



JOURNEY TO CAMBODIA

GREETINGS OF PEACE FROM CAMBODIA!

I have created this newsletter to share with my family, friends, church family, mission community, supporters, and networks about my missionary journey here in Cambodia as a Global Mission Fellow serving in CHAD (Community Health and Agriculture Development) of Global Ministries-UMC. Even pandemics gave many uncertainties to me to decide if I will involve in a mission outside of my country, God showed me his direction and provision to this journey I have now. I praise God that before 2021 finally ends, I was able to travel to my place of assignment.



Jay Hezeil Abayon, GMF Batch 2021-2023

WHAT IS THE GLOBAL MISSION FELLOW PROGRAM THAT I HAD BEEN COMMITTED TO UNTIL 2023?

This is a program for young adults, ages 20-30, who are committed to serve in social justice ministries for two years. They enter into new communities, understanding their challenges and assets through relationships and with the long-term goal to overcome systemic oppression. Fellows partner with community organizations to address a variety of issues, including migration or immigration, education, public health, and poverty. This program invites young adults from around the world to see differently and serve differently.

JOURNEY IN CHRONOLOGY

OCTOBER: The Uncertainty of Travel



Traveling during a pandemic was a testimony of God's miracle to me. In 2019, I first applied to join the GMF program. I passed the selection process, but when the pandemic changed the global situation, the program was cancelled for a year I felt frustrated when I read the email about it, but I continued praying to God for his leading for the whole year of 2020. After a year, I received an email if I want to reapply for batch 2021. They gave us materials to use during our discernment process. I was thankful that all the Scriptures God gave me during pandemic devotion times were reaffirming the words in my discernment process I did. I reapplied and finally went to the last part of the process where we need to prepare our visa and other things to go to our place of assignment. The waiting process of the visa and other pre-departure requirements was the most difficult time. The different travel restrictions were challenges I faced. Despite that, little by little, God opened the door for me to get an entry visa and all requirements to travel. I experienced a miracle when my papers were totally not qualified and suddenly the officer accepted. I experienced his provision and protection when he kept me healthy during travel and quarantine time. Every time I got a negative RT-PCR test or swab test, I felt I won the game. I thought about giving up because of these uncertainties, but God is faithful encouraging, and strengthening me despite of pandemic chaos and restrictions.



JOURNEY WITH CHAD

CHAD (Community Health and Agricultural Development) is a development program that I am working with here in Cambodia. It is a mission initiative implemented by the General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church and Methodist Church in Cambodia. Because of what happened to Cambodia for the past 43 years, community development is still a great need, especially in provinces. This last quarter of 2021, I was given an opportunity to travel with my team to different provinces in Cambodia. Our project visits exposed me to community situations and needs. Pandemic really changed the scenario of CHAD work. Many community partners were not able to continue their businesses, savings, and accountability meetings. But we are happy that because of CHAD projects, what they raised or planted were able to provide food for their families during the chaos of the pandemic. We spent time this last quarter evaluating and following up on the holistic ministries, health, and agriculture projects that we have before the pandemic brought many travel restrictions. As all the nations in the world are working out to recover from this pandemic, CHAD is also working out to help our community partners to recover and continue their development journey. Working and observing my teammates taught me how sacrificial they are. The time they spent with each community to work for is a picture of passion that "community matters". I am excited to learn more as I continue my journey with CHAD this year 2022.



