

INTERNATIONAL

THINGS
TO COME
MISSION

Harvest

SPRING 2021

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*Now may the God of hope
fill you with all joy and peace
in believing,
that you may abound in hope
by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

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MORE THAN CONQUERORS

Ben Anderson, International Director



I sat beside an unfinished, stone church building on a hill in the African bush. Swirling clouds of red dust blew across the sun-baked landscape. Throughout the morning people arrived on foot, by motorcycle and packed in an old station wagon. Women appeared carrying sacks of food and jugs of water on their backs. Before long tea and lunch were cooking on open fires inside the building, the wood smoke adding its presence to the environment.

Black hand-lettering on an outside wall announced “G.B.C.” Grace Bible Church was formed by Kenyan pastors and Things to Come missionaries in the 1980s to proclaim the message of God’s grace. Soon, the church service started. The singing was action-packed in three languages, prayer was loud and long and my message on *More than Conquerors* from Romans 8 emphasized that nothing in the future can ever separate us from the love of God. In the afternoon the members raised 105,000 shillings (\$1000) to roof their building.

While worshiping with this passionate group of believers I thought about the concept of hope. Although my background is so different from theirs, it really doesn’t matter. Apostle Paul asks rhetorically, “Who hopes for what they already have?” Whether rich or poor, free or prisoner, sick or healthy our hope is the same. Paul greeted Titus “in the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time.” Job, in the oldest book of the Bible, declared, “And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!” Paul powerfully sums it up, “If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.”

Where does hope come from? Apostle Peter commanded, “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.” Jesus Christ is the source of our hope. Since we don’t have Jesus physically in the world, faith is required. Faith and hope are linked, with Jesus Christ at the center. Jesus Christ is the object of faith and the subject of hope.

A missionary is a purveyor of hope. In 1957 two missions merged: *Hope Mission* from Wisconsin and *Things to Come Mission* from Colorado. Not coincidentally, both names reflect our hope that something new and wonderful is going to happen. The theme verse of this International Harvest states this truth well, “*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*”

Friends, it is this message of hope which TCM is committed to preaching to a confused and scared world. So many people do not know where they came from or where they are going. Real hope can be awakened only by being reconciled to God through faith in Jesus Christ. ❖

*“How can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard?
And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?”*

ADVANCING HOPE TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

Timothy Board
Development Director

*For so the Lord
has commanded us:
‘I have set you as a light
to the Gentiles,
That you should be
for salvation
to the ends of the earth.’
Acts 13:47 NKJV*



My mom passed from this life into eternity on January 13, 2021. Christ was her only hope in life and in death. Our kids led the music at Grandma’s funeral which included the glorious anthem of praise, *Living Hope*. Since God hardwired our hearts for hope, mankind’s quest for a confident expectation of future good charts the direction of our lives. Just as Mom’s grandkids proclaimed, this hope is found in none other than the person and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. May we therefore take heed to ourselves and understand that advancing hope to the ends of the earth begins at home with biblical family life, is anchored in the local church as the pillar and ground of the truth, and deliberately engages culture with salt and light by raising the banner of Christ among all nations worldwide to the praise of His glory.

1. Begins at Home with Biblical Family Life – God designed families to be built upon the bedrock foundation of marriage as a covenant relationship between a man and woman whose children are a stewardship that calls for rigorous discipleship in the biblical Christian worldview. The daily routine and weekly rhythm of intentional family life is characterized by cultivating spiritual disciplines, prioritizing mealtimes, and championing corporate worship at church any given Sunday. Such practices as systematic Bible reading of the entirety of Scripture, prayer journaling, breaking bread together in table fellowship, and worshipping God both privately through family worship and publicly through faithful church attendance are essential to advancing hope to the ends of the earth.

2. Anchored in Church as Pillar & Ground of the Truth – Strong local churches reflect the vitality of the home and are central to advancing hope to the ends of the earth through the worship of God among all nations worldwide as the pillar and ground of doctrinal truth in their respective communities. Holding forth the Word of life through resolute conviction, robust declaration, and responsible application is a matter of serious urgency in these assemblies. In contrast to the spirit of the age, churches must advance hope to the ends of the earth by proclaiming a biblical and Pauline gospel of hope in Christ alone as *the* Answer to the hopeless condition of the world.

3. Engaging Culture with Salt & Light – Biblical Christianity is superior to every worldview and the exclusive truth claims of Christ are rooted in the absolute authority of God’s Word. Advancing hope to the ends of the earth by raising the banner of Christ on every high hill and remote outpost in the regions beyond where Christ is not named strikes to the heart of missional urgency. Reaching souls for Christ in evangelism fuels the need for relational investment as they are established in the faith and gathered together in churches planted in communities for the worship of Him who alone is Living Hope to the ends of the earth. ❖

WHY PLAN? WHY PRAY?

Valerie Anderson Wynalda, TCM Office Administrator

(Inspired *Romans: Good News that Changes Everything*, M. Spoelstra)

In the last half of Romans 15, the chapter from which our theme verse for this issue was drawn, Paul shares his plans to go to Spain and stop along the way to visit the Roman believers. "Having a great desire these many years to come to you, whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you. For I hope to see you on my journey, and to be helped on my way there by you, if first I may enjoy your company for a while."

We don't know if Paul ever made it to Spain, and though he did get to Rome, it certainly wasn't the way he expected! Why make plans if they're not going to work out? Consider this insightful answer from *New Interpreter's Bible Commentary*:

God allowed Paul to dream of Spain in order that he might write Romans. No matter that Paul probably never reached Spain. What mattered was that he wrote this letter, which has been far more powerful and influential than any missionary visit, even by Paul himself, could ever have been. Perhaps . . . half our great plans, the dreams we dream for our churches and our world, and even for ourselves, are dreams God allows us to dream in order that, on the way there, we may accomplish, almost without realizing it, the crucial thing God intends us to do.

