



THE GARUNA FOUNDATION

A ministry of sharing the "grace, mercy and compassion" (Garuna) of Jesus in Thailand, Cambodia and surrounding countries.

THE GARUNA FOUNDATION | 2924 East Cholla Street, Phoenix, AZ 85028 | www.garuna.org | info@garuna.org | Volume 20, Issue 3 | December 2020

Immanuel – God With Us

“All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel (which means “God with us).” *Matthew 1:22-23*

CANCELLING CHRISTMAS?

NO WAY! Although we may have to change the way in which we celebrate the great joy of Christmas, it will never be cancelled – especially in 2020! Our Garuna teams realize that they will have to come up with more creative ways to celebrate, but the Good News of Jesus’ coming will still be shared with congregations, the communities, and the Garuna Kids and their families.

In the pages that follow, you will see exciting ways in which Garuna’s team is busier than ever communicating the Christmas message to others. It is no time to pull back. The world, more than ever, needs to hear of the Savior of the world whose birth we celebrate.

We take great comfort in the timeless message of Christmas that the Son called “Immanuel” – is God with us.



The Garuna Kids share the Christmas message with their parents and families (2019). They will find new ways to do so in 2020.



It's a blessing to hear the Garuna students retell the Christmas events in their own language and style.

Garuna Christian Schools Return To In-Person Learning



The Garuna Kids return to school, following health protocols.

As of November 2020, all 6 schools are meeting on campus, with added health protocols. We see attendance numbers returning to pre-COVID days. School was never fully “cancelled”; instead, our teachers went out to visit/teach at student homes from April through October! In fact, we are gearing up for a January 2021 “new school year” start. At that time, our students move up a grade level. We just ordered 1,232 uniforms and backpacks, expecting our highest enrollment ever! Happy New Year!



The Garuna classrooms are returning for in-person classes.



Immanuel – God With Us

We Have A Problem

Jeff and Cheryl were on an early morning Zoom call with Garuna’s Cambodia Director of Education, Phanna (Peter). As they discussed many details of ministry there, Peter mentioned that the Cambodian leadership team had recently visited Garuna Christian School #6 in Siem Reap. He said, “I’m worried...” Those are words you don’t want to hear.

He proceeded to say, “I’m worried that we have too many kids who want to come to our school. After our Garuna teachers visited and taught in the student homes during the quarantine, we have become more ‘exposed.” (He meant that in a good way). He added, “Everyone knows about us. They feel we have proper teaching at our Garuna Christian School, and they feel very happy and safe.”

We’ll take that problem any day...and thank God that this Good News continues to be seen, felt, and “heard” in Southeast Asia. That is exactly the message of Christmas, isn’t it? We had a problem (called sin) and Jesus came to earth to save us. He is Immanuel-God with Us! No quarantine or illness can keep us from God’s love. His love is exactly the medicine that we need – through faith in the Christ-child!



OPENING SOON: Garuna Christian School #7

The building of GCS 7 in Phnom Penh has been largely “on schedule”. The projected opening date should be in the early part of 2021. We will be looking for new Garuna Kid sponsors for this school. If that interests you, go to www.garuna.org for the link to set up that Garuna Kid sponsorship



Opening Soon: GCS # 7 in Phnom Penh. Mr Vuthy (left) is the new principal, and is meeting with Titus, Dara, and Phanna (Peter), the GCO Director of Education.

Meet Mr. Vuthy, Our New Principal



Principal Vuthy prays that God will provide ways to reach his new neighbors in Phnom Penh as the new GCS prepares to open.

Our leadership team continues to expand in Cambodia with the hiring of our 7th Garuna Christian School (GCS) principal. Mr. Vuthy will be responsible for opening our newest Phnom Penh school. As part of his training, he visited existing Garuna Christian Schools to learn more about the operations and procedures of the GCS school system. His reaction after seeing his first GCS was, “Oh, this is like a REAL school!” He realized that Garuna’s schools are real schools with one huge difference.... We have the blessed task of sharing Jesus every day in every school!

