friends.



Contextual Theology Workshop

With FELM: Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission

Doing Theology in Cambodia by Dr. Jeri Komulainen

Another training! They happen all the time.

The title made me skeptical. What is this Finnish professor going to say about theology in Cambodia in his first visit to the country? I was pleasantly surprised at how thought provoking the training was. The main objective was facilitating discussion between its participants, leaders from various Christian churches in Cambodia, about what being Christian looks like in this country and culture.

“Tell me what Gospel means in your country.”

Because the marginalization and suffering looks different in different places, the good news of the gospel looks and sounds different in different countries and contexts. What is the good news of Jesus brings where you live?

“What gift will the Church in Asia bring the Christian tradition?”

They engage in three types of dialogue.

- (Liberation) with the poor
- (Inculturation) with other cultures
- (Inter-religious) with other religions”

“Social actions and evangelism are two wings of the same bird.”

Khmer Consonants

ក	ខ	គ	ឃ	ង
Kaw	Khaw	Kow	Khoh	Ngow
ច	ឆ	ជ	ឈ	ញ
Jaw	Chhaw	Jhow	Chhow	Nhow
ដ	ប	ឧ	ឆ	ណ
Daw	Taw	Dhow	Thow	Naw
ត	ថ	ទ	ធ	ន
Dtaw	Taw	Dtaw	Thow	Nhow
ប	ផ	ព	ភ	ម
Baw	Paw	Bpow	Pow	Mhow
យ	រ	ល	វ	
Yhow	Rhow	Lhow	Whow	
ស	ហ	ឡ	អ	
Saw	Haw	Law	Aw	

I am studying Khmer again! I was really frustrated with my lack of progress, so Hannah helped me find a tutor. I am so grateful to have someone who gets paid to answer all my questions...”What is this in Khmer?”....teach me better grammar...and I’ve started to learn the alphabet. The goal here is to improve my pronunciation, but goodness! The Khmer writing system is complicated and this is just the consonants.

My tutor is Christian too! I asked her to teach me the Lord’s Prayer. I hope by the end of my time I will be able to say it at church. :))

Tuesday Night Meetings

When I arrived at the dorm, residents had meetings every Tuesday and Friday. Now, we only meet on Tuesdays which I think is better for the busy students. Most Tuesdays, we study the Small Catechism with the Bishop, but on the last Tuesday of the month we meet in small groups to talk about building community in the dorm. Church members and partners who have been trained in PSS(psychoeducation social support) by FELM lead these groups. It’s



Picture cards in action - Ice breaker activity - Small Catechism Workbook

not easy to get young adults talking about their feelings and how to build relationships. The leaders have us pick up picture cards to help answer some of the questions. It’s hard to get resources like these in Cambodia, but they definitely help. It’s important to intentionally facilitate these conversations because students can live next to each other and never talk, especially with everyone scrolling Facebook all the time. It sends a good message to the many new students who have arrived at the dorm in the past couple months. AND It’s really hard for me to sit in these group conversations and not understand all that is being said in Khmer or be able to give thoughtful answers. Building relationships is what the YAGM year is all about!



LCC gathered for the engagement ceremony of one of the preschool teachers at Krous church. I’ve had lots of fun getting to know her during my piano visits.

LCC blended Christian elements into the traditional Khmer ceremony. After the representatives of the bride and groom confirmed there were no other romantic interests even on Facebook, rings were exchanged, the groom presented fruit to the family of the bride and money was gifted to the couple two people at a time.



The LCC staff at the engagement with Pastor Jenna visiting again!

Quotes I've sat with

"Real inner safety comes from **making peace with uncertainty** and **trusting yourself** to handle whatever comes next."

@millennial.therapist | Sara Kuburic

This quote concisely articulates a truth I have working to realize for myself over the past two years. I cannot prepare for everything, but in uncertain situations I've gotten through and usually gotten through pretty well. As I prepare for and teach my English class, I remind myself of this again and again.

Trust the Spirit at work with you!

"It's backwards to try and teach kids to obey a God they do not trust.