In these times, as we continue to experience so much upheaval and uncertainty in our plans, may we be encouraged by this example from Paul. Perhaps the most important work God wants us to do is along the way to what we are planning to do.

Paul concludes chapter 15 by asking the Roman believers to "*strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf.*" Look at his prayer points and consider how God answered each of them.

- ◆ That I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe (he was delivered from them . . . into prison)
- ◆ That my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints (as far as we know the offering was accepted as expected)
- ◆ That I may come to you with joy by the will of God (he did come to them . . . although he was delayed for over two years and arrived as a shipwreck survivor and prisoner)
- ◆ That I may be refreshed together with you (this mutual refreshing likely happened . . . though Paul was under house arrest)

We might wonder, what good did it do to pray? Yet God did answer all those prayers, even though not in the ways and timing that Paul expected. Let's continue striving in prayer for one another, believing that God will answer!

A man's heart plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps. (Proverbs 16:9)

Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand. (Proverbs 19:21)

A PERSONAL STORY OF PLANS AND PRAYERS

The school where I was serving as principal in Turkey asked me to write a 5-year plan. I prayed earnestly, seeking the Lord's vision for the school. When the day came to present the plan to the parent community, my handouts were mustard seeds (literally!) because the Lord had impressed on me that our school should be a visual testimony of mustard seed faith in the Living God.

The plan set a big goal of adding a full high school and detailed the years to add each grade as well as the curriculum, personnel, classrooms, and outdoor space that would be needed. It was enthusiastically approved, and I felt all the prayer I had put into preparing it paid off . . . until the Department of Education officials and the police showed up 10 days later. That very day we had to close the school and completely evacuate the premises! We finished the school year with classes held in various family apartments and public parks. So much for that 5-year plan! Now we didn't have a school building at all!

But the Living God truly had inspired that plan, and He met every single detail and more! It took enormous amounts of earnest prayer and mustard seed faith, just enough to take each next step . . . if we had known at the beginning the massive challenges we would face, we never would have attempted it.

The Lord settled us temporarily in an exasperating alliance with another fledgling international school, but through it we learned how to operate within

the nebulous requirements of the Department of Education. After 2 years, the Lord provided a place to house a school of our own with classroom and outdoor spaces that were nearly the exact footage outlined in that 5-year plan . . . but it was a junk yard with a dilapidated shell of a building that had to be completely renovated and furnished at a cost of over \$500,000.



Despite much upheaval in the intervening time, exactly 5 years from when I presented that original plan, we were moved in and fully operational as a K-12 school! We started with only \$108,000 in our building fund, but through the Lord's amazing provision, our school was debt-free! It was also registered with the Department of Education (an extra blessing we hadn't had enough faith to include in the plan), and they even authorized us to teach Bible classes!

That school is still functioning today, enabling families to shine the light of Christ in Turkey. It truly stands as a visual testimony of what God can do with plans made in mustard seed faith. ❖



SAFE IN THE CENTER OF GOD'S WILL



On February 1, the military took over Myanmar's government, citing election fraud. Myanmar (also known as Burma) was liberated just 10 years ago from decades of repressive military rule that kept the country isolated from the world. The deprivations under that regime are still fresh in people's minds, as hundreds of thousands have taken to the streets to demand the release of elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi and the restoration of civilian rule. Demonstrations and protests are ongoing despite a government warning that those gathering in groups of more than 5 will be apprehended. Security forces are implementing the order by patrolling city streets with tanks, opening fire on unarmed protesters and even strafing them with military jets. Nearly 200 have been killed, hundreds more wounded and over 2000 detained. Laws protecting personal privacy and freedom have been repealed.

TCM Team Myanmar missionaries, Dan and Amy Banac with their two high school age children, are on the ground in the capital city of Yangon. They are endeavoring to continue classes for Myanmar Grace Theological Seminary with the help of their co-missionaries Gardner & Ledith Improso, who are in the Philippines anxiously waiting to return to Myanmar. To keep these classes and the Banac children's studies going, they rely on the Internet, which has been shut off every day from 1 a.m. to 9 a.m. Many believe this is timed with nighttime arrests, so no arrests can be live-streamed and no opposition can be coordinated. Most social media sites have been blocked due to the increasing number of people joining the Civil Disobedience Movement. A curfew has been imposed from 8 p.m. until 4 a.m. Dan Banac shared his perspective in the following messages:

We praise God, for the peace we have in Christ Jesus. One of main reasons why we came here is to share this peace that only GOD can give. Most of the people here in Myanmar are looking and fighting for peace, but they need to know that GOD is the only source of real peace.

The junta [military government] released around 23,000 political and criminal prisoners on Feb. 12 during the Union Day of Myanmar. It was a gesture to impress people with their "good will" but it has had a negative impact on



the ongoing demonstrations. There are unwarranted arrests happening all throughout Myanmar. They include former government employees, politicians and ordinary people.

Across the country a "noise barrage" is done every night at 8:00pm. This banging of pans, basins, etc, was originally done to cast out evil spirits, but now it is an act of protest. It makes us emotional hearing it. I feel like they are longing for a mother to come home. So touching.

Last night, there were unidentified people in our township roaming around despite the curfew. When people hear banging of basins or anything that catches the attention of the neighbors during curfew hours, that means some bad guys are roaming around.

Local markets and stores were closed, and most of the banks are closed to allow the employees to join the civil disobedience movement. The ATM machines have money but I don't know how long it will last since the junta replaced the former Central Bank chief.

Things have changed after 4 years in our field. It hurts my family to hear the Revolutionary song that was sung during the August 8, 1988 demonstration, a day when thousands of people here died because the military indiscriminately fired at the crowd. I never heard a gunshot in Yangon until today. After a month, the violence is in our township already. Our apartment is not along the main road so we are a bit safer, but if the military will use a fighter jet again, like they did the other day in another part of Yangon that killed 11 people and injured hundreds, then our only safe place is in the hands of God.

