



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 21, Issue 1 | Easter 2021

Easter – The Stone is Rolled Away!

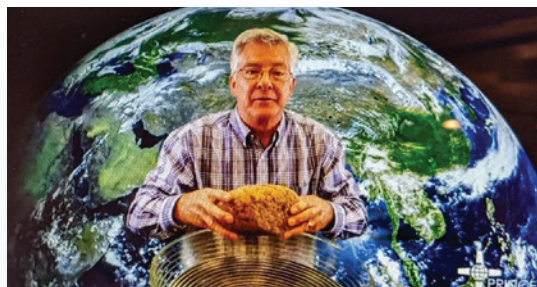
“But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away...He has risen! He is not here!”
Mark 16: 4 & 6b

Easter’s Ripple Effect

What started as a simple request from four Lutheran teachers at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church and School in Fremont, CA has grown into an **expanding circle of outreach and impact on the mission field!** After returning from a Garuna mission trip to Cambodia, these teachers returned home and asked their

pastor, Rev. Dr. Tom Zelt, if their church might partner with Garuna in the building of the 6th Garuna Christian School (GCS) in Cambodia. Several years later, ‘their’ new school (GCS #6) is operating in Siem Reap, Cambodia, with a current enrollment of 296 students.

These schools are operated by the Garuna team in Cambodia. The POP church and school community see their schools as an integral part of their mission statement which challenges them **‘to transform lives and impact the world’**, just as Jesus’ Resurrection has impacted each one of us – for eternity!



Pastor Tom Zelt drops a stone into a bowl of water, comparing the resulting ripples to the spreading of the Good News of Jesus’ Resurrection, impacting people around the world!

But one school was not enough for the Prince of Peace congregation. The fields are ripe for harvest, and so they have decided to once again partner with Garuna to build their second Garuna Christian School in Cambodia (GCS #8). The land has been purchased and a post-Easter campaign is planned in support of the school construction costs, with the campaign concluding on Pentecost Sunday.



The design for GCS #8 is nearly finalized and construction will soon begin. Pastor Zelt shares, “It’s amazing that God is using us to accomplish His work.”

And The Ripple Continues...

Despite the challenges of COVID, the Garuna Christian School (GCS #6) staff in Siem Reap decided to begin a new Sunday School program. It was started in December with all classrooms filled. There are currently 150 children attending Sunday School each week as God’s Holy Spirit works in the lives of children and families. God’s “ripple effect” is seen and felt as the Gospel is shared in Cambodia, Southeast Asia, and to the ends of the earth.



The entire staff helps with Sunday School each week. Teacher Elen enjoys sharing Bible stories, prayers, and songs with the younger children at the newly formed Sunday School class at the GCS #6 site.



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An Easter Miracle: New Life!

A few months after the opening of GCS #6, Mr. Bunthen, one of the general subject teachers, began to hear the lessons in his classroom which were taught by the GCS Bible teachers. He became interested in the message of Easter and wanted to learn more about Jesus. He was baptized a few months later and continues to serve as a Garuna Christian School teacher. Since this past December, one of his new roles is to serve as a Sunday School teacher for the older students (see photo). When GCS #6 opened the year with more students, a new teacher was needed



to accommodate the growth, so Bunthen's brother was hired. We pray that the same miracle will occur in his life, as he hears God's life-saving message each day. (Note: General subject teachers at the Garuna schools may not be Christian due to the fact that less than 2% of the population are Christian, but all who join Garuna are "open" to serving in a Christian ministry, attending faculty Bible study each week.)

Easter Crosses for Baptisms

When Garuna students (and teachers) are baptized, they receive a cross to take home as a reminder of Jesus' death on the cross and His resurrection. Retired Lutheran teachers Bill and Jean Hodgson (Phoenix, AZ) provide these handmade crosses which they lovingly prepare in anticipation of more Garuna baptisms. Bill and Jean include their Arizona grandchildren in this family mission project, praying for more and more baptisms in a region where so few know of Jesus. Thankfully, Christian educators never **fully retire!**



Bill and Jean Hodgson present Garuna's Director of Education (Cheryl Ehlers) with more baptism crosses.

Shopping for School Supplies

The new school year is starting, and supplies were just delivered to the 7 Garuna Christian Schools – 1211 backpacks and student uniforms, 3696 notebooks, 1232 pencils, pens, erasers, rulers, and folders, 84 staff shirts, 1863 replacement textbooks, and more. Shopping is a bit more complicated than our Amazon experiences in the USA, but **don't forget to designate Garuna as your Amazon shopping charity at [smile.amazon.com!](https://smile.amazon.com)**



Garuna's new school (#7), training site, and home office is located on the outskirts of Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The rocks that outline the base of the flagpole will soon be surrounded by children lined up for the flag salute and morning prayers.

Sure Foundation

The rock was cleared, the fill dirt arrived, the foundation was laid, and Garuna Christian School (GCS #7) was miraculously completed in the capital city of Phnom Penh despite the recent COVID crisis. We thank God for the completion of yet another building from which to grow a school, congregation, and outreach ministry. The Cambodian government recently approved this site as our new Garuna Cambodia Organization's home office and the GCS-LISA training center. Garuna is excited to plan for its opening in mid-April 2021. New faculty hires are being conducted, student recruitment is underway, and we look forward to filling these classrooms with students who will, for the first time, learn about Jesus, Easter, and the promise of eternal life. Please pray that the new students and families will meet Jesus, the chief cornerstone of our faith, and become His followers, "his living stones".



