



# 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 3 | Christmas 2021

## The Gift That Keeps on Giving

"...God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!  
Romans 5:15b

Merry  
Christmas!

What's on your Christmas wish list? We've all been offered a free gift...the baby Jesus found in the manger. **The tag on this gift reads "To: YOU From: GOD."** Many people in the world don't know about that gift, especially in the region of Southeast Asia. But once this gift is received and understood, it keeps on giving and truly brings "Joy to the World." This Garuna newsletter shares examples of ways in which **the Christmas Gift keeps on giving, overflowing to others, changing lives in Southeast Asia.** Thank you for your prayers and gifts which impact so many!



### Overflowing: Gift Of Coalitions & Partnerships



Leaders of Omaha's churches and schools gather to discuss their partnership ideas with Jeff Ehlers from Garuna as they make plans to build GCS #9.

It was only a few months ago that the churches in Omaha, Nebraska desired to implement a new mission model, partnering with Garuna to do so. **Their intention was to create a regional partnership of churches and schools to do something big in Southeast Asia.** They wanted to build and support their own Garuna Christian School (GCS) in Cambodia. The Omaha group's unique plan is to unite with a coalition of partners to make an impact in Cambodia, while infusing mission interest and involvement from an entire region in Nebraska. **To date, seven (7) churches and Concordia Lutheran Schools of Omaha (K-12) are onboard!** They are working together to raise funds for land and construction, planning upcoming mission trips and outreach, and encouraging all ages and levels of involvement. The students in the Concordia Lutheran Schools of Omaha are even doing their part by raising funds for the desks and furnishings.

### Overflowing: Gift Of Ministry Opportunities

Once you commit to building a Garuna Christian (Lutheran) School, what happens next? Garuna works with the indigenous leaders who know the area well. **It begins with finding the right leaders, location, and land to build a new ministry site.** Garuna's leadership team knew of a trustworthy and committed Lutheran pastor and two deaconesses who already attend Garuna's LISA Bible training program. **These leaders know the value of having a Christian school as a way to reach out into their community.** They knew of a good location, a Cambodia rice farmer willing to sell 3000 sq. meters of land, and they were excited to serve as the leadership team at that school, impacting an entire village!



Pastor Soa Em, his deaconess team, and his village are excited about the new Garuna School which will be built on the rice field behind them, thanks to friends from Omaha.



# Overflowing: Gift of a New School Opening

The 7th Garuna Christian School was recently completed and began to register new students as Cambodia schools reopened November 1. Following sporadic COVID quarantines, this event was met with excitement as many families registered their children each day. Most surprising was to see an adult Buddhist monk who asked if Garuna could help educate some orphans from the nearby temple. Garuna's leaders explained that the schools are



Buddhist orphans are registered by the temple leader for enrollment at the new Garuna Christian School. Cambodia is 98% Buddhist, so most of Garuna's students come from a similar background.

Christian and teach the Bible, in addition to the other subjects. The monk from the nearby temple was happy to have the six young Buddhist novices attend GCS #7 in Phnom Penh where they now hear the Good News of Jesus each day.



Garuna Christian Schools are half-day tutorial schools, operating during mornings and afternoons. K-6th grade students are taught math, Khmer reading and writing, English and Bible to all who register with their parent/guardian's approval.

## Overflowing: Gift of Leadership

Garuna's goal to train indigenous leaders was put to the test during the past 2 years during quarantines and travel restrictions. And the local teams passed the test! They used home visits, Zoom calls, and Facebook Messenger tools to maintain and grow the various school, church, and outreach ministries in the country as they followed the country's mandates and guidelines. **Garuna's principals, vice principals, and Bible teachers from 8 schools recently gathered together for the first time in a year.** They met in Phnom Penh for devotions, singing, planning, fellowship, and encouragement. They are amazingly dedicated and talented leaders. Their gifts spill over to thousands in their regions!



The 22 Garuna leaders guide their local teams in sharing Jesus with 1200 children (and families) in their care. This meeting even included new staff who are becoming acquainted with the team and the plans.