What is certain in Myanmar is that God sent my family here to preach the message of reconciliation to the people whose hearts are filled and overshadowed with anger and hatred. But above all these scenarios, my family is safe in God's hand. Our food supply has no problem. We can still sleep well at night. This is the time to display the peace of God amidst a troubled nation and people (2 Cor. 4:4-15)

It's harder to think of our situation with my kids here. They are really affected by what they see and hear from the news. Thanks be to God I was able to set them in a "missionary mind set" before coming here, but not to this extent. However, we just finished our family devotion tonight, and my daughter, Daniela, led us with the passage in 1 Peter 5:7 "Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." She taught us that 'casting' is a continuous action of trusting the One Who cares for us in times of trouble. What a wonderful thought from such a young mind!

Wherever we in the world, the safest place is to be in the center of God's will, doing our daily task. We rest in God and have peace in Him amidst these troubled times. Your prayers are really appreciated. Thanks for your intercession, not just for my family, but for our second country Myanmar and our people here. ❖

What is certain in Myanmar is that God sent my family here to preach the message of reconciliation to the people whose hearts are filled and overshadowed with anger and hatred.

HOPE IN PERSECUTION

Mel, Team Laos

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to His great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you. 1 Peter 1:3-4

LAOS SIMPLY BEAUTIFUL!

The land-locked, mountainous Lao People's Democratic Republic (Laos) has a population of around 7.8 million. As a country, it dates back to the 13th century when it existed as the Kingdom of Lane Xang (Kingdom of a Million Elephants). Laos is ethnically diverse with 50 official ethnicities divided into 200 subgroups and more than 80 different languages.

To most visitors, Laos is a scenic country with friendly locals, quaint Buddhist temples and picturesque landscapes. In reality it is among the poorest of the poor where the basic rights of many citizens are denied. Laos is a "closed" Communist country and the government uses its ideology and laws to demand registration and exercise strict control over religious groups. The government controls domestic internet servers, monitors internet usage and restricts content. Internet service providers are required to submit quarterly reports to the government and link their gateways to facilitate monitoring.

EXTREME DANGER

It is extremely dangerous to be a follower of Christ in Laos. The government believes Christianity is a tool of the CIA, while the average citizen believes the Christian faith angers the spirits. Because of this, Christians live under tremendous pressure from all sides, especially if they are from an ethnic minority. Christians suffer discrimination and oppression, such as being passed over for employment, medical treatment, education and other social services. Their rights and job possibilities are heavily restricted.

"It is the hope of heaven
that keeps us going
in the midst of persecution.
Whether we are
persecuted, beaten or not,
it is the hope
that we will be in heaven
that keeps us moving
forward.
After knowing the true and
living God, how could we
ever stop loving Him?"

There are approximately 150,000 Christians in Laos, who are targeted by the government as well as at a local level. The Lao constitution provides its citizens with "the right and freedom to believe or not to believe in religion". However, the government views Christianity as a subversive, alien creed that does not belong in the country, and imposes tight restrictions on religious activity. Christians are not allowed to teach from the Bible or to spread their religion to others because "Christianity is the religion of the Europeans and Americans." This sentiment springs from Laos being caught in the Cold War power struggle between the USA and the

Soviet Union. During the Indochina War (1964-1973), the USA heavily bombed Laos in an effort to eradicate the Pathet Lao Communists. As a result, Laos became the most heavily bombed nation per capita in history. "You believe in America's god," one Buddhist official notably stated. "Don't you remember what America did to our country?" Christian mission work is viewed as a tool to undermine the Laotian regime.

The treatment of Christians contradicts the country's recent **Law on the Evangelical Church**, which was approved and signed into law in December 2019. Under this law, Christians have the right to conduct services, preach throughout the country, and maintain contacts with believers outside Laos. Yet despite this new law to protect religious activities and uphold religious freedom to worship, Christian activities are heavily monitored, including those of registered churches. "Underground" house churches are considered "illegal gatherings". The law increases the monitoring of illegal house churches with the help of registered churches.

WHAT IT MEANS TO FOLLOW CHRIST IN LAOS

Followers of Christ expect and face harassment and persecution from family members and village leaders, as their faith is considered a betrayal of their family and community. Many local believers choose to hide their faith for fear of being targeted by fellow villagers who might discriminate against them or even expel them from their homes. Often their property is damaged, their possessions are confiscated, fines are issued to get them to renounce their faith. They are heavily monitored in registered churches, and if they attend an underground house church, they face the constant threat of being detained or arrested by the authorities. This is especially true in less cosmopolitan rural areas where Christians are treated as second class citizens.

In Luang Prabang (the old capital of Laos) in the country's northern province, religious rights are still restricted, and Christian villagers are marginalized. In their interaction with the government, they are told "Christians have no rights, and no one will take care of them." Sometimes they are cheated out of their land. A Lao Christian man who was arrested by the authorities after he refused to cease worship, is still missing, while his wife continues to be harassed and had her motorbike taken away from her. Ethnic Hmong Christians in Laos remain objects of suspicion.

During one of our visits to another province, I was asked to preach in the village. The next day, our local leader was brought to the village head. I was scared! I visited another village with a local believer to hold a Bible study. The next morning his father came and put a gun to his head! He was sent to prison for a day, and they burned two sacks of Bibles. They asked him my name, too. Good that I already returned to the city earlier that morning! One of our youth, N and his family, experienced being rejected and expelled from their community and had to look for a new place to live. My heart was so heavy seeing them, and I cried in pity for them, but they comforted me that God will give them a place to stay.



