CAMBODIA: CHURCH PLANT AND GIRLS DORM SUPPORT COMMUNITY

Multiple efforts also spread the Gospel in a country where there are very few Christ-followers.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

CONTEXT: Cambodia’s population of 16.9 million is about 95 percent Buddhist, with the remaining 5 percent people of other faiths, including Christianity. The constitution allows for freedom of belief and religious worship as long as such freedom does not interfere with others' beliefs or create disturbances. Most of the towns and villages in Cambodia lack a Christian presence as new church plants have been more focused in the cities. In addition, due to higher rents and cost of living in the big cities, many are choosing to move to the outskirts of the cities to areas such as Phnom Penh Thmey. In this city, to the west of Phnom Penh, there are few churches.

NEED: The needs for evangelism, church planting, and discipleship remain high, especially in suburban and rural Cambodia. A new Anglican church in Phnom Penh Thmey will meet the needs of newcomers and also provide a place for people to explore faith through the Anglican church. Likewise, opportunities for a good education outside of the city are inadequate due to a lack of qualified teachers, low family income, and the lack of basic infrastructure, such as water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities, which particularly impact adolescent girls.

SOLUTION: The Anglican Church of Cambodia seeks to establish a new church in Phnom Penh Thmey. It will be located in a growing municipality in the suburbs of Phnom Penh. This will allow the diocese to provide church and discipleship services to members, train church leaders, conduct youth and children ministries, and support community development programs to meet the needs of the congregation. The diocese will also establish a hostel for girls from poor surrounding villages.

LIFE IMPACT

Benefits 200 people, some in multiple ways:

- 20 girls from remote villages gain access to a high school education and safe accommodations
- 80 people (20 teenage girls and 60 family members) are nurtured in the Christian faith through discipleship and mentoring through the new dorm facility
- 100 people join a new church plant in Phnom Penh Thmey and grow to form a thriving community of Christ-followers

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Church of Christ our Peace (CCOP) “is a vital place for Christians (and non-Christians) of all backgrounds to gather together and worship in English. Many congregants pour out to the Cambodian and international community during the week, so CCOP is a place to seek the Lord, hear the Gospel, and fellowship with others in preparation for another week of ministry. The new location will cut down on commute times, often 50+ minutes, and will replicate the welcoming spirit of CCOP in a strategic location.”

– Rachel Meyer, a congregant at CCOP since 2011
Project Design

The Anglican Church of Cambodia plans to establish a new church plant in Phnom Penh Tneomy, a growing municipality, with the goal that the church become self-sufficient in three years. Funds will be used to rent two adjacent facilities, for no more than $700 a month each, for at least two years, to house the new church. The church will also renovate, repair, furnish, and outfit the place, as well as set up an AV system and seats. Plans call for services on Sunday and English and Chinese classes on weekends.

Along with the local Cambodians, many expatriates and mainland Chinese live in Phnom Penh Tneomy. The new church plant will host services in Khmer and Chinese languages and is projected to serve 100 to 150 people in the first year.

Prior to the pandemic, COCP, the English congregation in the Anglican church in Phnom Penh, went to over 200 from an initial group of 100. Many who attend the Sunday service have come to appreciate and love the beauty of Anglican worship and through the ministry of the church the many have come to faith.

Along with the church plant, the Anglican Church of Cambodia seeks to provide safe accommodations for teenage girls from poor families in the villages surrounding Prey Smach, Pursat, so they can continue their schooling. For a number of years, the church in Prey Smach has allowed four to six girls to stay on its premises during the school term. Requests have come in from other families, but the church staff is unable to take in more due to space and manpower constraints. By building a new single-story building on available church land, 15 to 20 more students can be accommodated. An additional staff member will be added to serve and guide the girls, who will pay a monthly fee and contribute to the community life by cleaning and cooking for each other.

The community surrounding the hostels will be invited to contribute funds to help the support. The estimated budget is $10,000 to cover the cost of a staff member and food for all residents. The Diocese of Singapore and St. Andrew's Community Chapel (the main supporting parish for this work) will facilitate the project.

Measuring impact. Work will be observed by the Rev. Steven Leah, Dean of Cambodia, and the Rev. Tii Hing, Vicar of the Rural Mission Districts. Expenses are monitored and controlled by the Dean and reported quarterly to a church council. Attendance at the new church plant and the number of girls hosted at the new dorm will also be tracked.

