

March 20, 2008

Dear Friends,

Thanks so much for your prayers for our trip to Asia! It all went really well. We've been back for a week now, and are slowly getting over jetlag. We want to get this newsletter out to you before Joel and Grace Margin arrive because there are several things we'd like you to be praying about.

First of all is the wedding of our former office secretary in Cambodia, Sarah Keo, this Saturday, March 22. We got to meet her fiancé, Sokheoun, while we were in Cambodia, and got to hear his testimony. We are thrilled that the Lord has brought them together. The prayer request is this: their wedding will be the very first Christian wedding in their village, and they want the ceremony to be a testimony to Jesus Christ to all their Buddhist and Muslim neighbors! Will you join them in praying about that?

We found out that wedding bells are in the air for a number of the young people we know in Cambodia. Daniel Sar got engaged right after our visit, and if we time next year's trip just right, we might get to attend his wedding. One of our Bible school students, Sophanny, will be graduating this summer and getting married. Others are planning weddings in the next year as well. Five more college students will graduate this summer. It's exciting to see our Free Methodist young people maturing, completing their education, and getting ready to start Christian families!

Our week in Cambodia was really full. We each shared twice for different church activities, and we kept busy getting together with friends and colleagues for lunch or dinner. We "pigged out" on mangoes as often as we could, and made it to most of our favorite restaurants. Jim managed to get giardia, but we knew what medicine to get, and it took care of the problem in time for him to preach the last Sunday at Phnom Penh church.

We were able to get out to the ministry center in Phnom Penh Thmei, and see the reconstructed covered sports pavilion. It was dedicated the weekend after we were there. This summer a team is coming from Canada and they will start work on the multi-purpose building that will be in memory of Margaret's mom, along with several others interested in the work in Cambodia who have gone to heaven in recent years. It was interesting to see how the neighborhood around our property is changing, as many new apartments are being built, roads are being paved, and it no longer feels like you're out in the country. We did not get to see our former dog, Frodo, as he has moved up to the city of Siem Reap to be watch dog at the Teen Missions property there.

We were concerned to find out that many of our older pastors and leaders have been facing numerous health issues, which hinder their ability to serve the Lord and lead their congregations. Most serious is Daniel's father, Samuel Sar. From what we understood, the doctors aren't sure exactly what all is wrong with him, but he has lost a lot of weight, can only eat bananas and rice porridge, and has had a lot of headaches. Another pastor has taken over his responsibilities at Treuyslaa village. Please pray for God's healing touch on this man, who was one of the first Christians in Prek Thei village, and on the other leaders who are not feeling well.

Please continue praying for the mission team in Cambodia. Joel and Grace Margin will be gone for 3 months of Home Assignment (April-June), and Rebecca Chung will leave in May for an extended Home Assignment in Hong Kong. The traffic around Phnom Penh is heavier and crazier than ever. The heat and dust, corruption and poverty, opportunities for everyone. Pray that the joy of the Lord will truly be their strength!

The ongoing ministry of Reaksmei Products needs prayer as well. We were able to bring back with us hand-painted note cards and bookmarks to sell in a local Cambodian restaurant, and SEED continues to sell Cambodian products. However, shipping items to the US continues to be a big problem, so they need to develop local markets for items made by our people. New seamstresses need to be trained, and other products need to be developed. Yuko Wilkins will be working closely with Minea, the part time manager of Reaksmei.

We had a couple of days in Bangkok to catch up on things with David & Sherrill Yardy before heading with the rest of the Asia Leadership Team (ALT) to Malaysia on March 5. It was a 4 hour bus trip from Kuala Lumpur to Ipoh, where most of our Free Methodist ministry is located. We were warmly welcomed by the church members, who had arranged a delicious meal at a local Chinese restaurant. Many of the members speak antonese (as well as English and Bahasa Malaysian), so we had fun conversing in two languages. Others enjoyed speaking Mandarin with Keith & Julie Winslow.