Another time, Papa Y called me at almost 9 p.m. to report to the village chief. Papa Y said, "I will not leave you, Mel." Upon arrival 12 chief leaders were waiting for me, asking what I am doing in their village and why. They asked about my faith, religion and purpose. They said they don't like Christians. The good thing was, after that interrogation, they said, "We don't like Christians. But we like you, Teacher Mel!" Glory to God!

TO MAKE ALL MEN SEE

As we sat with these faithful believers, we asked them why they stayed in this area where they are hated. With so much harassment, why did they not simply give up and turn away from Christ?

"It is the hope of heaven that keeps us going in the midst of persecution. Whether we are persecuted, beaten or not, it is the hope that we will be in heaven that keeps us moving forward. After knowing the true and living God, how could we ever stop loving Him?" they said. "Our persecutors do not know the love of God, so we love them and share with them".

"We are not alone!" Sister C always says. "People from outside are praying for us." And she cried! "We have peace in our hearts so that whether we are poor or persecuted, we have this peace."

OUR HOPE TO KEEP SERVING CHRIST

Despite the tightened control, opposition, discrimination, violence and rejection that our brothers and sisters face, Lao Grace Ministries (LGM) keeps on growing! Our Team knows that God is still in control! Our main guiding hope is the blessed assurance in Christ! We take courage from 1 Samuel 26: 23 "The Lord rewards everyone for their righteousness and faithfulness. The Lord delivered you into my hands today, but I would not lay a hand on the Lord's anointed."

Through your partnership, LGM strengthens our Lao "family" by providing leadership and discipleship training, educating children and providing for basic needs through a livelihood program.

PRAYER PARTNERS

Thank you, partners, for prayerfully upholding our brethren in Christ, petitioning for God's intervention in their lives and situations. Please do keep praying for Team Laos. As you pray, you can fellowship with us through any means.

- ◆ Pray for our local House of Grace leaders, who are singled out as targets of persecution, to persevere with grace and place their hope in Him.
- ◆ Pray for strength and courage under pressure for LGM members, that they may proclaim the Gospel of Grace unashamedly to their families despite close government monitoring.

OUR VISION

Engage and Evangelize

Empower Grace Believers

Establish Grace Churches

Equip Leaders

Entrust to them a
Grace-oriented message
to Exalt God

Edify one another
for Excellent service
and have an Exit Vision

- ◆ Pray for the government of Laos, that those in power will continue to improve policies and activities and recognize the need for freedom to worship.
- ◆ Pray that God will comfort all LGM brethren in times of trouble so that the comfort of Christ will overflow into the lives of others with joy and peace in this Covid period of 2021 (Romans 15:13).
- ◆ Pray that God will strengthen our hearts, causing our love for Laos to increase and overflow. (1 Thessalonians 3:9-13)
- ◆ Pray that those who are enemies of the gospel and persecutors of God's people will experience Christ's love and be reconciled to God. (Romans 5:10)
- ◆ Pray for our Vision 2021 to establish a needed LGM headquarters in the capital city. ❖

GOD CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

Juna, Team Laos

Doing mission work in a closed country is challenging but exciting...because I am really excited every time I have an opportunity to share the gospel. Giving out tracts, evangelizing anyone, or gathering kids on a street are things I miss about sharing the gospel when I was in the Philippines.

From my observations, one of the great challenges we are facing here is the people. Most of them are closed-minded. This is the result of being excommunicated as a member of their family if they change their religious belief. Preserving the culture and belief that were handed down is their way of showing reverence to their ancestors. Some of them believe in many gods; that is why, when you share the gospel with them, they might accept God as one of their gods. When our God doesn't answer their prayers the way they expect, they will turn to other gods.

For me there is always hope for these people, for God can change the world. I believe what Philippians 2:10 says: "At the name of

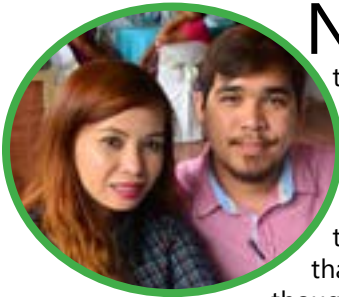


Jesus, every knee will bow." In my teaching job, I thank God my school gives me the freedom of sharing the good news with these little ones. I am trying to put in their minds an understanding of the true God whom

we need to worship. God is working in this country. We are just His instruments to bring people to Him. ❖

WAITING TIME ≠ WASTED TIME

Roland & Beverly Improso, Team Taiwan



Nervous and excited, we were at the Taiwan embassy for missionary visa application. After so many tiring days of securing the documents, our papers had been finally accepted, and we only needed to wait for a call to schedule the interview. When our phone rang, we thought, “This is it!” But our excitement turned into sadness when they told us that we couldn’t proceed with the interview, stating that Roland’s school papers were not sufficient, even though the embassy had authenticated them.

It’s been over two years since TCM accepted us as missionaries to Taiwan. However, until now we’re still unable to go there. When we think about it, we feel a bit frustrated, but we thank God for our family, friends, and mission partners who always encourage and pray for us. Though we don’t know what the future holds, we know for sure that God is in control. We trust God is doing something good out of this waiting time. We hold on to Romans 8:28, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.”

There are many factors that caused our wait. In August 2019, we had to withdraw our missionary visa application because the embassy didn’t allow us to proceed. We decided to apply for a visa for studying Chinese instead, but were told we had to wait 3 months before re-applying. For this visa we needed an admission letter from a language school in Taiwan. We prayed for a language school and found an affordable one located near our contacts there. The school was very accommodating and sent us admission letters.