Implementer Financials

This project adheres to some or all of this sector’s established best practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INCOME</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
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<td>$67,978</td>
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<tr>
<td>Donations</td>
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<td>$880</td>
<td>$337</td>
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<td>Donations - Mission Team</td>
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<tr>
<td>Service collections, offerings, tithe</td>
<td>$52,346</td>
<td>$64,247</td>
<td>$62</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Income</td>
<td>$422</td>
<td>$11,253</td>
<td>$14</td>
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<tr>
<td>LOW</td>
<td>1,501</td>
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<td>MID</td>
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<td>HIGH</td>
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<td>64,247</td>
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NOTES:

* Income and expenditures reported in U.S. dollars

** The Anglican Church of Cambodia presented unaudited profit and loss statements for 2018, 2019 and 2020 in USD. These are a sub-account of the diocese’s larger account, which includes a hostel. A review of these statements indicate fluctuations in the church’s revenue during the period under review (2018-2020), with the most significant growth in 2019 as a result of an increase in church offerings and collections. A decline in the same is noted in 2020. Though not stated, this could be attributed to partial closure of churches in 2020 due to Covid-19. General donations were presented separately from donations to the missions team. Altogether, both sets of donations represented 9% of the church’s income in 2018, 2% in 2019 and less than 1% in 2020. Other income, presented without additional details, grew from 1% in 2019 to 14% and 20% in 2019 and 2020, respectively.

** The church reported a surplus over income amounting to 1% in 2018, 15% in 2019, and a deficit of 23% in 2020.

Financial Control: 3

The annual budget for the church plant is $31,800 and will be funded by the Diocese of Singapore and from local tithes and collections. The church does not have externally audited financial reports or independent governance as all board members are Anglicans.

Sustainability: 2

Diocese of Singapore has been committed to supporting work in Cambodia by sending missionaries, raising funds, and interceding for the work there. It has a strategy to ensure that the new church plant is self-sustaining within three years. For the hosts, ongoing costs will be covered through fundraising and local in-kind donations.

External 2

Religious freedoms experienced now could change at any point should leaders from the dominant faith have a change of heart. However, so far, the government leaders have been welcoming of all faiths as long as they do not interfere with the peace of the nation.
LEADERSHIP PROFILES
The Rev. Steven Seah was installed as the fourth Dean of Cambodia in 2019 and is based in Phnom Penh. He is an ordained minister from the Diocese of Singapore, serves as Vicar of the Church of Christ our Peace (CCOP) and the Dean of Cambodia, and provides oversight of all activities in the Deanery in Cambodia.
Fr. Gregory Whitaker, an ordained minister and a member of Society of Anglican Missionaries and Senders, has been the priest in charge of the English congregation of CCOP for the last eight years. Prior to serving in Cambodia, he was involved in church planting at Church of the Resurrection, Illinois.

REFERENCES
“Girls in Cambodia, as with many other third-world Asian countries, have for years never been given the same opportunities as boys. For some families, the unavailability of a safe and affordable/free accommodation could cause the child to lose the opportunity to be educated in the city. Safety and good management, including reliable Christian dorm parents (are critical elements to consider in hosting girls).”

– Dr. Seet Ai Mee, founder and chairman of E2STEM Education Ltd., Cambodia

“How the Rev. Steven Seah as a leader is an apostolic leader with a missionary heart. He loves to see the gospel go out and connect with those who do not yet know the Lord. He also lives and works with compassion for the poor and those in need. I have known Rev. Seah for four to five years of direct ministry partnership. The ministry in Phnom Penh has a great deal of potential. I have seen first-hand the effectiveness of the dorm ministry in exposing people to the gospel and offering an invitation to them.”

– Jesse Blaine, church planter, Wellspring Church, Englewood, Colorado

RESEARCHER’S STATEMENT
Diocese of Singapore remains committed to bringing the Word of God to Cambodia. It has planted thriving churches in the city of Phnom Penh, along with outreach programs that meet the needs of the people. For young people in particular, the diocese has sought to offer programs that address the challenges young people face, such as the need for good education. By establishing the new church plant and girls dorm, the Diocese of Singapore will be laying a foundation for nurturing the spiritual wellbeing and growth of Christian pupils, their families, and those interested in the Christian faith.

IMPLEMENTER’S INSPIRATION
“And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”

– Acts 2:47 (ESV)

HOW TO FUND THIS PROJECT
PROJECT RECAP
For information about the Fund or Projects, write to:
The Anglican Relief and Development Fund Canada
Box 1013
Burlington, ON L7R 4L8
Canada

ID - ARDF-0921- Cambodia
Timeline - 12 months
Requested - $61,150
Modified - 011022

The Anglican Relief and Development Fund Canada
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PARTNERS FOR IMPACT WORLDWIDE
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484-995-7841

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