The next day we spent sightseeing in the Cameron Highlands. About a 2 hour drive from Ipoh, the Highlands are 4500-5600 feet in elevation, so much cooler than the rest of Malaysia! We got to tour a tea plantation, saw strawberries and many other fruits and vegetables being grown hydroponically, and enjoyed seeing orchids growing wild alongside the road.

The next two days were spent in the ALT meetings, held at the Ipoh FM church. We were wonderfully hosted by the congregation, with home grown fruit and homemade goodies for coffee breaks, and delicious meals prepared by the ladies for lunch and dinner. The Lord guided in the discussions, which centered on how to develop relationships between the various Asian countries where we have FM ministry and interested conferences, churches and individuals in North America, so that the Asian ministries are fully supported in prayer and finances. Pray with us as plans are implemented in the months ahead, and missionaries take on more responsibilities in this area.

Our final day in Malaysia was really special as we got to participate in a great day of celebration as the Malaysian FM church officially became a Mission District. We also celebrated the 6th anniversary of the English congregation, the 3rd anniversary of the Chinese congregation, and the 1st anniversary of the Bahasa Malaysian congregation. Worship took place in 3 languages, and the church facilities were packed out. There was a big potluck dinner, Malaysian style, afterwards. As soon as possible, we'll post pictures of our trip on our Shutterfly site: <http://nelsonmissionphotos.shutterfly.com/>.

It was hard to say good-bye to all our new friends in Ipoh, but we had to head back to Kuala Lumpur, and then on to Bangkok for about 24 hours before flying to Kaohsiung, Taiwan. Our only travel mishap of the trip happened when we left our bag of reading material in the taxi when

we got out at the Bangkok airport for the flight to Taipei. The Lord softened the loss by letting us get upgraded to business class on that flight!

The main reason for our stop in Taiwan was to attend the Taiwan Annual Mission Meeting. It was good to spend a little time with our missionary colleagues there, and hear the latest updates on how God is working through their ministries. We stayed with David and Sarah Clemente, and had fun getting to know them and their two cute children better. It was interesting that the coolest temperatures on our whole trip (other than the day in Cameron Highlands) were in Taiwan!

We were very thankful to connect up in Kaohsiung with 3 boxes of Asian Prayer calendars and finally get them back to the US. Praise the Lord with us that we didn't have to pay any excess baggage fees to take the extra 125 lbs. with us either! We hadn't realized until just before our trip that being "Silver" class in EVA Air's frequent flyer program meant that we were entitled to three 70 lb. pieces of checked luggage EACH on our trip back to the US! That "Silver" class ranking will expire the end of this month, but it lasted long enough for us to bring back the calendars for free.

Now we're trying to get a lot of things out of the way before Joel and Grace arrive Monday night. I still need to type up the notes from the ALT meetings... I'll put Joel and Grace's schedule at the end so you can pray as we travel around the state with them.

We hope that you have a glorious time celebrating Easter and Jesus' victory over sin and death!

Love in Christ,
Jim & Margaret Nelson

Joel & Grace's schedule in the US:

March 24 - arrive in San Francisco

March 28-29 - Joel and Jim attend Sierra Pacific Conference Men's Advance

March 30 am - speak at Sacramento Filipino-American Fellowship

March 30 pm - share at Oak Avenue FM Church, Orangevale, CA

April 5 - share at Mission Valley FM Church, San Gabriel, CA

April 6 - speak at New Life Christian Church, Glendale, CA

April 11-12 - attend Filipino Network organizing meeting, San Jose, CA

April 13 am - speak at Hayward FM Church

April 13 pm - share at Willow Vale FM Church, San Jose, CA

April 20 - speak at Snohomish FM Church in Washington

(they will be in the Seattle area April 16-22)

April 27 - speak at All Creation in Christ Fellowship, San Mateo, CA

April 29 - fly back to Cambodia (and then on to the Philippines for the rest of their Home Assignment)