



GARUNA MINISTRIES

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

GARUNA MINISTRIES | 2924 East Cholla Street, Phoenix, AZ 85028 | www.garuna.org | info@garuna.org | Volume 21, Issue 2 | Fall 2021

Partnerships...From The First Day Until Now!

"I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now." *Philippians 1:4b-5*

HOWDY PARTNER!

Words like **cooperation**, **coalition**, and **collaboration** are not commonly heard and seldom seen in today's world. Over the years, Garuna has been blessed with partners like you who are excited to help make an impact in Southeast Asia as many doors are opening for ministry there. In this issue, we look at some of the exciting and impactful ways Garuna partners have blessed the children and ministries in Asia by sharing their time, talents, and treasures as they join with Garuna to share Jesus' love with others.

Time Flies...Especially With Great Mission Partners!



Garuna recently celebrated 20 years of ministry. The ministry was founded by Rev. Dr. Jeff Ehlers and mission partners in 2001, after returning to Arizona following 8 years of missionary service in Bangkok, Thailand. Garuna came into being at the request of the local Asian Lutheran Christians who asked for training to prepare them for church leadership and for help with outreach and ministry projects. We thank our friends and partners around the world for the prayers, finances, and other assistance given over this time, and we praise God for his presence and blessing during these 20 years!

Asian Students Helping Asian Students

This summer, 10 students from **Concordia International School Shanghai** served a month-long internship with Garuna. These high school students worked with Garuna's teams in the US and Cambodia to create promotional videos and resources to use in the Garuna Christian School classrooms, including Bible story books and English/Art activities linked to the Bible lessons. Concordia International School Shanghai students have been partnering with Garuna for several years now, participating in family and student trips to Garuna's schools in Cambodia and sharing resources to benefit their Asian neighbors.



Kids Helping Kids!

It started with a call from **D.J. Schult, the North Wisconsin district education executive**. He wanted to invite his district's Lutheran schools to partner with Garuna during the past school year as their Heart for Jesus chapel offering partner. Garuna provided mission education and stewardship materials for the schools. The offerings given were used to purchase the new school desks and furnishings for Garuna Christian School #7 which is opening soon in Phnom Penh!



Concordia Shanghai teachers, students and families love to visit the Garuna Christian Schools to help share the love of Jesus with the Garuna Kids in Cambodia.



The desks purchased by the Wisconsin students were crafted by Cambodian carpenters in Phnom Penh. "Buying local" is Garuna's goal whenever possible!

Church Partners

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church & School (Fremont, CA)

concluded a post-Easter fundraising campaign to build their second Garuna Christian School in Siem Reap, Cambodia. The results were revealed on Pentecost Sunday and the congregation rejoiced in the fact that they met and far exceeded their goal for the building of Garuna Christian School #8! The land has been purchased, the plans are finalized, and the construction bids are coming in. The building should be completed in 2022, hoping to reach another 200+ kids and families with the Gospel!



Rev. Dr. Tom Zelt kicked off the fundraising campaign in April. Former member Mr. Scott Wollberg visited that day to learn more about Prince of Peace's partnership with Garuna. Scott, Operations Director at Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church (Omaha) took the idea back home and began a new partnership initiative with friends in Omaha, NE.

City Partners

Amazing friends in Omaha, Nebraska are joining together to make a difference in Cambodia, too. In the spirit of cooperation, leaders from Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church and King of Kings Church formed the **"Omaha Partner Churches for Garuna Christian Schools in Cambodia" coalition**, including the Concordia Mustangs who are students of **Concordia Academy and the Jr./Sr. High of Omaha**. This *round-up* of missional Christians in Omaha want to build Garuna Christian School #9 and this group has already purchased the land for this school. It's so exciting to include the K-12 students and families in this project, as well!



Jeff Ehlers (Garuna) joins Rev. Dr. Roger Theimer from King of Kings (left) and Operations Director Scott Wollberg from Beautiful Savior (right) as they begin to launch the new Omaha partnership.