By March 2020, we were back at the Taiwan embassy in Manila, ecstatic because we had all the needed documents. The officer only required us to reprint our application because we had to indicate on it that we were previously denied a visa. We rushed to do that because the office receiving applications was about to close for the day. We beat the time, but ended up at a different window with another officer checking our documents. This officer said we needed to submit additional bank statements. When the previous officer overheard it, she said our papers were sufficient, but they couldn’t guarantee approval of our application without the bank statements. We planned to return as soon as we had them.

That didn’t happen because COVID reached Metro Manila, and the president put the city under lockdown, suspending all public transportation, as well as domestic and overseas flights. We had no choice but to return home to our province. Had we been able to submit our visa applications, we still wouldn’t have been able to fly to Taiwan because all flights going there were cancelled. Soon, our province was also put under lockdown. Taiwan also imposed strict regulations, only allowing entry for foreigners on diplomatic or official business. Taiwan also suspended giving visitor visas for studying Chinese.

While waiting for open doors, we asked God for wisdom on how we could maximize our time. God impressed on our hearts to use the lockdown, when

many people are earnestly looking for hope, as a unique opportunity for sharing the gospel. We decided to distribute food packs with gospel tracts to our neighbors and frontline workers. We also reached out to our friends and loved ones who haven’t heard the gospel, and that resulted in an online Bible study. Whenever there’s opportunity we help our church in its various ministries online or in-person. Once the strict lockdown eased we started going once a month to another town for ministry outreach.



Aside from that, God also impressed in our hearts to use this time for growth. Every day we study Chinese through books and apps. We also develop skills that might help us in our future ministry in Taiwan such as cooking, video editing, etc. Even with all these activities, we sometimes still feel as if we are in limbo. Nevertheless, we don’t lose hope, because we believe God is doing something behind the scenes. He wants us to realize that waiting time is not wasted time.

Whatever you may be waiting for—perhaps you’re also waiting to start a new ministry or go to the mission field—never lose hope. Pray for patience and ask God for wisdom in how to use your situation to accomplish His purpose. Most importantly, hold onto the word of God. Keep trusting God and always remember, your waiting time is not wasted time. ❖

HOPE IN THE MIDST OF CHANGE

James Bermejo, Team Cambodia



Agape and I arrived in Cambodia October 3, 2017 as TCM missionaries. We were privileged to be part of TCM Team Cambodia with missionaries, Ariel & Faith Mahilum, Myra Omictin and Julia Liles. While Ariel and Faith concentrated their ministry in the adjacent province, we stayed in the capital city, Phnom Penh, to focus on language study and to work alongside Myra and Julia by helping them organize their ministry contacts into a new local congregation.

The following year, 2018, God poured out a lot of opportunities for serving Him in this mission field. In January, Agape and I started our formal Khmer (Cambodian) language study at the International Foreign Languages department of Royal University Phnom Penh. In February, we officially started the newest local congregation of Cambodia Grace Gospel Church (CGGC) City Central, which gathered at our rented house. The following months until year-end, we really enjoyed our time studying the Khmer language and serving the Lord with the new local church! We are grateful to God for our Cambodian regular attendees (Borey, Simon, Ratany, Thaisan, Channy, Lisa, Ahny, Saoleary and Chanphal) in our Church Fellowships for their presence and participation. We were also able to meet more local people and become good friends with

them. Our working relationship with our co-missionaries also developed and grew stronger. Our weekly Devotion & Discussion time with Myra and Julia, and our scheduled TCM Team Cambodia council meetings, team retreats and other events really helped a lot in understanding each other's personalities and how to deal with our differences.

Unexpectedly, the next two years brought a lot of big changes in our ministry field. In January 2019, Ariel and Faith decided to go back to the Philippines for good, after serving 12 faithful years in Cambodia. That October, Myra got engaged and resigned as a TCM missionary to focus on their wedding and to prepare for the next chapter of her life as a wife. Then in December, Julia's dad suffered a stroke, and she returned to England to attend to her family's needs.

The following year, 2020, the COVID pandemic changed and prevented a lot of ministry schedules. At first glance, we thought 2019 and 2020 were all SETBACKS; but God, in His perfect plans, brought HOPE in the midst of change.

In 2019, new people were added as regular attendees to our local congregation: Chetra, Chantha, Chanthly, Chaly and Sreynon. Most of our local church members started to participate in the ministries of music, teaching and preaching. What a joy it is seeing them doing their part! In May, our national Board of Trustees was able to complete our CGGC Constitution and Bylaws in both English and Khmer languages, which will be needed to register as a church organization with the government. In October, CGGC City Central transferred to a new place, and our local church members began shouldering almost half the rent and electricity bills. In December, our City Central and Chom Chao churches held a joint outing for team-building activities in one of Cambodia's seaside cities.

In 2020, our national leaders launched CGGC's 5-year Master Plan. In the midst of COVID, we were able to start an online

ministry called *Khmer Connect* featuring video recordings of our local leaders and members sharing God's word and the gospel of salvation. The videos are then shared with their Khmer friends and family members. I was also able to start a separate one-on-one Mentoring Class with Chetra and Simon with the goal of training and equipping these Cambodian men in the Grace Message for pastoral leadership. In September, we appointed local church leaders to work together with us missionaries, in developing and expanding our local church ministries. The same month, Julia Liles was able to return to Cambodia, and we received confirmation from the TCM leadership that a Filipino missionary couple will also be sent to join our Team in Cambodia.

It's true that some changes will break us, BUT with HOPE IN THE LORD, changes can fill us with GREAT JOY and PEACE in service! As Romans 15:13 says, "**Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.**" Let's all keep hoping and believing – the best is yet to come! ❖

FACING GRIEF WITH HOPE

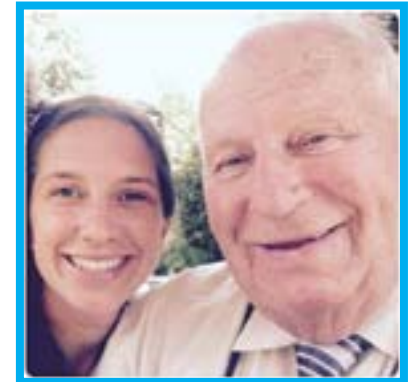
Julia Liles, Team Cambodia

As Christians we have the promise of ETERNAL LIFE! I do not think this concept really sinks into our understanding until we are faced with the reality of someone we cherish, going HOME to be with the Lord for eternity.

