

CAMBODIA

FROM KILLING FIELDS TO HARVEST FIELD

Story by Bob Makin
Photos by Dusty Winne

A California-based mission team returned to Cambodia to offer physical and spiritual healing. Those ministering full time in Cambodia say the team's continued efforts have resulted in hundreds coming to Christ in the Buddhist country.

Inside a dimly lit room, a small Cambodian boy with a swollen face and neck sat in a canvas chair. Susan Nichols, one of a six-member mission team from CC Alpine, CA, stared intently into his mouth. Only a penlight held by her interpreter and the sunlight filtering through the bars of a window illuminated him.

Susan had been pulling teeth all day. She knew that he could die from such a severely infected tooth. Carefully, she pulled the tooth free, thanking God silently for the successful procedure. Then through the interpreter, Susan prayed aloud for the boy.

Led by their senior pastor, Drew MacIntyre, the CC Alpine team provided eye and dental care by setting up makeshift health clinics at six different locations in 11 days last January. But the core reason CC Alpine returned to Cambodia for the second year in a row was to fulfill the Great Commission.

Treating Illness, Touching Hearts

"It's not to treat dental problems or to give eyeglasses but to offer hope and life," said Sue Patten, a team member and CC Alpine administrative assistant. "We come equipped with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, bearing the message of salvation, telling them of the greatest gift of all. Otherwise, there is no reason for us to be here." Ministering at churches in several villages and working alongside local believers, the team saw many give their lives to Christ.

Souls Come to Christ

During their previous visit, Sue Patten used her veterinarian experience to help an elderly

woman's sick dog. When she shared the salvation story, the woman gave her life to Jesus. The woman could not read, so Sue had given her a talking Bible that used solar power. Local believers told the team that the woman was still walking with the Lord.

At the start of the January trip, a group of 30 villagers came to the health station run by team members Pam Small and Bill White. All heard the Gospel message. Local pastors were present to follow up with the new believers.

Pastor Drew added, "To have long-term impact, you always want to work alongside a church that is established in the area ... so that someone will continue to disciple and minister to new believers."

According to the grace of God ... I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. ... For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 3:10-11



Pam Small, team member from CC Alpine, CA, teaches students health education with an anatomy chart.



Children who live at the dump in Phnom Penh do not go to school but instead spend their days looking for items to sell and recycle. Some of the children live on their own; others have families.

A Need for God's Word

A Buddhist country with a caste system, Cambodia has a small percentage of born-again Christians. Most of the Christians are "babies in Christ," Sue said, "and many of the pastors have never even read the Old Testament because they don't have complete Bibles."

Limited evangelism is allowed by the government. "We were told that, when speaking, we needed to be careful not to say anything against the authorities or the national religion, Buddhism, for fear of arrest," Sue said. "The people seemed wary [of] informants." The whirlwind trip began at the Vietnamese border and ended in Phnom Penh. The team's soft-spoken Vietnamese driver, Hong, used a

game-like Gospel Cube to share the Good News with everyone who came for care.

Past Brutality, Present Scars

Under former Prime Minister Pol Pot, the Khmer Rouge sought to exterminate anyone with an education. Nearly one-third of the Cambodian people were slaughtered or starved to death during this brutal time



Jim Patten, right, and Sautio pray with a villager in Svay Rieng before an eye exam.

in the 1970s, along with Christian pastors and countless Christians. The CC Alpine missionaries discovered that most villagers over the age of 35 had lost someone during this time.

Team members provided dental care and medication, tested eyes, dispensed glasses, and taught villagers how to prevent illness by practicing good hygiene. Many of the elderly commented that they could now see their grandchildren clearly.

Sharing New Life in Old Places

One of their clinics was held at a school at the base of a mountain in Kakao. Under Pol Pot, the school had been used as a place to execute prisoners. Team members used a Gospel Cube to share the message of salvation with students. Soon, the students were sharing the story with each other.

Another clinic was held at an orphanage that houses 32 children who had been taken in from the city dump. It was started two years



Hong, the team's Vietnamese driver, prays with villagers in Svay Rieng who want to accept Christ after he had shared the Gospel with them.



Pastor Drew MacIntyre of CC Alpine, right, examines a student. Drew has led several medical mission teams to Cambodia.

ago by a 19-year-old Christian man who grew up as an orphan living in the dumps. Now 21, this young man provides housing, food, and clothing for the children; sends them to school; and teaches them the Bible. The team provided medical and dental care for the 32 orphans—many of whom know Jesus as their personal Savior—as well as local villagers.

The team ministered in many villages. According to U.S. government statistics, nearly 95 percent of Cambodians follow Theravada Buddhism. However, in one village, the chief welcomed Pastor Drew and his team, thanked them for their physical and

spiritual help, and invited them to return. Drew prayed with him.

Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.

2 Corinthians 2:14

Being a Blessing, Not a Burden

The CC Alpine pastor plans to lead another trip to Cambodia in 2009. "It's very beneficial for the team to see outside the box about what

the Lord is doing in other places," Drew said. "They obtain a greater heart for missions."

For each mission trip, Drew said, "We do screening and training because we need to make sure the people know why they're going, and I need to make sure they're going for the right motives." Taking those who have a heart to share the Gospel has been a key, he added, and through them God has touched the Cambodian people. ☪

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Cambodia lies south of Thailand and north of Vietnam.

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