

# WITNESS & WONDER

THE BIMONTHLY MUSINGS OF A YAGM IN CAMBODIA



ELCA Young Adults  
in Global Mission

June  
Edition

Average temp:  
Lows: 79F Highs: 93F  
Still so hot, but the  
rainy season is back!  
Happy to have cozy  
afternoon rain  
showers. > Really grey  
and damp, but cooler  
Feels like 113+



HAPPY KHMER NEW  
YEAR!!  
April 14-16

Teaching!



Easter, April 20



## What have I been up to?

April was all about Khmer New Year. It has the same cultural prominence as Christmas in the US and was a really fun holiday to get to know. Coming back after the holiday, the tide started to turn towards leaving. The Cambodia YAGM just returned from **our last retreat before moving**. It was a great time of fellowship and starting to think about how we will share stories from this year.

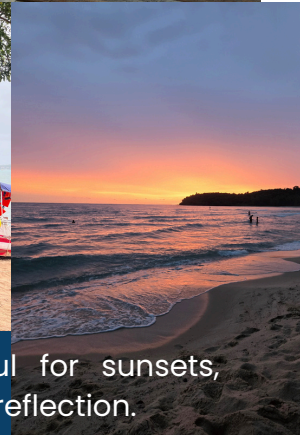
*I finally saw the bioluminescent plankton!*

Time to think about how to say goodbye. Reinvigorated to lesson plan well for the rest of my time here. Classroom management has really gone down the drain as of late. **Only four full weeks of teaching left.** I don't feel great about leaving in the middle of the year, but the Cambodia school calendar is different.

There was a **hostel student outing to Kampot** right after we all got back from Khmer New Year which may be the highlight of my YAGM experience. It's different to be around hostel students outside of the dorm. We left Phnom Penh early in the morning, painted a church that just joined LCC, picked up trash along the road, and visited members of the congregation. Then, in the afternoon, we went to a nice beach area on the river, ate lunch together, swam, and relaxed as some students went out in kayaks and pedal boats. We went up a mountain for an unfortunately rainy, but still breathtaking view. Finally, we hit Kampot city for a half hour before singing (at least a quarter) of our way back to Phnom Penh. It was a joyful day. Thankful for the relationships I have built here and the students I got to know a little better on this day.



Just wanna highlight my year-long cross stitch project. :)



Island retreat! Thankful for sunsets, smoothies, and time in reflection.



Seeing students taking on service and fellowship together was such a gift. Especially witnessing my peers, who come from LCC home congregations, lead those member visits surrounding older members in prayer encourages me in my own service and the importance of church around the world over.





Apsara are Hindu/Buddhist deities

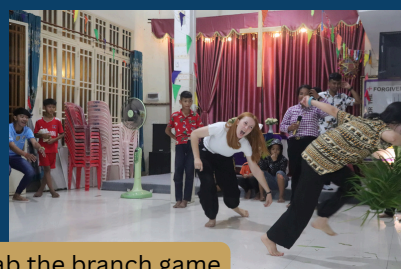
Yay for seeing old classmates and teachers!



Its a clay pot, but think piñata.



Me losing at the super fun grab the branch game



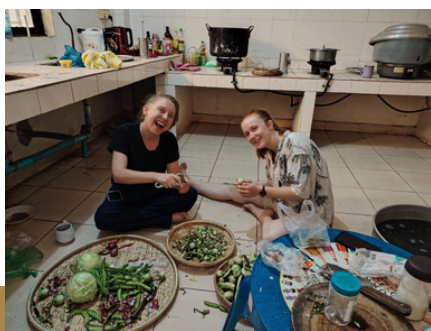
Khmer New Year marks the solar new year. The anticipation was high. Star and bunting decorations were hung. Photo walls made with straw hats and traditional fishing gears. Sangkran parties started happening at schools, universities, businesses and church all around the country.

I joined . . .

- a university Sangkran with a resident. The Apasara fashion show from that evening is pictured.
- Ashlyn and I reconnected with our Khmer language school for their Sangkran. A safe place to learn some of the Khmer traditional games before Sunday School the next day
- LCC-CC had a Sangkran before all the students went home welcoming back alumni.
- When the hostel closed, I joined LCC-Krous for the official holiday

# the season of Sangkran

Krous-beautiful morning runs - daily water fights - making food for lunch after church - plucking duck feathers! - a lot of being together, eating together, and karaoke

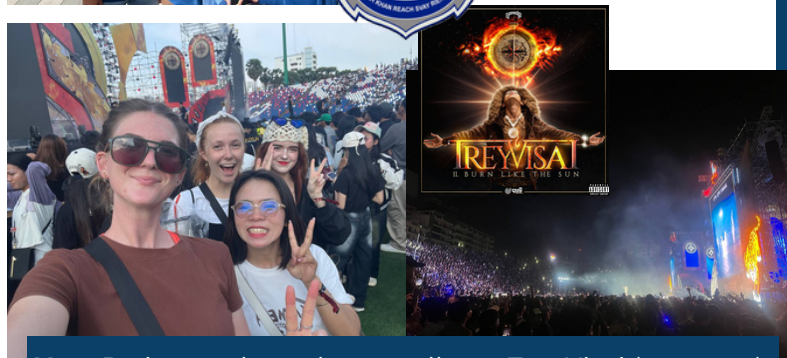




## Three Epic Weekends

Wow, well there have been some epic events going down in Phnom Penh as of late.