Hope is the oxygen we are enabled to breathe when waves of grief come crashing over us. It is the hope we have in the Lord that keeps us centered when our 'world falls apart.' It is hope that reminds us we still have purpose beyond the important role we had in that special relationship. Hope reminds us not to give up and to be encouraged that we will survive this grief. It is the reality that we can face each day and the future of missing the one/s we have loved the most. God in His grace keeps that love alive even after our loved ones have died. This was an unknown concept to me until I faced the loss of a close friend a few years ago and, most recently and exceptionally, when my own father passed into glory.

We wonder, "How can my heart beat strongly after someone I loved so dearly is no longer here to sit with me, hold my hand, speak and advise me and love me with such celebration of who I am, even with all my faults and weaknesses, as a Christian woman, and as a daughter?" My God blessed me so greatly with a godly father, guide and encourager.

However, I do know that all my Dad was to me, comes from the very heart of who God is. Thus, though my Dad is not present with me, the Lord very much is. Through this first year of grieving the absence of my darling Dad, the Lord has reassured my heart, "Your dad is with ME and all is well with his soul". That was my Dad's hope, and that is mine too, remembering to fix my eyes on Jesus, on things eternal, not on temporary things (2 Cor. 4:18). The comfort of knowing my Dad has made it safely



Home to our Lord and Saviour is overwhelming. It has at times also been hard for my simple human mind to comprehend, and the tears will flow, and that is ok. It is not a weakness for a Christian to honestly grieve the loss of another believer; but let the Spirit of the Lord that dwells in you, allow the reality of eternity to sink in that little bit deeper.

I am aware that many of us face the loss of loved ones who may not have accepted Christ as their Saviour. Here again is where we need to press ourselves more completely into hope. As we experience the pains of life, to which Jesus was in every way exposed during His earthly ministry, we are increasingly aware that HOPE is something we all need. When you feel as if you are drowning in the weight of emotions, loneliness or heartbreak, God remains standing firm with an outstretched arm. He is the anchor. In all circumstances, trusting in the hope that Christ offers anchors us mentally, emotionally and spiritually. He brings light into the most unknown, darkest, deepest parts of our soul that perhaps even our nearest and dearest are not

aware of. However, the Lord knows, and He is there. The Lord promised to send "the Comforter who will abide with you forever," (Jn. 14:16) and He does indeed dwell in us. We are not alone.

However painful or long our experiences of loss are, we need to remember that these are among many 'momentary afflictions' (2 Cor. 4:17), and 'the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.' (Rom. 8:18).

In my own experience I have come to appreciate the Lord's compassionate heart and how He refuses to waste my suffering. He uses the battles I face in order to support others. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God." (2 Cor. 1:3-4).

There is no avoiding the painful reality of the loss which we experience through separation, particularly in death. I have written an acronym for the word **LOSS** which describes my understanding of what grief is. God designed us to love and love needs connection, in some way or another; therefore, when that is 'lost', the pain is great. God has created us for relationship, but we need to be reminded that we are most complete when we have a solid relationship with the Lord.

Loving

Overwhelming

Separation of

Souls

Grief is not something you overcome . . . grief is something you walk through. but you do not need to walk through it alone. With Christ, we always have hope, and hope gives courage and reassures us of a peace and joy far beyond the imagination of mankind. Those of us who choose to keep a grip on the Lord's hand when the greatest waves of sorrow wash over us, will still be able to experience a deep joy, a steady peace and a certain hope which is only found in Jesus Christ. God bless you in your own discovery through any circumstance, of the powerful comfort of HOPE which comes from the Lord and His LOVE. ❖

Celebrating the 3rd Anniversary
of CGGC-City Central



UNRESTRICTED HOPE

Jimmy and Joy, Team Vietnam

Hope is being able to see beyond what is undesirable now, and to overcome the eventualities of life with optimism through God's help.

The thought of working in a closed country seemed an elusive reality that brought out some fear and apprehension in us. This place felt strange and unfamiliar, the language incomprehensible, and there was a significant difference in government policies and political ideologies. However, knowing that we serve a powerful God, we believe there is hope, even in a Communist country.

When we first stepped onto the soil of Vietnam, we were quite apprehensive as to the kind of life that awaited us. Books and history told us what a Communist country is. Stories about violence, persecution, imprisonment, deportation, and even death of Christians could scare us to the core. Knowing this, we had to brace ourselves with much courage and bravery to serve in a restricted zone — a Communist country. All the stock knowledge did not sink in until we arrived in this place. Only through immersing ourselves in the reality of this country could we truly feel and experience what it is like.

In a closed country like Vietnam, establishing a ministry is a huge task. Every move we make must be calculated well to keep us within the boundaries of government-stipulated policies. There is no freedom in relation to our faith-based activities. Mission work is officially not allowed. The word "missionary" cannot be used freely because of the stigma linked with it. Sharing the gospel cannot be done openly, unlike in democratic countries such as our home country, the Philippines, where Christian activities can be done in the open even with loud public address systems, and ministry leaders are at liberty to gather for evangelism, teaching, and preaching the Word of God.

What makes gospel sharing even more difficult in this restricted field is the language barrier. Most people speak their own dialect and cannot understand the universal English language. Handing out Christian literature on the streets or in public parks is prohibited. Doing so could attract the attention of police officers. To legalize the status of a religious organization, it must be registered with the government. However, once registered, their autocratic controlling power comes in. All the activities and programs of the organization must be reported to the authorized people, so there is no more independence from state control. As a result, some organizations and/or churches opt for non-registration and operated as "underground" ministries, rather than be controlled by the government which can also become a source of corruption.



