



CAMBODIA LOVE IN ACTION November 22–30, 08

Cambodia, a nation torn apart by the Khmer Rouge regime, a country teeming with orphans. Its history is painful, its materials simple, its people poor, but the team was surprised and encouraged by the strength of their partners' faith — as Gordon said:

"they gave out of their poverty, dreamed like there was no tomorrow and emanated a wholehearted trust in Him."

The theme for the Cambodia trip was to put love into action, because, as Ronald said, **"We struggle doing love because it costs us."** Every single team member came away from the trip humbled by the Christians they met, touched by the pure faith of the children, and imbued with a deeper understanding of God's love.

Karen was particularly touched by Pastor Hieng's story: he was only 11 years old when his two brothers and father were killed by the regime and he was sent to a concentration camp. He is a pastor now, a little-respected profession in Cambodia. **"So why does Pastor Hieng undertake this challenge?"** asks Karen. **"Because he was dead many times over from starvation in the camp, yet he escaped death every time."**

For Shannon, who had been on many mission trips to developing countries before, she found her heart hardened this time by tales of child prostitution, depravity and the desperate situation surrounding the Cambodians. She felt cynical, helpless, hopeless. That morning she asked God to capture her heart. The team loaded up in the van to go to the rubbish dump in Phnom Penh to see the Water of Life ministry.

"I am an adoptive mother so the thing I seem to be most moved by is orphans ... As we rode in the van to the outskirts of town, I was still praying 'capture my heart, Lord.' The gates to the Water of Life school opened and there on the wall is part of my life verses in Psalm 113. It is the Psalm that spoke to me when I was 24 and infertile. Verse 9 gave me hope for the six-year wait for Abby, my 14-year-old. ... and there in both Cambodian and English were verses 7 and 8:

He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes, with the princes of their people. (7-8)
He settles the barren woman in her home as a happy mother of children. Praise the Lord. (9)

I felt like God was saying 'do I have your attention?' 'Are you a happy mother of children?' ... and my answer is YES! My heart was captured and broken."

For many team members, the visit to the rubbish dump was especially heart-breaking. Four hundred families live on this 10-meter-high dump and scrape out a living by scavenging for metals and plastics to sell, fighting for the "best" pieces, for US \$1–2 a day. Albert recalls: **"I saw a little girl amongst the adults, with a pick in hand sifting nonchalantly through the rubbish heap. She is apparently oblivious of her sordid environment and could even return a smile when we took pictures of her."**

Mandy reflects on God's word in LUKE 18:16: *Let the little children come to me, and stop keeping them away, because the Kingdom of God belongs to people like these.*

Tiffany remembers a girl at the Love in Action orphanage grabbing her hand, and unabashedly asking her "Do you know Jesus?" "Yes,"

Tiffany had replied, "I know Jesus!" This little girl made her think: **"Would I ask a stranger if they know Jesus when I first meet them? Am I as passionate to share the gospel as these little kids?"**

A dramatically frightening incident gave Wai-duen a wake-up call: **"We were walking in a single file along a little path on the trash mountain, and were blocked by a refuse collection vehicle. The first two persons made a detour by turning left, but I decided not to follow them because I wanted to take some photos."**

Right away, I found myself stepping into a pitfall. I was not standing on solid ground, but mashes. My instinct was to step forward, and immediately I sank, and from my waist down I was soaking in the dirty water. It was a swamp. Plastic bags were floating on the surface, so it looked like solid ground. Jessie, our co-leader, tried to lift me up, but this slim girl could not do the job. Thankfully, Isaac, the muscular local

guy who was walking behind Jessie, pulled us both up, one arm each. Miraculously, I was not seriously injured; I just had a few scratches."

