

Discoveries and challenges

April 25, 2011

We have returned from our 7 weeks in Southeast Asia with both our heads and our hearts full of new experiences and new relationships. We saw first-hand how national Christians are carrying out creative outreaches that meet some of the desperate human needs of orphans, prisoners, victims of human trafficking, immigrants, and other needy people in Cambodia, Nepal, and Singapore. They are doing this in spite of few resources and living with the disadvantage, in Cambodia and Nepal, of being a minority religion where the overwhelming majority of the population follows another belief system.

We also saw how the Diocese of Singapore of the Anglican Church has transformed itself into a mission agency. This means that everything it does is driven by the underlying question: **“will this help bring the Gospel to the 600 million people in Southeast Asia that have not yet heard it?”** We were impressed to see how many local churches in Singapore are actively involved in the mission churches that they sponsor in other countries, often sending teams or members nearly every month to help with something. We witnessed this partnership in action while we were in Cambodia.

You can find a running commentary on our experiences during these 7 weeks, along with cultural notes, pictures and video clips by visiting the blog that we maintained during our time there:

<http://travel-n-serve.blogspot.com/>

Nepal:

The middle of March Bill traveled around Nepal for one week in the company of a Singaporean missionary who speaks the language. **This visit was the underlying purpose of our presence in the area.** The warmth and generous welcome offered by the Nepali Christians was a stark contrast to the grimy living conditions in a country that has not yet joined the ranks of developing nations. Bill was treated to Nepali meals in pastors' homes and to tea outside the humble home of a Christian in a hill village. But mostly, he saw a rapidly expanding church movement that baptizes dozens of new converts every month and is actively setting up training programs and constructing new church buildings.



Worship service in a church in Nepal

These Nepali Christians are very open to contact and partnership. **One of their major needs is training for their pastors and church workers.** The in-country resources are limited and their financial situation makes it nearly impossible for them to leave the country for training. At the same time, this difficult economic context has led many Nepalese to leave for jobs elsewhere. This means that there are Nepali communities around the world, including many in the US. Although distance makes it very difficult for close sharing partnerships between US churches and ones in Nepal, contact with Nepali churches or groups of Nepali immigrants in the US is very easy.

We are going to be working on facilitating both kinds of contacts.



Cambodia:

Diane remained in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, while Bill traveled to Nepal. In addition to some fascinating cultural experiences, like attending a day-long Cambodian wedding, she participated in several ministries. The Four Rivers Language School is an outreach ministry of the Anglican Church of Cambodia. It is presently functioning with only 2 teachers, which limits the number of students that they can accept.

Diane helped out by teaching some advanced beginner conversation classes and also by just sitting in on other classes to provide more English conversation.

In addition, she led the **day-and-a-half training session in March for Cambodian church workers** who came into the capital from around the country. Translation of her lessons, from the book of James on relationships within the church, into the Khmer language posed no problem for the national pastor. But his English vocabulary was quite limited, which meant that feed-back from the students was equally limited. However, the subject led to some good discussions among the students, which was the primary goal.

Singapore:

From March 14 to 16 Bill participated in a **missions consultation** that brought together international partners of the outreach ministries sponsored by the Diocese of Singapore in 6 surrounding countries. These information sessions provided numerous ideas on how to better develop meaningful partnerships between mission churches and their international partners.

And the contacts continue...

In order to advance closer partnerships between US churches and ethnic churches in this country, we have made contact with **Nepali Christians in the United States**, both in Philadelphia and near Dallas, TX. One group includes the son and daughter-in-law of one of the pastors Bill met in Kathmandu. We will be seeing how to establish more meaningful cooperation with these local groups.

This coming weekend we will also be introducing a group of Singaporeans that will visit Covenant Chapel



The newly-opened Autism Centre

Reformed Episcopal Church in Basking Ridge, NJ. **These four people work at the brand new Autism Centre that was opened the beginning of this year by the Anglican Church of Singapore.** The day before flying back to the US, we had the privilege of attending the official opening ceremonies of this beautiful school which is designed to eventually welcome up to 300 autistic children and adults. This is one way the church is ministering in a professional way to the “neediest among us”. **If you live in or near northern NJ, you would be welcome to come to Covenant Chapel this coming Sunday, May 1. We will be attending the morning worship service at 11 a.m., which is followed by a coffee hour in which our Singaporean guests will be sharing information about the Autism Centre.**

Thank you again for accompanying us with your prayers and for the support gifts that make such missions possible. In addition to upholding national Christians in these countries with your prayers, we would appreciate your prayer for us as we try to foster meaningful links between Christians wherever they live and serve.

Diane and Bill Jerdan

Temporary address: 75 Smithtown Rd, Pipersville, PA 18947

Phone: 610-294-9329

Email: jerdandw@gmail.com

Blog: <http://travel-n-serve.blogspot.com/>

PS – the quilters on our newsletter list might want to check out this quilting ministry set up as a micro-business in Cambodia: <http://www.K13creations.blogspot.com/>