Generally, foreigners cannot independently lead or speak in gatherings to share their beliefs and faith. In one instance, we visited some tribal groups in the highlands to give some gifts and have a short worship service. Two policemen



came to stop the activity and commanded the people to go home. While negotiating with them about the meeting, my pastor companion reminded me to keep quiet and never say anything during the entire gathering. Opening my mouth could put me into big

trouble. When the police left, the people dispersed but did not go home to their respective houses. Instead, they gathered in another venue to continue with their worship. It was amazing to see how these people fight for their faith in spite of all the restrictions.

No matter how big these challenges are, they are but a speck of God's glory which shall be revealed in us. What gives us hope for the impact of the good news and the fellowship of believers in this country is our strong belief that our God is more than powerful and trustworthy to accomplish what He promised for the furtherance of the gospel. Coupled with this belief are some courses of action to keep us focused on the path that He prepared for us.

Foremost on the list is learning their language, that is, being able to speak and understand it. As Nelson Mandela said, "If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head, but if you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart". Secondly, entrance to this country requires us to have a creative means as "tent-makers" in order to stay longer. This makes reaching out to people possible. Introducing myself as an English teacher is readily acceptable to local people. As they observe us living life with a purpose, we hope this will lead them to embrace the love of Christ. Moreover, enlarging our sphere of influence through connections with local workers is another way of creating opportunities for greater access in establishing God's glory.

A lot of fears and challenges may beset us as we serve here. This may be brought about by political insurgencies, such as what we see happening now in Myanmar. It can be the threat of this present COVID pandemic. It may be wars, economic challenges and even the fear of losing our freedom due to a change in the ideology in the government. The enormity of these problems could weigh us down and make us feel hopeless. However, there is hope in every struggle, no matter how big it looks. Our heavenly Father is always at work putting the situation together, not to destroy us, but to strengthen our faith in the powerful God. There is hope in Him. Psalm 31: 24 says, "Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the Lord." (NIV)

These circumstances are designed to enlighten, encourage, and empower us that the Lord's name will be glorified. Instead of being confused and saddened by these challenges, we in the church, the Body of Christ, should rejoice as we share in the sufferings of Christ Jesus. Rejoice in the Lord always. Instead of dwelling on our circumstances, ponder this thought: **We are in Christ, and Christ is our only hope of glory.**

Let us press on and be liberated from our fears, knowing that there is always hope in Christ. As the famous Burmese leader Aung San Suu Kyi said, "The only real prison is fear, and the only real freedom is freedom from fear." ❖

HOPE IN THE TIME OF COVID

Aaron & Noemi Arsino, Team Timor

This January the COVID cases began increasing in East Timor. Its borders with Indonesia have been totally closed, and importing goods is not permitted because of the number of patients from border areas and the alarming death toll. Residents of border regions are not permitted to come to the city, and no private cars and public utility vehicles are allowed to travel between cities. The country itself does not produce enough food for the population, so they depend on imports. The government is doing its best to curb the transmission of the virus, but the majority of the people are starving. The government began distributing goods to selected locals in December because the State of Emergency has been extended until April or until further notice. We hope by faith, that we can survive this pandemic with the help of our Lord.



Classes have just now been permitted to have face-to-face instruction with limited numbers of students. We decided to hold in abeyance the opening of our English Learning Center and wait until the situation will be normalized to avoid contact between enrollees from the districts, and to implement any further rules which might be announced at any time.

Church gatherings have been banned, but group meetings up to 10 persons are allowed, so we do our worship services inside our Bible study room. Praise the Lord that we have more evening meetings during the week now. Starting in January, we changed our ministry to focus on the members, and we continue our Bible studies and have family devotion together. In this situation, we have the opportunity to teach them worship songs, Bible doctrines, Bible reading and exposition and memory verses. We thank our Lord Jesus for the burning desire of our new grace believers who are eager to learn more of God's Word through rightly dividing. These new grace believers need more spiritual feeding to make them grow. We are praying that these Filipino – Timorese families and kids would become our conduit for the locals, as even in the midst of the pandemic, God can work through us to reach unreached people groups.



The entire country has been warned of a total lockdown any time if the number of infected patients continues to increase. We continue praying about this pandemic that causes people to die without knowing the gospel of salvation. Every day the world is counting the deaths of many people in different places. Most of those people are dying without hope. This time of pandemic, when people are facing death, serves as a very real context for preaching about hope.

Because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth. (Colossians 1:5-6) ❖

THE STAYING POWER OF HOPE

Asuncion "Ciony" Buca, Team Timor

Into today's generation of fast-paced technology and scientific advancement, developed to meet the demands of the world, comes COVID. No one expected it to disturb humanity, but now it is the center of attention. COVID has become the eyesore of both rich and poor nations, of secular people and Christians as well. The fear of being infected, the loss of loved ones and the economic bankruptcy brought about by this pandemic shakes the world and creates much speculation about whether the biblical "end of the world" has begun. Is there hope for people to get rid of this fear and uncertainty? How are we able to cope with or overcome the inevitable feelings of insecurity in these times?

East Timor has been greatly impacted by the pandemic. Poverty rises and natural resources are depleted in the effort to make both ends meet for countless jobless families. Yet these religious Timorese people are hopeful for the better and have continued to celebrate their religious rites as they always have. Even with the least biblical knowledge, they have this kind of faith amidst their normal animistic beliefs and culture. These are not believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, yet they are full of hope that COVID will soon pass or be controlled, as they learned with HIV, AIDs, Ebola, etc. In fact, this confidence makes them somewhat lax in cooperating with the government's best efforts to curb the spread of this virus.