Lutheran Students Helping Garuna’s Lutheran Students

Lutheran Schools and Sunday Schools all over the world have chosen Garuna Kids as offering and project recipients. It is so exciting to work with so many amazing kids who want to help share Jesus with those who haven’t had a chance to learn of him. Quarantine or not, we have found that kids and teachers really want and need to connect with meaningful mission and outreach. Whether chapels are virtual or in-person, classes meeting or not, consider partnering with us! There are always ways you can help!



Cheryl Ehlers, Garuna’s Director of Education, loves to visit students in the USA to share about the ministry in Cambodia.

- “I thought you’d be interested to know that since you visited, various students in my class have been praying for the Garuna kids. I think your visit really brought the concept to life. I like knowing that my students are praying for other kids that they have never met.” (Mrs. Murray from **Christ-Columbus, NE**)
- “I am so excited by the generous donations we have gotten in just three weeks. I am blown away by our school. The teachers did not expect the offering to be this high for a quarter...” (Miss Kohl from **Immanuel-Columbus, NE**)
- **Christ Lutheran School (Phoenix, AZ)** was the first school to partner with Garuna Kids in 2013 as part of their chapel offering program. Eight years later, in 2020, they broke “all previous records” as they continued support of 12 Garuna Kids – 1 per grade level – plus additional funds over and above their goal. An additional 10 Garuna Kids were newly sponsored by school families, as well. This was done through “virtual chapels!” Despite COVID, technology helps us to stay connected in mission.
- **North Wisconsin District “Hearts for Jesus”**: The North Wisconsin District Schools have chosen to help the “Garuna Kids” for their February 2021 “Hearts for Jesus” campaign. We are so excited to work together as they seek to fund the costs of the desks and other furnishings for our 7th Garuna Christian School in Phnom Penh!



Sharing love between Lutheran students in Cambodia and the USA.



Soccer Ministry

Garuna now hosts 3 “football” (soccer) teams in Cambodia! These teams consist of 2 age groups: 14-17 and 18-24 year olds. This combo sport-youth group activity is a fun and exciting way to keep young people connected to the church and great fellowship. We thank the donors who specifically asked to help with this project. More teams will likely follow. News reports from Cambodia reveal winning records for Garuna Christian Youth teams!



Soccer ministry is a great way to excite and involve young people who love sports and want to be involved in youth group and Bible study.

Luther Institute – Southeast Asia (LISA)



During a LISA Christian Education course, Country Coordinator Bun Phanna (Peter) works with Cambodian students who serve as ministry leaders in their country.

The quarantine months have been a good time for a review of LISA’s core Bible curriculum. Garuna’s LISA program has been serving the national Lutheran Churches in Thailand and Cambodia since 2006 in the training of their pastors, deaconesses, and leaders. This review relies on feedback from our partners in the region who also serve on this curriculum updating team. The goal of this process is to refine and strengthen the core curriculum with a view of making it accessible online for even more students. Please keep this very important task in your prayers as the ministry of teaching and training is vital for the growth and development of the local national Lutheran Churches in the region.

GCU – Master’s Degree Update

Garuna’s Luther Institute Southeast Asia (LISA) is working in close partnership with Grand Canyon University’s College of Theology to offer GCU’s online MA in Christian Ministry degree to qualified students from our partners in Asia. GCU and Garuna are currently working on the process of enrolling students, selecting our Lutheran professors, and preparing the courses for a January starting date. This is an amazing opportunity to bring important theological training to our leaders in the region. Garuna is very grateful to GCU and its leaders for their wonderful cooperation and hard work to bring this study opportunity to many. Please pray for the success of this ministry.



Garuna enjoys a great relationship with GCU!