The danger she had just been in did not hit her until she was in the SOS clinic waiting for her tetanus shot: **"Although I can swim, I would rather die than be immersed in a pool of dirt water! There could have been glass or sharp objects, or even medical waste down there! Now literally placed in the scavengers' situation, my heart was filled with compassion for them."**

Ricky, a seeker when he signed up for the trip, challenged God to show Himself to him. He thought he had made it through the whole trip without being converted, but it so happened that his roommate had to leave early and Ricky found himself alone in the room on the last morning. He woke up and, for

reasons not entirely clear to him at the time, cried hard for an hour. **"And I hadn't cried in 20 years!"** he exclaimed. **"I just kept thinking about all my sins, and I repented, and accepted Christ."**

Florence, the co-leader, said: **"Though we were there to put love into action, we were really there to learn love. How high, how deep, how wide is His love for us and the people in Cambodia."**

Pris concluded: **"I had placed too much emphasis on looking for the 'macro' answers. But ... what about the life of this one child? Who was I to undermine the significance of the one? It means everything to [show love to] that one child, that she is able to grow in confidence knowing that she is not a commodity, that she is valuable, worthy of love, and is loved."**



i-Partner

Water of Life

This ministry is a little preschool right next to the trash dump. Thearith, the director, is a pastor who grew up as a child refugee. He quit his job at the Phnom Penh seminary to start up this ministry. The ministry pays the parents two dollars for the privilege of taking the kids out of laboring in the trash dump. The school is for 20–30 pre-school-aged children to teach them to read, to feed them a hot lunch, to clean their physical and emotional wounds. Most of all, the ministry provides education to the children, to break the cycle of poverty, and to allow the children to learn to be children again: to climb trees, sing songs, play games. When Shannon asked Pastor Thearith what these children needed the most, expecting an answer like "clothes" or "books" or "money," he simply replied: **"Love. That's what they need the most."**

During Easter, 22 people from Island ECC went to Qinghai, one of the most beautiful, ethnically diverse, yet poorest regions of China. Qinghai province is a mixture of Han and ethnic minorities such as Hui people, Tibetans, Mongolians — a mixture that breeds political and religion tension. For 7 days, the group was not only confronted with altitude sickness at 3500 meters, but most of all, challenged to live out the gospel, by deeds of love; for *What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?* JAMES 2:14. The mission was to use the Easter theme to live out Christ's love.

At the beginning of this year, political instability peaked in this region. It was the fiftieth anniversary of the failed Tibetan uprising and tension was at an all-time high, so surveillance was especially strict. Throughout the planning process, the leaders Loretta and Rachel faced many uncertainties. The programs were "confirmed" but subject to last minute changes. Yet, given the trip was about God, surrendering control to Him was key.

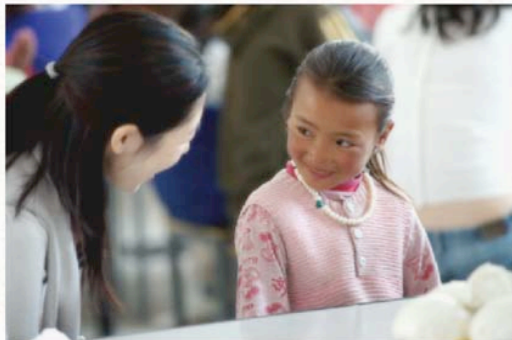
By God's grace, everything went according to plan. They started off visiting Minority Café, inside a university for students of ethnic minority background. The café conducts "English" evenings where students can come to chat with native English speakers. The people who run the café have made great efforts to convert this space into a nice place, even though it is lacking the basic necessities to make drinks, such as a sink and running water. As John remarked: **"The perseverance of the people who run the café was a great blessing to us ... virtually no one buys their cakes, because the students want to save money, yet they continue to bake cakes and make the coffee, because they believe this is God's calling in their lives, and they leave the rest in His hands."**

On the third day, the team went to visit a social welfare center for the elderly and handicapped. Eileen said: **"Most of these people had families, jobs and normal lives before they became ill and were abandoned by their families. Now they have nowhere to go."** The team was heartened by the good spirits of the people nevertheless. Ben especially remembers **"an old man who finally laughed and smiled after many songs we sung, the little blind girl who smiled when I held her hand, and another little girl who ran around to everyone for them to pick her up."** After the worship team had run out of non-Christian songs to sing, the crowd was still excited and clearly wanted more. The team took a prayerful risk and started singing Christian songs, openly praising God, in an open-air setting, with people from the surrounding buildings all coming out to listen. They were not harassed and all the patients were dancing and smiling.



