



Jason & Leigha Carpenter Missionaries to Cambodia

Dear Praying Friends,

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So much has happened over the past few months that it is challenging to know how to condense it into one email update. The last time we wrote in the middle of October we were about to leave on a second trip to the province of Tboung Khmum. The weekend we were supposed to leave on that trip was the beginning of a month-long whirlwind of most unusual happenings. Since we are leaving next Wednesday (February 14) on our first furlough and will have opportunity to see many of you face to face, we will save the details of the story for then but will try to summarize it here.

Just as we were about to leave for Tboung Khmum, we got word that a Canadian friend of ours in Phnom Penh, who attends the English church service led by Dr. Tom Johnson, was in the hospital and not doing well. We were quite close to our friend Claude, and since he had no family, we helped take care of him as the need arose. Just a week and a half before, we had taken him to get an MRI since he was experiencing a lot of back pain. Between a PSA test and the MRI, we discovered that our friend had advanced stage 4 prostate cancer, and he immediately began treatment. Now, Claude was in the ICU with kidney failure and the beginning of pneumonia. On Saturday, we drove to Phnom Penh to be with him. On Sunday, he appeared to be greatly improved and was even able to talk with us. Early Monday morning, we received a phone call saying he had had a heart attack and passed away. We were shocked. Just two weeks before, we found out he had cancer and now he was gone! We were now faced with the challenge of obtaining a death certificate, finding and informing his family back in Canada, and all the details of what to do with the body. To make matters more complicated, it was Water Festival week when everyone comes to Phnom Penh for the festivities and most places are closed for the weekend. On top of this, Dr. Tom Johnson's son came down with Dengue Hemorrhagic Fever and had to be airlifted to Thailand. As a result, I filled in for him for the Sunday services, as well as the burial service for Claude. At the same time, we were also contacted by an older American lady who was stranded in Cambodia because she had been refused entrance back into India where she was teaching at a Bible college. God worked in amazing ways during this time of great need! To make a long story *very* short, we discovered that Claude had a niece living in Cambodia (who we had met unknowingly at our language school) and her mother, Claude's younger sister and the named executer on Claude's will, just *happened* to be visiting at that very time. We were able to meet the family and answer many questions since they had not had contact with Claude for eight years and didn't know where he was. In the end, all the details were worked out, we buried our friend here in Cambodia, Dr. Tom's son recovered from Dengue Fever, and the older lady made it successfully back to the States.

Leigha and I then headed back to Svay Rieng ready for a bit of rest and a return to "normal." December was filled with various Christmas services with different

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missionaries in Phnom Penh, but Christmas Day, we spent just the two of us together in Svay Rieng. It wasn't your typical Christmas, but it was a good day. It started early in the morning with a bullhorn announcing that one of our neighbors had died and the funeral was beginning. Then sad, earie funeral music began to play, interrupted every now and then by the chanting of monks and other Buddhist funeral rites. It was a sobering reminder of why Jesus was born and why we are in Cambodia. Later in the day, we took a gift of banana bread and went to visit Line, the man I have been discipling. Giving a gift and sitting with him explaining the meaning of Christmas helped us to not miss family so much and made it *feel* like Christmas.

The end of December, I had the opportunity to do my first baptism. A man named Sopen, whom the missionaries we were doing furlough replacement for first began discipling, requested to be baptized. I had done some discipleship with Sopen as well, and it was a joy to see his unashamed public association with Christ. Please pray for his continued growth in the Lord and that the Lord would provide a Christian wife for him.

January found us wrapping up our time in Svay Rieng. The Freeze family, whom we were replacing, returned from the States, and we turned things back over to them. We were sad to leave Svay Rieng and the friends we had made there, but we are hoping to be able to go back to visit occasionally.

We have had three weeks to prepare for furlough since returning to our home in Phnom Penh. On Wednesday, February 8, we plan to try once again to visit Tboung Khmum. Please pray for the Lord's clear direction and safety as we travel. Please also pray for us as we make the transition back to the States for the next seven months. While we look forward to seeing family and our supporting churches, we are sad to leave Cambodia. Sometimes, you don't realize how much you have changed until you go back to your home country and culture. It can make you feel like a foreigner in your own country for a while. We look forward to seeing you all in person soon and telling of what God has done over the past few years.

In Christ,
Jason & Leigha Carpenter