## Overflowing: Gift of Christmas

Christmas is a great opportunity to share Jesus in Southeast Asia. **The children love to learn the stories, and they share it with others.** The Garuna Bible teachers use the flannelboards, puppets, and acting to enhance Garuna's Bible curriculum as they share the Good News with all the Garuna Kids. When allowed to gather again, the families are included in the Christmas gathering, as well.



Mr. Mayavuth serves as the Bible teacher at GCS #2 in Prey Veng and leads the Bible teacher training for the entire system of Garuna schools.

## Overflowing: Gift of LCMS Schools Who Care

**We couldn't do it without you!** To the many districts, schools, and churches in the USA who love to help the Garuna Ministries, we say thanks. **The North Wisconsin District schools** recently purchased all the desks and furnishings for our newest school in Phnom Penh, which just opened. **The South Wisconsin and Michigan Districts** are joining together to build a 2-classroom building, restrooms, handwashing facilities, and purchase desks during this school year. They will expand the capacity of our very first Garuna Christian School in Tbong Khmum, built in 2013. This project will provide them needed facilities for a growing enrollment and the addition of a new Kindergarten program!



These LCMS teachers from North and South Wisconsin join together to worship, learn, and fellowship as they help build up God's kingdom in both the USA and Cambodia.

## Overflowing: Prayers and Gifts From Others

When asked what would be the most helpful gift for his ministry this Christmas, Thai Pastor Niran humbly replied, **"A great gift to help me in my ministry now is a prayer from all my brothers and sisters in Christ.** Christmas is a good time for us to have the opportunity to speak this news to Thai people. The obstacle Thai Christians face is that Thai people feel comfortable in their old beliefs. But we need time to build relationships and trust with them and look forward to the time when the Holy Spirit will help us properly share the gospel." He went on to say that **what he most appreciates is the kindness and support which he's received through Garuna's donors which allows him and his team the opportunity to help share the best Christmas gift, the gospel of Jesus Christ, with those in Thailand and the entire region.**



As students leave the Garuna Christian Schools, we pray that God's Spirit and the Christmas promise touches their hearts, overflowing into the lives of their families and friends.



# Overflowing: Gift of Sponsorships

The gifts given through Garuna Kid sponsorships go well beyond the intended support of providing children with enrollment, uniforms, backpacks, textbooks, safety, care, and Bible story books, but they also provide the priceless gift of the Gospel message. **A Garuna Kid receives the opportunity to hear the good news of salvation, which overflows into the homes and through the village churches as many are baptized.** Villages and communities welcome the Garuna schools as children receive a quality education. God's kingdom is impacted because of the work done through the everlasting effects of the sponsorship program to bring salvation to the people of Cambodia.



Tamie Worthington manages the 3 sponsorship programs for Garuna – Garuna Kids, Garuna Teachers, and LISA Bible students. She finds this personalized connection is meaningful for families and classrooms!

# Overflowing: Gift of Music and English Teaching

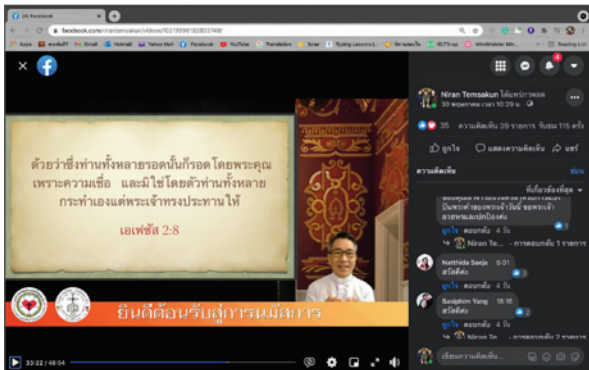
The team in Thailand has found the teaching of music and English to be helpful tools for the church. **These are highly desired and fun skills to learn, often serving as a bridge for sharing the Gospel while providing the next generation with the skills they need for ministry, as well.** Bangkok's Into Light English Center coordinator, Mrs. Ar shared, "Even with COVID challenges, we continued to teach one-on-one or using online tools. Many parents thanked us for finding ways to teach their children without leaving home, which gave us a great opportunity to build relationships with families. We prayed for them, visited and encouraged them by phone, and sometimes traveled to their homes to meet more safely. These methods gave us the opportunity to share life and faith in Jesus Christ, and we prayed with them when they were in trouble. **We hope that in the future these students will trust Jesus Christ as their Savior and come to worship at the church as well."**

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It is easy and fun to share the Gospel message through music.