First, Brother Sophea, from the LCC office, told me he went to a minor league baseball game in North Dakota when he was a camp counselor. I said I'd love to a game in Cambodia. This game was it! **Svay Rieng** is a club team in Cambodia. They won a Cambodia championship, so this was a big match with a team from a different country. Svay Rieng lost, but it was so cool to see the new stadium and to be in the crowd.



**VannDa** just released a new album, *TreyVisai* (compass). We went to his concert at Olympic stadium. Big crowd! Lots of guest performers (the whole label + rappers from Laos, Thailand, Japan, and India) So cool to see him so close! Then, VannDa has just released a new three part album called *TreyVisai* (compass). We went to his concert at Olympic stadium. Big crowd! Lots of guest performers (the whole label + rappers from Laos, Thailand, Japan, and India) So cool to see him so close!



Love a weekend teaching piano in Krous! The pictures speak volumes about my hosts. ❤️



## My evolving thoughts on motorbikes

At YAGM orientation in Chicago, YAGM going to Cambodia were given motorcycle helmets. They were huge and something I thought I would never have in my possession. I was excited to ride a motorbike. However, after merging onto the main road from the Phnom Penh airport, it became apparent that we were in a whole new transportation game. Everyday I've been here, I silently hope to ride a motorbike. When it happens I feel so cool, but here are some drawbacks to motos that you may not think of:

-I've watched students move out of the dorm on motos. It takes a lot of trips, careful balancing and friends **carrying bigger items** like fans. I have such respect for the motorbike duos where the guy on the back has **an entire windshield** in his lap. When I was biking last Sunday, a band rode by one by one with **traditional instruments** strapped to the back of their motos. I hope they beat the **rain**.

-There is no shield from the weather. In the middle of the day there is **no a/c** and nothing in between you and the sun. That's why many people drive in long sleeves and with gloves even when it feels like 110.

-You should wear a mask too because there's nothing between you and the **traffic exhaust**.

-**balancing** the in stop and go traffic in the city is so hard

-a moto is clunkier than a bike

-The most people I've seen on one bike was ~7 young men and it wasn't going far. I've ridden **max 3 people** on one. It's **not comfortable** and **each person makes the bike harder to balance**.

-**No baby seat**. Usually, a parent holds a baby in the back and the baby rarely has a helmet.

Did you know the seat opens and you can store stuff in there? That's how you fill the gas. Mind blown. Mass transit could be a game changer for Phnom Penh. People are thinking about it, but it is likely a long way away.



Moto parking at the hostel



Suprise! No one in Cambodia wears helmets this big!



But the helmets here don't really have safety standards...



# Quotes I've sat with

"In my Shona language munhu munhu nekuda kwevanhu, **a person is a person through other people**...[Ubuntu] is a reminder that we are all interconnected. That your wellbeing is connected to mine and mine to yours".

Kudakwashe Chikonyora | Valparaiso University Baccalaureate Speech

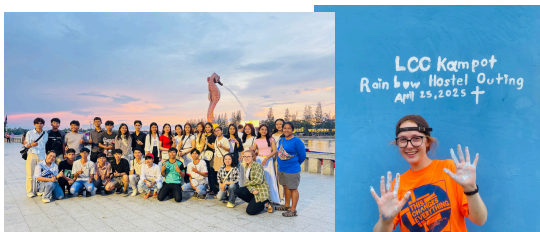
My year is because of so many people. After listening to Kudakwashe's speech, I found myself better able to articulate my own gratitude for those who have supported me this year. That support has come in two directions from my sending community and my host community. It has been a blessing to be a link in between and I am so grateful for all of you. *\*I wrote more about this in an article for the ELCA's boundless magazine. Maybe coming soon?*

(Congratulations to the Class of 2025! Kudakwashe and I worked together on the Chapel Sacristy Team at VU)

"The joy of the Lord was his strength."

Rev. Dr. Bill Harmon | my Papa's funeral

Losing a family member while you are in a different country is hard, and I know that I am not the only YAGM who has experienced this. My prayers are with you all. I am so grateful for my Papa's legacy of faith and joy, modern technology that let me join the funeral livestream, friends who sat with me for the service, and the communion of saints who join us everytime we take communion.



More pictures from the hostel outing!



## Thank You

^^ One more month! Praying for meaningful goodbyes and joyful homecomings. I hope to see you all in August!!



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

## What skills did you gain in YAGM?

I learned how to cook for myself for the first time. It's a lot of work feeding yourself!

Here are some highlights:

Shoutout adding cornstarch to my chicken marinate...Saw this on Instagram...Why does this make it taste better? Is it healthy?



Shoutout my mom's honey oatmeal hotcakes. Taste of home.

Spagetti is such foreign food here, but an English word most people know. Bounus points for elevating with local bread.



Genius: Cooking everthing in your rice pot! SO easy

-I've been given 3 cans of sardines in tomato sauce to finish before I leave.

### Food not of my own hand. 1.

Love the local Baw Baw lady 2. Prohut (hot dog?) Before cooking 3. Different prohut being cooked 4. Cutting greens for an after church omelette 5. Spread to be dipped into prahok (fermented fish paste) 6. Singapore ice cream sandwich 7. Prepping new years noodle mix-ins