QINGHAI SHINING LIGHT INTO DARKNESS

April 7-13



Next they visited the hospital next door where the handicapped children stayed. Alfred recalls one girl: **"[She had] one sleeve rolled up, the other sleeve was covering her other hand. I was trying to do her a favor by rolling up the other sleeve and discovered that her hand was completely deformed. Then I thought 'we shouldn't be ashamed of deformities' so I touched her deformed hand, to show her that it's ok ... I felt that God gave me a chance to touch somebody."**

That night, they visited an English learning center. The team put on a skit and passed out Easter eggs. The children were actually able to relate the eggs to the resurrection of Christ. Rosalyn, who had been to Qinghai on mission four years ago, felt especially touched by this verse: *God sent [Abraham] to this land where you are now living. He gave him no inheritance here, not even a foot of ground. But God promised him that he and his descendants after him would possess the land.* ACTS 7:4-5. Rosalyn was able to reconnect with a missionary she had met there on her last trip and to hear about how things were changing, how university students were stepping away from their family's faith to know Jesus! **"And the whole time I thought she had been kicked out of the country!"** Rosalyn exclaimed, confirming that **"God upholds His promises to His people."**

John, a lawyer by profession, was particularly touched by meeting S. S., age 26, who studied law and had passed the famously tough PRC bar, chose to give up a brilliant career in law to dedicate his life to God. That sacrifice struck John: **"... after all the studying he could have gone on to 'enjoy' life — to have a career, work, money, and to do all the 'worldly' things, yet he decided in faith to give his life to God."** S. actually studied at the university where the Minority Café is situated and he had attended those English sessions. **"We were really blessed to know that the work being carried out at the Minority Café does result in some fruit."** Eileen was also deeply moved by the missionaries — **"their sacrifice and perseverance could not be explained by anything but faith. The strength was surely from God."**

Kelvin took away from the experience the idea that these missionaries rarely get a chance to speak freely about Jesus, yet they stay in the area and persevere, as they believe God has called them to reach out to these people. How do we, then, with the religious freedom we enjoy, undertake to spread the gospel and live out the Word every day?



Sichuan



BUILDING TRIP

April 10-15

SICHUAN

During the Easter holidays, 57 Island ECC volunteers went to Sichuan for a 6-day mission trip. As soon as they arrived at the Chengdu airport, the Building Team and the Outreach Team parted ways and set off on their different missions, yet they shared one common goal in their minds — “love, care, build.”

Whilst 33 members of the Building Team stayed in Pengzhou to build houses for the Sichuan people who lost their homes during the earthquake on 12 May 2008, 24 members of the Outreach Team went to Mian Yan city (綿陽市) in the An County (安縣) to reach out to other Sichuan people.

When the earthquake struck Sichuan, people's houses, buildings, and schools collapsed in a matter of minutes. The team arrived at Sichuan expecting to see only destruction everywhere; but instead, they caught a glimpse of the situation from God's perspective: it was a chance for people to rely on God to rebuild not only their physical buildings and community, but most importantly their spiritual lives and hope.

In a place where open missionary work is restricted and the information flow limited, God is everywhere. From the local workers that the members spoke to during the construction work, to the local hosts and the people they encountered at restaurants, it seemed all were in some way touched by God. The members went on the trip to support and witness God's work in remote places, and witness they did indeed.

In association with Habitat for Humanity China, the Building Team was to participate in the rebuilding of Taitse village of Pengzhou. The aim of the project was to enable the village to have a viable bed-and-



breakfast business so that the citizens could start rebuilding their lives. Local contractors and various teams from around the world have been invited to participate in this project and the Island ECC Building Team was the visiting volunteers for this Easter holiday.