Childhood is for getting to know God, so kids can discover God can be trusted."
kids + faith | Meredith Miller

On Friday, the English classes have a Bible lesson. This is my first time teaching or planning "Sunday School lessons" without a handy-dandy camp curriculum. It feels like a lot of pressure to choose stories and present the Bible in the right way, especially in a different culture.

After quickly moving through a story a week with my upper level English students (think 7th grade), I decided to slow down last Friday. A former YAGM or pastor left Henri Nouwen's *Discernment* on a bookshelf in the hostel. I picked it up. In the introduction, Robert A. Jonas states that Nouwen felt discernment begins with the question, "What tradition will help me find my way to my true self, my true vocation, and my true community?" Then, he points to the fruits of the Spirit as part of gifts of the Christian tradition.

Now, the Phonics students have been exploring the story of Joseph and Level 6 is now learning to sing "The fruit of the Spirit's not a DRAGONFRUIT!"

What a gift to get to share the stories of the God I love with these students. I pray that as they grow they will discern for themselves traditions and practices that remind them they are loved, gives them purpose, and connects them to community.



^^ Okay YAGMs! We are getting to the home stretch. Stay strong. Let's enjoy what we have left. I look forward to swapping stories at re-entry even though that is still forever away.



Thank You

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

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Celebrating the birth and baptism of my cousin's baby from a far. Please pray for my family as my Papa (robed in the picture) begins hospice.



Notable Enemies

1. ROOSTERS- Every morning at 6 am and I really need this sleep.
2. SLIDE - This is game the English students love where they throw water all over the roof and then slide like they are skating. This incredibly unsafe. At first I couldn't stop it. Once it started I couldn't get them back in the classroom, but after locking the door for a week they have stopped.
3. THE HEAT - I want to run errands on my bike during my 12pm-2 pm lunch break, but I think its getting dangerous.

Notable Thanksgivings



1. **Going out with friends** to cheer on the LCC-CC soccer team, but lets be real, we went for the adventure, the snacks, and to take pictures.
2. Buying some **new clothes** that are more fashionable and have lighter fabric.
3. **Weekend walks** in Krous, its nice to get out of the city
4. Small moments where I recognize that I am more comfortable in this space and with these people. The time pays off.
5. **MANGOS-** I think mango season is here! What I think is happening: Families bring the students tons of mangos from home. Then, there are extra and they gift them to me! It's all very exciting and yummy. This week I got 4.

< Peep the seasonal DQ blizzards: My friend Hayley and I tried the *Fresh Mango Sticky Rice with Coconutmilk Blizzard*. One of a kind. ;)



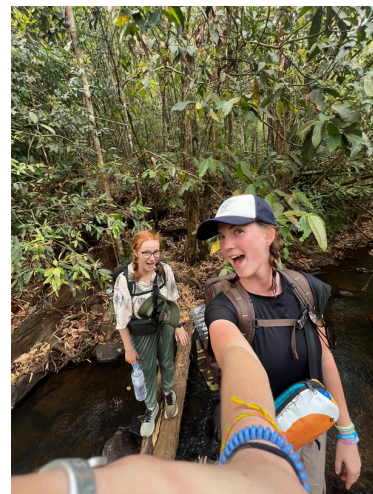


We travel to take pictures! Visited some of the temples — Dinner at Sister Sokheng's family home — Photo shoot in the backyard rice fields — Night on Pub Street! — Visiting Angkor Wonder Garden: Where did all these flowers come from?? If you ever go, I do recommend the go karts.

Staff Retreat in Siem Reap

This is our hotel. The wood in older Cambodian buildings is always very impressive to me. Excellent buffet. We traveled together in a coach bus singing karaoke almost the whole way. They let me sing too! yay.





YAGM Retreat in Mondulkiri

We travel to test our limits and see as much as we can!

Fun group picture at the LOVE sign in town — Backpacking through the jungle — Some of the most challenging hiking I've ever done in terms of elevation change. — Look at this really big tree! wowowowow— We found a few waterfalls and swam quite a bit.— feeding banana's to elephants: We hiked with the Mondulkiri Project Elephant Sanctuary. They protect three elephants that formerly used to give rides to tourists. — I did get really sick towards the end of the retreat. — Thankful for rest — Thankful for time together — Thankful for creation