JOURNEY IN CHRONOLOGY

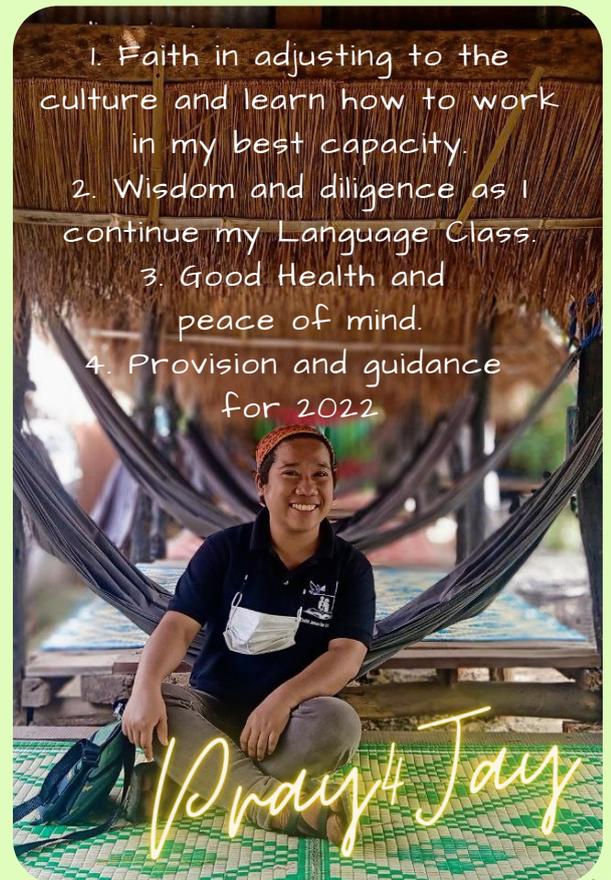
NOVEMBER:
Commissioned
to
Unknown
Culture



Culture shock is an unavoidable thing when you move and live in a new and unknown culture.

I praised God that we finally finished during this month our Final Missionary Training and Commissioning Ceremony. I am so blessed to meet the Global missionaries working in Asia Region. Their stories and testimonies were a wonderful inspiration to me. After this, I continually adjusting and learning the unknown culture of Cambodia. I got culture shocks from food, roads, systems, culture, and the language. I thank God that he enables me to cope up with all of this during this month. I learned that when God commissioned you to a mission, he will help you grow in the unknown culture where he sends you.

1. Faith in adjusting to the culture and learn how to work in my best capacity.
2. Wisdom and diligence as I continue my Language Class.
3. Good Health and peace of mind.
4. Provision and guidance for 2022



Pray # Jay



JOURNEY IN CHRONOLOGY

DECEMBER: My Different Christmas & New Year Experience Away from Home



JOURNEY WITH CHURCH

During this quarter, I praise God that I was able to attend different churches serving here in Cambodia. I got to meet different missionaries here, serving in different ways to share God's love to the Khmer people. I see that denominational division here is not an issue because the workers here have the mindset to build the kingdom of God. Every time we have a travel work, I am observing the place and you will really see the deep roots of Buddhism here. Whenever I see a cross, even a cross of the Catholic church, my heart was clapping inside with happiness that I want to shout because I see hope for this nation, I see the cross that represents my Savior, Jesus.

JOURNEY WITH CHRIST

Respect is a big thing here in Cambodia. They have different ways to show respect through hand gestures, words, and names. When they say Hello, they join their hands together like praying. They also bend their knees to bow depending on the person they are talking. Here, the highest respect was given to the monks. As I reflect here, I asked myself if I really give my full respect to God. There were many times that I know I did not give my best respect to Him because I think only about myself. I pray that as I continue this journey I will learn more to give my respect to people surrounding me, to the people I am working with, and to my Savior Jesus who directs me in everything. I pray that I will not only focus on myself but grow in my connection with the community. I also pray that this nation will also give reverence to Jesus and accept His gift of salvation.

The holiday season is a big deal for my Filipino countrymen wherever they are. This year, I learned many things about celebrating Christmas outside the Philippines. This season made me homesick, but I thank God for the different people He used to help me overcome homesickness. I praised God for Filipino Church who welcome me here, for many new friends with different nationalities, and to my GBGM and GMF family.

Because my placement site is a Buddhist nation, Christmas has a different picture here. They celebrated New Year like us but April is when Khmer celebrate their New Year as a nation. Malls have Christmas trees, lights, and decorations. People are also busy buying gifts but they don't know the real meaning of Christmas. This season taught me that they really need to have a relationship with Jesus. My culture lessons in my Khmer Language Class, community exposures in the provinces, and the experience when we visited the genocide museum and memorial deeply touched my heart. Cambodia needs hope and restoration from all the pain from their history. Our hope and restoration are in Jesus alone and may this nation find these.

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