Once the team was on site, they worked side by side with the local contractors as extra helping hands, transporting bricks, filling out foundations, shoveling gravel, mixing concrete, and carrying mortar. There were not many machines and sophisticated equipment on the site, and they mainly relied on manual labor to do most of the work. The team tried to help, but were very slow compared to the professionals.

To illustrate: 1) They formed human chains to move bricks and could move 1-2 bricks each time, but the local workers carried a dozen bricks in one go; 2) The team lifted only less than a bucket of cement at a time, but the local ladies could easily lift two mountains with a stick on their shoulders. Wai-duen sums up: **“So, to put it politely, we were already doing very well if we did not screw up their work; more bluntly, we were useless and made zero contributions, at least that was my thought for the first two days.”**

On Day 3, an old lady in her 70s came. She grabbed Wai-duen's hands and kept talking, telling her life story, and how the earthquake changed her life. Every 30 seconds, she said, “xie xie, xie xie, thank you so much for coming all the way over from Hong Kong to our village to build houses for us.” Her repeated thanks made Wai-duen cry: **“Then I understood why I was there.”**



The team's larger purpose was not to build but to reach out to local workers who may not have the chance to be ministered to. By working alongside them, the team could begin to build relationships and care for them, as Jesus teaches us to. The spirit of God enabled the team to carry on despite the heat and in the face of a very physically demanding task that they were not used to doing.

One particularly memorable encounter was a Christian lady working in the construction site. She had lost everything, including her only son, during the earthquake, but she remained faithful to the Lord. Now she is working as a contract worker to try and rebuild Sichuan. But her gratitude toward the team had most of them confused, because they thought they were actually getting in her way more than helping. She explained that it was not the amount of physical work accomplished that determined the success of the team; what really made a difference was laboring in the name of the Lord, and that some of her brothers and sisters in the Lord traveled all the way to Sichuan to work beside her that made her feel that regardless of country, we are all His children and part of His kingdom. She saw the volunteers as the representation of His love and care toward Sichuan.

Simon put it well: **“Spiritually, what I experienced in this trip put my priority into perspective so that I am able to experience the inner joy and peace more often than before. The love of God demonstrated upon the people in Sichuan reminds me of the lasting hope I have in this loving God.”**

When the team was leaving Sichuan, they truly felt that the love of God transcends nations. It is our hope that Sichuan will be rebuilt on the solid foundation of the Lord's grace and truth.

The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe.
PROVERBS 18:10



i-Partner

Habitat for Humanity

Habitat for Humanity China was established in 2000. It began operations in 2002 in Kunming, capital of Yunnan, one of China's poorest provinces.

In January 2006, Habitat merged its operations in Hong Kong and China into a single entity. The move aimed to leverage on the resources and acumen of Asia's premier international city to provide for the mainland. Hong Kong concentrates on fundraising and recruiting volunteers.

Habitat is using Chengdu to base its response to the May 2008 Sichuan earthquake.

The pilot post-disaster reconstruction program involves working closely with the authorities at various levels in three communities in Pengzhou, some 36 km northwest of Chengdu. In 2009, the plan is to build about 800 homes, three sets of nursery schools, health clinics, and activity centers/libraries and outdoor exercise areas. Habitat currently works in rural areas in China where homes are often made of unsafe structures. Electricity is common, but water comes from communal wells and sanitation facilities are not widely available. A typical Habitat home measures about 70 sq. m. in size, and is constructed with red bricks, stone, compressed earth blocks or wood supplemented with a tiled roof.

Under the Save & Build housing microfinance model, Habitat's homepartners save as a group towards the cost of one house and when that amount is reached, Habitat and its partner organizations contribute the costs of another two houses and construction on the three units begins. Construction takes place over about seven weeks and the average loan repayment period is five years.