# Overflowing: Gift of Technology



Thai Pastor Niran is leading online worship in new ways, thanks to his God-given talents and his willingness to learn and try new things.

Pastor Niran is the Director of Garuna's Luther Institute Southeast Asia (LISA) Bible training program in Thailand. He leads the work in northern Thailand and into the border countries and hilltribe areas, impacting many people. His very positive attitude overflows in all He does. **He can even see the bright side of the COVID quarantines as he had the time (and need) to set up more online teaching,**

**worship, and ministry in his country and beyond.** He found this helped to remained connected to new Christians, church members and other pastors, while also meeting many new people through this tool.

*thank you* VERY MUCH

# Overflowing: Gift of Training

Garuna is blessed to be able to provide advanced training (bachelors and master's degrees) for some of the Southeast Asian Lutheran leaders. **The best part of these programs is that the students can study without having to leave their homes, ministries, or families – and there is immediate application of their knowledge to their current ministry.**



Garuna's team loves to learn through workshops or enrollment in degree programs, all the while continuing in their local ministry.

Thankfully, there are growing opportunities to study online in Asia. We pray God will use their talents and gifts to impact many in the years ahead. As one of our leaders said, "I'm thankful to God for this opportunity. I promise to study hard and use that knowledge to work for the glory of God by sharing that knowledge and love from God with the students at our Garuna School. I'm very happy."

# Overflowing: Gift of Sports Ministry

The challenge for churches to impact teens is felt throughout the world. **Soccer (or football as it is known in Asia) is a tremendous interest for young people and one that Garuna's staff has encouraged to create community and share Jesus.**



The Garuna Christian Youth soccer teams provide a great opportunity for fun, fellowship, and Bible study for Asian youth.

To date, there are 5 teams (both male and female) which are connected to the Garuna Christian Schools and nearby Lutheran churches. The Garuna Christian Youth teams have winning records and are excited to be part of the leagues. Upcoming mission trip activities will include soccer clinics to develop international friendships which will provide local leaders a chance to introduce a Bible fellowship long after the mission trip ends.





## From the Chairman

*joy · hope · peace*

*Dear Friends in Christ,*

Greetings to you in the name of Jesus!

***“But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God’s grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!”***  
*(Romans 5:15)*

Christmas is such a joyous time. It is such fun to see the smiling faces of children sitting around the Christmas tree as they anticipate opening their gifts. I’m sure we all have great memories of the wonderful Christmas Eve services, the message of our Savior’s birth, the carols, joining family and friends in worship, and perhaps even some snowfall in your hometown.

Christmas reminds us of the wonderful gifts that the Savior brings, such as His love for us, forgiveness of sins, His constant presence in our lives, the gift of His Holy Spirit, and eternal life in paradise.

**The theme of this Christmas newsletter is: “The Gift (Jesus) That Keeps on Giving.”** In Romans 5, we read of the amazing gift and grace (garuna) that comes to us so freely and abundantly through Jesus because of what He did for us. The blessings are so great that they overflow to others. We see this happening in Southeast Asia for the many who hear of Jesus for the first time. This gift creates such joy and happiness that those who receive it overflow with joy as they share it with others.

Thank you so much for being an integral part of making this ministry possible. Your gifts overflow and impact the lives of your brothers and sisters in Southeast Asia. May God bless and keep you and your family in His grace this Christmas and New Year.

Sincerely in the Savior,

**Rev. Dr. Jeff Ehlers, Chairman – Garuna Ministries**



*Few children in Asia have heard and understood the life-changing Christmas story.*



## Christmas “Overflowing” Generosity Options

**Where Needed Most** – Any amount is greatly appreciated!

### Garuna Ministry Sponsorship Options

- Garuna Kids (K-grade 6): \$30/month
- Bible/LISA Student: \$50/month
- Garuna Teacher: \$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 directly to Garuna from their IRAs 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](https://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](http://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](mailto:info@garuna.org) if you have any additional questions.