Garuna Christian Schools and Staff

Garuna's 50 school teachers are a blessing to their students and families. They have continued to meet with their students as allowed or to visit students for small group instruction while maintaining and improving the 7 Garuna Christian Schools which are ready to reopen after recent summer Covid-19 closures.

These inviting smiles welcome the Garuna Kids and their families to their schools.



School Districts Helping Garuna's "School System"

This past spring, the district education execs from the **Michigan and South Wisconsin Districts** asked if they could partner with Garuna in the 2021-2022 school year. That was an incredibly easy "YES"! The goal for these Lutheran schools is to raise funds to build 2 new classrooms at the Garuna Christian School #1 site, located in eastern Cambodia, near the border of Vietnam. This school was built in 2013 and has outgrown their original site. They also want to add a new kindergarten program. In the spirit of "collaboration" (and a bit of fun), district education execs Chris Cody and Travis Grulke have challenged the other to meet and exceed the goals set for themselves, hoping each district can fund 1 classroom each! These Michigan and Wisconsin students will have the opportunity to see weekly updates of "their" new school building as it is constructed in the coming months.



Michigan District principals prepare for their new school year, including Garuna as a part of their planning! They want to help their students make an impact in Cambodia.

Thai Partners

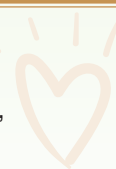
Some public schools in northern Thailand have invited Pastor Niran, Garuna's Luther Institute Southeast Asia (LISA) country director to bring his team into the **local schools to teach music and English to their students**. This partnership also welcomes the teaching of a Bible lesson and sharing the Good News of Jesus by church members and LISA students during the classes. It's a joy to be able to work together as hundreds of students in Thailand are impacted each week. It has also been a great blessing to partner with the **Thailand Concordia Lutheran Church (TCLC)** for many years now in ministry in Thailand. They are amazing partners in bringing Christ to their country.



Thai students from the public schools are thrilled to have an opportunity to learn how to play guitars as they also learn about Jesus from their teachers and the songs.

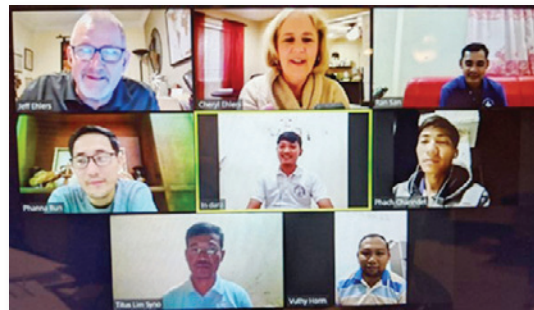


Rev. Dr. Ted NaThalang (left) has been an amazing leader in the young Thailand Concordia Lutheran Church, here standing alongside the Ehlers at the 15th Anniversary celebration of the TCLC.



Cambodian Partners

God is blessing His Word in the country of Cambodia. Garuna partners with the **Cambodia Lutheran Church (CLC) and LISA Cambodia, as it operates the Garuna Christian School (GCS) system** there. This collaborative effort is a wonderful partnership that God is blessing with many opportunities to share the Good News with children and their families, resulting in many baptisms, new church plants, and outreach opportunities. It has been a blessing for LISA Cambodia to



offer frequent teaching and training courses for the indigenous leaders of the congregations and schools.

Despite travel restrictions, the amazingly dedicated and talented Garuna Cambodian Organization's (GCO) leadership team has continued to grow and guide the ministries in their country. Led by Pastor Peter (middle left), his team has managed well. Regular Zoom calls and emails between the Garuna USA team have been added to their agendas during the past 18 months.

Online Partnerships

Grand Canyon University's (GCU) College of Theology in Phoenix, AZ has partnered with Garuna in offering its **online master's degree in Christian Ministry** to a group of our Asian leaders. This online learning method is wonderful as the students may combine ministry and studies, with immediate application to their current ministries. This practical 10-course program is nearing the halfway point and includes ministry leaders in Southeast Asian countries.

The benefits are many as the professors are selected by Garuna and the students may remain in their home countries. In a June 2, 2021, GCU Today article, Dr. Peter Anderson (Assistant Dean for the College of Theology) said, "It's actually a really unique setup where we are able to bring on adjuncts who understand Lutheran-specific dynamics for leading congregations and also understand Southeast Asia," Anderson said.

