

Tim & Diane Esala

Reporting from the Mission Field

April 2018– Holidays in Cambodia

*There is a time for everything,
And a season for every activity under the heavens.
Ecclesiastes 3:1-8*

- - **Connect - Cambodia** - -



**The definition of CONNECT
is to join together or become joined**

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HOLIDAYS IN CAMBODIA– Holiday celebrations are huge part of Cambodian life. So much so, that Cambodia tops the world list with 28 public holidays celebrated annually. Yet those holidays do not include Christmas or Easter. As missionaries at a Christian NGO here in Cambodia, we intentionally share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with our students and families at every opportunity. Because Cambodians do not celebrate the true meaning of Christmas and Easter, SHC is very deliberate about remembering and celebrating the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus. This message of God’s grace and promise of eternal salvation through faith alone runs counter to the Buddhist culture of earning merits toward attaining self-enlightenment. The SHC focus for Christmas and Easter celebrations is sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ with our students and families through faith, food and fun.

CHRISTMAS - The Christmas in Cambodia event has become an annual tradition with the SHC students singing Christmas songs and performing the Nativity skit in Khmer for their families. After hearing the Christmas Gospel message in their own heart language of Khmer, our SHC families are then served a delicious dinner by SHC staff/volunteers. No food goes to waste! This year we had enough left over to feed about 100 of our neighborhood children! Everyone attending receives a small practical gift (hygiene and non-perishable food items) handed out by our own Santa Claus. During our ESL classes, we read the Christmas story while the students followed along with moving the manger characters.

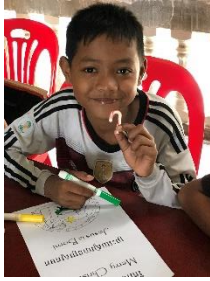


Our SHC students love performing as this is a rare opportunity. Government schools provide only basic learning with none of the arts. It is such joy to see the children smiling with joy and brimming with new-found confidence. The parents beam with pride as they have never seen their children perform.

EASTER - To help our students understand the events of Holy Week, we sing Easter songs and provide them with interactive activities in our ESL classes. Then to celebrate Easter, we hold a mini VBS for our students where we share the Gospel of Jesus’ death and resurrection through teaching stations. This year, the students rotated through stations where they colored eggs and learned color-related Bible themes (Green-Growth, Blue-Faith, Black-Sin, Red-Jesus’ Blood, White-Forgiveness, Yellow-Heaven). Each student took home an egg carton filled with 6 colored hard-boiled duck eggs along with a laminated card detailing the Biblical color themes in Khmer. We ended our celebration with a delicious lunch followed by eating a big chocolate cake depicting Jesus’ empty tomb.



The students learned about serving others by washing each other’s feet. There was giggling as they washed away the visible dirt. But it was with softened hearts that they spoke aloud “Jesus loves you” to each other. As they love to color pictures, we often use this time for specific individual hands-on blessing and prayer. As our hand touches a student’s head, they cease activity while basking in the presence and power of God through personal prayer.



One of the students' favorite activities is trying new tasty treats so we try to incorporate this with our ESL teaching on special holidays. At Christmas, students colored a Christmas poster for their family while eating peppermint candy canes brought from the USA. At Easter, they created an empty tomb scene using half of a donut for the tomb, an Oreo cookie for the stone, sweet cracker for the ground and green icing for the grass. YUMMY!



KHMER NEW YEAR - In Cambodia, we have three New Year celebrations! International New Year on January 1, Chinese New Year follows the lunar calendar and Khmer New Year is celebrated in mid-April. Of course, Khmer New Year is the favorite celebration of these three. At SHC, after our Easter VBS in the morning, we spend the afternoon celebrating Khmer New Year. The kids love playing traditional Khmer games and dancing together. By the end of the day, we were all hot, tired and ready to start our 2-week Khmer New Year holiday from school.

IMPORTANT NEWS

Although the Khmer New Year is always a fun-filled celebration here in Cambodia, this year it also brought news of impending change for SHC. Sihanoukville has experienced an economic invasion by Chinese investors. The landscape of this once sleepy seaside city has exploded into a tourist destination of hotels and casinos. Property values have skyrocketed and many landowners are selling their property to cash-rich Chinese investors. Like many others, SHC has lost its lease and must vacate its facility by July 31. SHC is currently investigating relocation to a more affordable area to continue its ministry.

GLIMPSES OF GOD

During this time of chaos and uncertainty, we are tuned into recognizing God's hand in our lives. We see glimpses of God all around us. We see Him in the joy and laughter of our SHC students and families, in the pulling together of our MCN team, in the fervent sharing of God's Word and love by SHC staff, in the common bond of trust in God with other Christians and through the awesome generosity of our faithful senders. Because of your faithful support, **we finished this year 100% funded!!** We look forward with hope toward the future of God's mission here in Cambodia through SHC.

JOIN US IN PRAYER AS WE...

- Thank God for all He has done, is doing, and will do through SHC.
- Praise God for the certainty of His love through the truths of His Word.
- Release our grip for certainty of the future and instead anchor our hope and trust in Jesus.
- Trust the Holy Spirit to cause the seeds of faith to grow in the hearts of our SHC students.
- Acknowledge that SHC is God's mission and we are merely His vessels to accomplish His mission.
- Ask for God's guidance in finding a new SHC home.
- Ask God to direct our next steps in following His call on our lives.
- Ask God for safe and uneventful travel back to the USA on June 7.

*I am the vine; you are the branches.
If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit;
apart from me you can do nothing.
John 15:5*