

The Farmers



*on Mission in
Cambodia*



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June, 2009

And we're off . . .

On Friday, June 5, at 4:30pm (only 5 hours overdue) we left our home of 5 years in Dunbar, WI to begin the U.S. side of our Cambodia mission. Thanks to the beautiful display of Christian love from our family and from our brothers and sisters at church and at Northland, our departure was only 5 hours, instead of 5 days, behind schedule. Those who helped with the actual furniture moving and house cleaning aspects know that I'm hardly exaggerating. We have been repeatedly humbled by the extravagant generosity of God's people and have again had the joy of seeing the church functioning as a body.

During our final, extremely hectic weeks in WI, the thought occasionally crossed my mind that if I weren't so incredibly busy, I may well become quite emotional over this whole thing. Thankfully, the move kept me occupied, and we were able to avoid any such awkward moments. In all seriousness, "mixed emotions" is certainly an accurate description of our feelings about leaving our church and Northland for work in Cambodia. Numerous times during the last school year, as I would walk home from a "good day" in the class room, I would bemoan the fact that it would be decades (if ever) before I would again be able to communicate the Word with native fluency to a people whose culture I (for the most part) understand instinctively. From now on, our work will be through a (very) foreign language and culture which will perhaps never become native to us. Leaving the many, readily available opportunities

for sweet fellowship with students and our church family is also difficult. Nonetheless, we're thrilled that the day has finally arrived for us to begin our transition to Cambodia. Now, we're looking forward to our next departure date – to Cambodia! Until then ...

The church's one foundation . . .

Our first stop couldn't have been better. We joined Morning Star Baptist Church in Rockford, IL (pastor Bob Bixby) for their annual Bible conference, where I had the opportunity to speak six times; the topic this year was "Creation to Christ," and the Lord blessed us richly with fellowship in the gospel. We came away feeling that we had found a sort of home away from home in this group of believers. They are a model of a biblical mixture of passion for truth and love for the body. Our next stop was Countryside Baptist in Olathe, KS (pastor Mike Summers). I first heard about Countryside in my first year at Northland in various conversations about missions with my students. Countryside's model of church-missionary relationships is biblical, beautiful, and worthy of careful consideration by other local assemblies. Getting to know the pastors and reconnecting with former students was a joy. Our last meeting in June was with the people at Summit Springs Baptist in Lee's Summit, MO (pastor Adam Godshall). In terms of age and size, Summit Springs rounds out the spectrum in the churches we've visited: They are a new church (2-3 years and fairly

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small); Morning Star is 7 years old with about 200 attending; Countryside is about 20 years old with 500 attending. Despite this wide range along the growth spectrum, these churches manifest a remarkable degree of consistency with one another, both theologically and philosophically, and we found it very instructive to see how a single ministry philosophy is working itself out in very different external circumstances. Christ is indeed building His church, and He is doing it well. Now we're in SC, where we'll visit Community Baptist in Greer (pastor David Whitcomb) and Victory Baptist in Walhalla (pastor James Bryant). Please pray that the Lord would enable us to minister His gospel to these folks and that we would be encouraged by them in our mission.

I didn't know you had five girls!!

No, that's not *another* of our daughters. Bonnie Ruth's sister, Vanessa, is travelling with us this summer to provide a helping hand, especially in looking after the girls while we're in churches. Already, Vanessa has more than earned her keep, and we thank the Lord and her often for the blessing she's been to us.

Why the trailer?

In case you're wondering, we're not thinking about going into evangelism if this whole missions thing falls through! So, why are we pulling a 32-foot trailer for deputation? Many of you have asked this good question, so I've tried to summarize our reasons as follows. The first is strictly pragmatic. Raising four very young children while living in a different house every 2-3 nights raises some nearly insurmountable obstacles in terms of discipline, consistency, and stability. The trailer, we hope, will provide a degree of stability during this unstable time called "deputation." Our second reason is a bit more philosophical. Our desire is to form strong relationships of mutual encouragement and service with the churches who partner with us. Ideally, we would like to be able to stay in town for more than the typical weekend service,

making ourselves available for some short-term ministry and fellowship with the people there. The trailer enables us to stay rather cheaply for an extended time at no extra burden to the pastor or people. So, we've got the house; just give us an invitation. Lastly, after doing lots of number crunching, with all kinds of worst- and best-case scenarios, we believe that the trailer option will actually prove to be the wisest financial decision at this point in our lives. Any time you make a big decision like this, there's always the potential for buyer's remorse; but one month into it, we're convinced that it's one of the best decisions we could have made, and we daily thank the Lord for this blessing.

Pray for us

Short-term:

- Pray for likeminded churches and individuals to partner with us in our mission.
- Pray that we would be able to minister the gospel in every church we visit.
- Pray for our girls, Abigail, Isobel, Gloria, and Eden, as they adjust to constant life on the road. The lack of regular schedule is sometimes taxing on both them and us (read, they are very disobedient sometimes!). Pray also for wisdom and strength for us as we raise them in the Lord's discipline and instruction.

Long-term:

- Pray for the salvation of the Lao of Cambodia and Laos.
- Pray for the opening of Laos to the gospel.

Grace and peace,
Jeremy, Bonnie Ruth and the girls