Our hope in serving as missionaries in East Timor springs from our innate sense to help souls come to the saving knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. This season is ripe for sowers of the Word so that the grace of our Lord Jesus will reach to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

We are sometimes lonely and miss our homeland, but these feelings lead us to connect with people here who are wanting for things they do not have. Gladly sharing our lifestyle and provisions is our way of telling them that life has always been a constant struggle since time immemorial, but these things are only temporary. Believing Romans 8:28 works in our lives both then and now helps to encourage people, along with learning from history ((Black death, World Wars I and II, etc.), that peoples in the past have suffered much more than what we feel today.

Why is going home not an option? Among the reasons is that our hearts bleed every time we hear that a Timorese dies. The immediate family mourns the whole year round, wearing all black garments, putting up photos of the deceased loved one on a pedestal and honoring them with ritual prayers and shedding of tears. This sad picture of real life here causes us to grieve for these people. How



could we long for the comfort of home when we left it for the sake of missions? Going home could mean surrender for us and, we would be imprisoned by stricter COVID restrictions that might lead to spiritual defeat and limit us in reaching out even to our unsaved relatives. Here, we are used to the off-on situation and conduct normal church worship services and related activities. We teach in-house English classes and connect the lessons with Science, History, Biblical approaches and family evangelism. Through these methods, we have scouted out more contacts and established new friends.

East Timor has only 2.5% professing Christians, including missionaries, among its 1.3 M population. We preach faith in God. Leaving here due to fear of infection or uncertainty amidst difficult times would render the words we have spoken as meaningless, irreconcilable statements. The time to go home for good will only be if the government forces us to leave. In a press release last October, the East Timor Senate questioned missionaries posing as tourists or NGO workers just to establish new religious organizations. This was brought to their attention as "threatening" by the Catholic clergy. Thus, our stay here is already a great privilege, since we have been granted work permits/visas while others have been denied.



Life is short. We consider each day as a priceless gift which some are not privileged to have. Maximizing time for Christ's mission is the need of the hour. Hindrances and challenges such as government agencies' malpractices and restrictions in sharing the gospel are frustrating, yet we trust God that He alone convicts the hearts of our listeners.

We hope this chaotic situation brought about by this pandemic will soon be over. To the extent that world leaders pledge to us that this is the "new normal", let us remind ourselves what the Word of God says in Romans 14:8, "For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's."

Christians now must come to a conclusion of "looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12:1-2) as the glimpse of hope for all eternity, regardless of what happens. "And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." (Romans 5:5) ❖

FOLLOWING ON . . .

Nathan & Jessica Killion returned from Thailand last summer for furlough. In January they resigned from TCM to pursue an opportunity for ministry with international students in the USA. TCM appreciates the great effort they poured into our work in Thailand and our GTCM missionary training program. TCM's ministry in Thailand will continue with Genesis & Verna Maraas, thus ensuring continuity of the Killions' investment over the past 13 years.

Joe & Michelle Campos (North Brazil) and **Pat & Michelle Kilgo** (Malaysia) plan to visit the USA this summer to connect with churches and supporters and attend family events.

MEMORIAL GIFTS



JANET KARSHINA DAVIS

Daniel Davis

REX HATHAWAY

Darlene Anderson
Pete & Valerie Wynalda

JAMES LAWLEY

Greystone Bible Church

ART LEFEBER

ART & HENRIETTA LEFEBER

Church Mission Link

VIRGINIA ROBBINS

Lori Reiman

BRYCE & CHAR TOWNLEY

Grace International

Several TCM missionaries (**Andersons, Honculadas, Gardner Improsos, Roland Improsos, Quiñoneses and Sanders**) are waiting for borders to open and/or visas to be granted, allowing them to travel to their assigned fields. Others (**Banacs, Juna**) are overdue for home assignment. Pray patience for them, and praise that all are actively engaging in ministry while they wait.

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Things to Come Mission prepares people for Jesus Christ's return through the methods of the Apostle Paul by sending missionaries to evangelize, plant churches and train leaders worldwide. Our financial support comes from free will gifts of churches and individuals. Things to Come Mission will disburse gifts as they are designated. When a project is complete, TCM will disburse the gifts in a manner consistent with its mission statement and purpose. As a 501(c)3 tax exempt organization, TCM issues tax-deductible receipts for all donations.

HOW CAN I HELP?

NORTH BRAZIL BUILDING PURCHASE

Grace Bible Church - Boa Viagem (TCM-North Brazil's "mother church") has been praying for 2 years about moving to a larger place that can accommodate all the existing ministries. They found a building twice the size on a major avenue. This property could not only house the church but would give space for the literature department, Project ABBA, Bible School, and other North Field operations. The location would give the church major visibility to attract further growth and would be an investment in the fulfillment of their strategic plan. Due to the pressing need of the owners, they are willing to sell it now for \$20 thousand *less* than the asking price.

Need: \$102,000

Designate: North Brazil Building



LAOS OUTREACH MINISTRIES

Sponsor an event to help people in a Communist country learn about the hope found in Jesus! This year Team Laos is planning 3 camps/retreats as well as monthly visits to 3 other provinces to share the gospel with unreached people and to provide fellowship and encouragement to believers who are persecuted for their faith. Expenses for these events or visits to other provinces include transportation, accommodation, food and teaching materials.

Need: \$1000 per event (3) or province (3) Designate: Laos Field Ministry



COVID TESTS

Missionaries traveling to or from their assigned field, or simply exiting and re-entering for visa renewal, or sometimes even to move about within a country are required to have COVID tests. TCM is committed to assisting with this extra expense to enable our missionaries to continue their ministries.

Need: \$100 avg. per person per test

Designate: Where Needed Covid Tests





International Harvest



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