

John 15... "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener... Remain in me, and I will remain in you... No branch can bear fruit

The Welch's Grapevine

For The Glory of GOD!



Dearest Family & Friends,

Volume 3, Number 9, December 2008



Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from Phnom Penh, Cambodia! We pray your holidays are filled with the love of Jesus overflowing abundantly on all around you as you have spent time with family and friends; as you have perhaps travelled many miles and shared many smiles; and as you have lived out the words of Jesus from Acts 20:35, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." You remain in our daily prayers!

This month's newsletter includes the following:

- Christmas in Cambodia
- Village Churches
- Schools
- New Christians
- Candy Canes
- Visit from Home

Many of you who sent us an email during Christmas expressed an interest in how it is celebrated here. Buddhists don't! Still, in the city, we notice signs of the season in many places. Christmas lights and trees are found on businesses everywhere. Consider that many of these businesses are run by or frequented by foreigners in the city, so notice is given to our annual holiday festivities as they try to win our favor. However, leave the city and there is no indication the Christmas season is upon us.

We spent Christmas Eve and Day not all that unlike many of you. No, we didn't have our grandchildren over – not even our son, but we were surrounded by loved ones with whom we shared a special meal and special times together.



The LORD blessed us with beautiful weather of about 80 degrees with a gentle breeze blowing the branches of the coconut palm and mango trees outside our windows which remained open allowing us to hear the sounds of a city filled with Buddhists who have no clue why the West celebrates Christmas. As Christians, we were more focused on fellowship and being family to one another. One highlight of the day was putting together a special jigsaw puzzle purchased for the occasion. Turns out, the quality was so poor we laughed at it plenty and promptly gave it away when we finished it hoping never to see it again.

Since our last newsletter, there have been at least two conversions at the Phnom Penh church. Soclay, a relative of some of the members, and Sirivut the most recent student were both baptized while we were working at a village church so we missed the moment of rejoicing. Please pray for these precious new babes in Christ.

The rice harvest season has come and gone. A few months ago when we arrived, there was water everywhere and a beautiful green shade of young rice. Now the fields are brown with green accents from trees; all very picturesque. There are piles of rice straw everywhere in the countryside. Bags of rice are being trucked from the village farmers to processing plants. Away from the city, life is about rice production. We pray the Lord has blessed the poorest of farmers with much rice.



We have been spending much time in the villages on the weekends. On most Saturdays we travel and meet with church leaders to see how we can assist them in their efforts for kingdom growth. Then on Sundays, we return with students from the Cambodia Bible Institute (CBI) who offer some teaching and preaching. It is heart-warming to see these young men and women give of themselves to help others grow.

and it will be given you... This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit... As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.

by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me... I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will

bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing... If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish,

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It happened much sooner than expected. Sooner or later we would begin to teach in the language of the Cambodian people. We expected this to occur more than a year from now. However, on the last Sunday of 2008 we both were put on the spot to teach our first lessons without translators. We are so thankful Christians are patient and forgiving. Somehow, we managed to convey meaning and truth as Dennis led the brethren through some Scriptures to focus their minds on the Lord for communion and Sharon led the children through some songs and Bible stories with the help of some of the teenage girls. We will always remember the first time with great fondness of heart.



We continue to work and worship with these brethren in the village churches to encourage them and draw more villagers to our gatherings. We both are working in the background to serve them in special ways we hope to be able to share with you soon. Please pray about an upcoming teaching seminar we hope will build-up the brethren and draw others to Christ.



One sweet sister in Keller sent us 200 candy canes for us to give to the children. We and the CBI students were delighted to give them to the village church children. The children loved them. Thanks sister!



You have inspired Sharon to find special ways to tickle the hearts of these kids. We welcome your prayers and suggestions on other ways to bless them.

The Cambodia Bible Institute is on holiday break. The students spent the first two weeks of December finishing courses on Revelation and Personal Evangelism necessary for the first two of the students to complete their studies for graduation. We hope to have a ceremony for them during George Carman's upcoming visit. Classes resume on January 5 with courses on Acts and Bible History 1. Meanwhile, Sharon continues teach a non-Christian English using the Bible.

We continue to work diligently on our language studies and cultural integration to learn to live somewhat like Cambodians. Often, we are presented with other opportunities to serve. There is so much work to be done. Please pray we will remain on-track with our primary goals. Please pray for more workers to share the load.

The LORD recently blessed us with the company of our dear friends from Lubbock, William & Tammy Tucker. We have spent many hours together exploring caves. They joined us for a week of fellowship and tourism as they also spent time with their daughter Jill who has been serving here for two months. They really helped us deal with missing each of you during the holidays. No doubt about it. It was hard to be so far away from so many we love. We are truly blessed to have had the Tuckers come and lift our spirits.



Dennis has been doing a special study on prayer. We remind you all what a special privilege it is for Christians to humbly kneel in the throne-room before the All-Powerful God who created the heavens and the earth and say, "Thank you LORD!"

Sending much love,

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