Dr. Jason Hiles, Dean of GCU's College of Theology shared that he and Dr. Peter Anderson had talked for several years about the possibility of working with international students in a specific cohort, teaching material for a specific denomination – in the case of Garuna, Lutheran. After watching the students interact in their online classes, Dr. Hiles shared in the same GCU Today article, "They're all smiling, they're talking. You're all of a sudden looking into a window that has you



in another part of the world...(leaders) being trained specifically to serve in those contexts. We couldn't have been more excited. We felt like we were part of something that was bigger than ourselves."

College of Theology Dean Dr. Jason Hiles and his staff had been looking for a way to incorporate a specific international cohort.



Garuna's Luther Institute Southeast Asia (LISA) Training Ministry

In the past 18 months, Covid-19 travel restrictions have resulted in some new LISA delivery models. **LISA's Thailand country coordinator, Pastor Niran Temsakun**, recently shared that the quarantine has resulted in his having more time to create an online studio and develop online classes. He and his fellow LISA graduates continue to reach out to Thai Christians, but are also finding an openness among non-believers, as well. Online prayer requests are shared, worship is available, and weekly Bible classes are being shared with groups as large as 45 in a class. This tool has allowed



Pastor Niran's team to work with hilltribes and evangelists in regions that might otherwise be more difficult to access. They also have plans to conduct 20-hour Reformation course in the month of October led by Thai pastors. Praise God for blessings through challenges!

Despite the challenges of a global pandemic, Garuna's ministry partners have been blessed by the opportunity to use new technology delivery systems to share the Gospel with many more people. Pastor Niran Temsakun has used his technology skills to expand the ministry.

Garuna's Board of Directors

Garuna is indeed blessed to have **an excellent and very dedicated Christ-centered board**. Garuna's board meets regularly and is deeply committed to bringing Jesus to this region where fewer than 2% of the people know Christ as Savior. The board is also very conscientious and thorough in its responsibility to manage Garuna in all areas. Meet our board members, by visiting the Garuna website.



FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Dear Partners in the Gospel,

Greetings to you in the name of Jesus!

"I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."
(Philippians 1:3-6)



It can be discouraging to see the arguing and fighting that is taking place these days in so many areas of life, locally and around the world. That is why I am so thankful to highlight the blessing of "partnerships" in this issue of Garuna's newsletter.

What a joy it is to work with you, our dedicated partners in Garuna's ministry of bringing the Good News of Jesus to Southeast Asia. We are very blessed to be working with so many wonderful individuals, congregations, schools, and organizations, each of whom are essential in helping Garuna and our Asian partners bring the Gospel to thousands. What is the 'mark' of our partnerships and life in Christ? What is it that will get people's attention? It is the love and grace (Garuna) of God and how that love enables us to work together for good. God's love is exactly what our world needs now.

"This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." (1 John 4:10-11)

Thank you very much, and may God continue to bless our partnerships to the Glory of God and to the expansion of His Kingdom.

Sincerely in Christ,
Rev. Dr. Jeff Ehlers, Chairman – The Garuna Foundation

Generosity Options

Where Needed Most – Any amount is greatly appreciated!

Garuna Ministry Sponsorship Options

- Bible/LISA Student sponsorship: \$50 per month
- Garuna Kids (K-grade 6) sponsorship: \$30/month
- Garuna Teacher sponsorship: \$100/month

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.
- **Estate Planning** – Have you considered leaving a legacy gift for Garuna as a part of your estate planning?
- **Endowment Fund Gift** – Helps us to plan for the future!

- **Thrivent Choice** – Garuna partners with Thrivent Financial and is eligible to receive Thrivent Choice Dollars.
- **Amazon Smile** – Please consider Garuna as your charity of choice during this online shopping season with Amazon! (smile.amazon.com)

If you are led to donate, your check may be made payable to Garuna. 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 partnership in prayer and financial support. Contact us at info@garuna.org if you have any additional questions.