New Congregations And Sunday Schools Are Starting

The model is working! The system of Garuna Christian Schools was designed to be used as a springboard to plant new congregations who will be members of the Cambodia Lutheran Church (CLC). The schools were designed to be multi-use – as schools during the week and for outreach at other times. During the past month, a new Sunday School program started at GCS #6 in Siem Reap and a new congregation started to meet with our team from the GCS in Phnom Penh. By God’s blessing, there are many Sunday Schools, Bible study groups, home churches, and other youth ministries forming as a result of the Garuna Christian School ministry.



A new congregation begins to meet in Phnom Penh, near the GCS 7 school site.



A new Sunday School program started in Siem Reap in early November. They have had over 100 students attend each week. The smaller students had a great time!



Immanuel – God With Us

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Dear Friends in Christ:

A Blessed and Merry Christmas to you and your families.

Garuna is sincerely thankful for you and our many partners in ministry. As you have seen in this Christmas newsletter, your prayers and support make it possible for Garuna to bring the Good News of Immanuel – Jesus who is God with us – to Southeast Asia.

The passage below captures our feelings for you – our partners in ministry:

Ephesians 1:15-16 *For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.*

Thank you for your love of God's people both here in the United States and in Southeast Asia. Thank you for your faith in the Lord Jesus and the prayers you offer.

Sincerely in Jesus – our Immanuel.

Rev. Dr. Jeff Ehlers, Chairman
The Garuna Foundation



**Garuna's
USA Home
Office Team
Is Busy,
Too!**



*Debbie Shumway,
newest Garuna director.*

Garuna's Board welcomes Mrs. Debbie Shumway as its newest director. Debbie is the CEO of Hospice of the Valley in Phoenix. She brings a wealth of experience and expertise from her training as a CPA, her involvement in the community, and her vast experience with non-profit ministry. We thank Debbie for her willingness to serve.

As our traditional Christmas hymns remind us... not everything is cancelled! This Christmas may you still enjoy *silent and holy nights, sleep in heavenly peace, feel the gift of Jesus' joy to the world, and trust that the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee (Jesus) Christmas night. "O come to us, abide with us, Our Lord Immanuel."*



Christmas Giving Options

Where Needed Most – Any amount is greatly appreciated!

LISA Theological/Bible Training Projects

- A. LISA Student Sponsorship: \$50 per month/\$600 per year
- B. LISA Theological Training Expenses: \$1,000
- C. Other LISA Support – Contact Garuna

Garuna Schools & Garuna Kids Projects

- A. Garuna Kid scholarship: \$30/month or \$360/year
- B. Garuna Teacher sponsorship: \$100/month or \$1200/year
- C. Garuna Christian School Teacher Training: \$5,000/year
- D. Construction cost for one new classroom: \$20,000

Have you considered these ways to give to the Garuna Ministries?

- **IRA Charitable Rollovers** or IRA RMD's can provide an opportunity for stewards over 72 to make gifts to Garuna from their IRAs directly with no income taxes due on the rolled over or donated funds.
- **Gifts of Stock** – Garuna is able to receive gifts of appreciated stock. If you would like information on how to make a gift of this nature, please contact Garuna at info@garuna.org.
- **Estate Planning** – Have you considered leaving a legacy gift for Garuna as a part of your estate planning?



Even during COVID, we are happy to arrange a visit in person – or via Zoom call, depending on the circumstances and your preference.



- **Thrivent Choice** – Are you a member of Thrivent Financial and eligible to direct Thrivent Choice Dollars? If so, you might consider sharing them with the Garuna Foundation ministries.

- **AmazonSmiles** – Garuna is registered with Amazon. Please consider making Garuna the charity of your choice when visiting Amazon. (smile.amazon.com)

If you are led to make a donation, your check may be made payable to The

Garuna Foundation. Gifts may be mailed to Garuna at 2924 E. Cholla Street, Phoenix, Arizona 85028. You may also donate online by visiting our secure online giving page at www.garuna.org. Your gift is tax-deductible as allowable by law. The Garuna Foundation is a 501-c-3 nonprofit. Garuna's EIN number is: 86-1037570. Garuna will mail a gift receipt to the address you provide. Thank you in advance for your generosity.