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Garuna Kid Sponsorships



The newest GCS #7 is seeking more Garuna Kid sponsors. If you or others you know are interested, we would love to

connect you with a newly enrolled Garuna Kid from our Phnom Penh School. **Did you know that 100% of all sponsorship money goes directly to your Garuna Kid's expenses?**

GK Sponsors receive updated school photos and information about their child each year. Sponsorships are \$30 per month and cover the costs for Garuna students to attend school for 12 months, receive supplies and uniforms, and hear about Jesus every day!



To sponsor a student, sign up at www.garuna.org

GARUNA KID DATA: For those who ask if their sponsored Garuna Kids really exist, we can confidently tell you they do. The home office staff is shown meeting with the GCS #3 (Kampot) leadership team to confirm the new attendance and update the student photos and data for the GK Sponsor brochures!



GARUNA'S HOME OFFICE TEAM: The global pandemic was a great test of the Garuna model – training indigenous leaders to lead the ministry. These 6 men very capably managed the ministry in Cambodia as they led the 45 Cambodian principals and teaching staff members through the challenges of the past year. During this time, they forged ahead to grow the ministry while encouraging and supporting their team members. We thank God for their strong faith, leadership, and dedication to sharing the Easter message with their Cambodian brothers and sisters.

Rock Solid Training

Garuna has been blessed to partner with Grand Canyon University (GCU) in Phoenix to provide Asian leaders with a chance to study for an online MA in Christian Ministry, taught by qualified Lutheran professors. The first class started in January with participation from 10 Lutheran leaders in 6 different countries. The students are now working on their second class, Christian Ethics. They are gaining practical knowledge as applied to their current ministries, but also enjoying the chance to become connected with Christians in their part of the world, supporting and encouraging one another. In addition to their on-line studies, they meet each week via Zoom call, sharing questions, ideas, concerns, and prayers for one another.



One student from Taiwan shared...



"I am excited! Very excited! That first Zoom meeting when I met all of you, it was like in heaven! Knowing I am not alone...all God's children love each other so much. We have to spread the gospel! I am so excited to learn God's Word in a deeper and fuller context. I am excited that I can use time every day to fully immerse myself in God's words to solely study. I am excited to learn from each one of you on how to serve in Christian ministries from your precious experience and journey. I am so excited that maybe someday I will be able to visit each one of you and maybe we can serve side by side!"

The Luther Institute Southeast Asia (LISA) Classes Resume in Cambodia



As COVID restrictions eased, LISA students recently gathered in Phnom Penh for the New Testament Survey course. The students were very excited to resume meeting together to study God's Word. The training is designed so that students take

what they learn in their LISA classes and share it in the congregations they serve as elders, principals, teachers, deacons, deaconesses, evangelists, and pastors in the Cambodia Lutheran Church (CLC). The LISA Country Coordinator in Cambodia is Rev. Bun Phanna (Peter). Rev. Un Songim joined Peter in the teaching of this LISA course. Both are graduates of LISA and along with a few others make up the team of CLC leaders who help teach and lead LISA in Cambodia. LISA courses are designed to be taught by the local Lutheran pastors.



Pastor Samol serves as Principal of GCS #5 on Monday through Friday and then uses the weekends to lead house church services and Bible & English outreach events for children.



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FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Dear Friends in Christ:

Blessed Easter greetings to you in the name of our resurrected Savior, Jesus.

Mark 16:3-6 “...and they asked each other, ‘Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?’ But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away.... ‘Don’t be alarmed,’ he (angel) said. ‘You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him.’”



Jesus’ resurrection rolls away the stone of our fear of death. His resurrection softens our stone-hard heart, and His Word brings us to faith. He is the “Chief Cornerstone” for His Church. He makes us His ‘living stones’, His people, to help share this Easter message with others.

Thank you very much for your partnership with Garuna in its ministry of sharing Jesus. He is rolling away the stones of resistance and building us as ‘living stones’ around the ‘Chief Cornerstone’ in His Church among His peoples of Southeast Asia.

Sincerely in the Living Savior, Jesus,

Rev. Dr. Jeff Ehlers, Chairman
The Garuna Foundation

HE IS RISEN
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Sharing Love and Hope

High school students from Concordia International School – Shanghai (CISS) have partnered with the Garuna Kids through “Reading Hope”



Service Club, collecting and sending hundreds of books to all 7 Garuna Christian Schools. Each school received 2 boxes of books which will be used to start school libraries, nurture

a love for reading, and will benefit GCS English classes. We look forward to visits from the CISS students and families back at the Garuna Schools when travel resumes once again!



Easter 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

Garuna Schools & Garuna Kids Projects

- A. Garuna Kids 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 or school:
Contact Garuna

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 the age of 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 can 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?

- **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 (EIN number: 86-1037570). Garuna will mail a gift receipt to the address you provide. Thank you in advance for your generosity.