SICHUAN OUTREACH REACH

April 8-16

The Outreach Team partnered with a local disaster relief and community building organization called "China ActionLove Volunteer Association," who had been working in Sichuan after the earthquake hit the province on 12 May 2008, a date etched forever in the communal memory of the Sichuan people.

During the bus ride from the airport to Mian Yan city, traces of the impact from the 5-12 earthquake could be seen. As soon as the bus turned right from the highway, there was a big red banner with white words "Dignified Regards to the 512 Earthquake Heroes" (向512地震救灾英雄致以崇高致敬). Along the bumpy road as they traveled in the affected area were road holes which required repair; landslides on the slopes; houses and building structures with cracks and "demolished" (拆) in red. Those buildings were considered dangerous structures unfit for human habitat and had been evacuated by the local government. There were temporary houses with blue rooftops in which the earthquake victims were staying. The team was told by the bus driver that Mian Yan is a 4-to-5-hour drive away from the center of the earthquake Wen Chuan (汶川).



Upon their arrival at the training center, the team was pleasantly surprised to find a well-equipped farm house located at the outskirts of Mian Yan city. Instead of a sheltered place with no bathroom facilities, God was gracious enough to provide CCAL with this training centre converted from a farm house 10 days before the team arrived. The team members quickly unpacked the avalanche of supplies and daily necessities, which they carried with them and pre-shipped prior to the trip, all stored in the corner of the common area of the training center, painstakingly sorting out all the toys, cabbage patch dolls, toothpaste, toothbrushes, clothes, food, children books and so on, so that the supplies could be ready to be picked up whenever they did home visits. In order to ensure that they would not run out of supplies for home visits throughout the trip, some of the team members went back and forth between the training center and Mian Yan city to stock up on food supplies and daily necessities at the supermarkets.

In the afternoon, the team members made home visits to reach out to the villagers and elderly, bringing food supplies and daily necessities. Often the team members hiked and went deep into the mountains to reach out to the local villagers, who were rarely visited by other people. These villagers were overjoyed to meet the new visitors from the south, chatting endlessly with them about how they spend their time in the mountains. Anita recounts: "The encounters ranged from the hollowness in the little eyes of Sichuan kids whose parents had passed away to the curious little eyes of other Sichuan kids who were eager to learn about the outside world; from the sadness in the wrinkled face of an old lady who witnessed her husband, whose bronchitis was untreated for several months, breathing his last few breaths in this world, to the bitter smile of a middle-aged man who was blind and paralyzed from the hips downwards and holding a radio tightly as if it were his only access to the outside world."

During the second night of devotional, one of the team members, Ricki, accepted Christ. "I came to realize there is only one thing which defines my identity — the fact that I am a daughter of God," she said.



The fourth day of the trip fell on Easter Sunday, when all other local missionaries stationed at nearby villages gathered together with the 24 members for worship and sermons in the common hall of the training center. Many of the missionaries had quit their jobs, moved from the comforts of their lives in cosmopolitan cities, and settled in the rural and primitive areas of Sichuan for an extended period of time in order to build rapport with the local Sichuan people. One of these people was Joseph, who left his banking job in Taiwan to commit to a longer-term missionary work on the field.

"Caleb followed God passionately and had a different spirit to the other spies who entered the promised land. I felt I was in the presence of 'Caleb's' as I was privileged to meet and work alongside local young believers, who left their homes to see God glorified in rural parts of Sichuan. Limited by resources and restrictions, they choose everyday to passionately follow God, to cry out on behalf of the people of Sichuan and to use their lives to be God's hand of salvation. And so I was humbled to meet them, and to realize that I too have to make a choice about following God passionately," Judith, the team's doctor, said.

As they said their goodbyes to the Sichuan kids and elderly and set foot in Hong Kong, it was comforting to know that the Sichuan people were being looked after by the non-weary missionaries on the ground on a day-to-day basis. The 57 team members brought with them the mixed feelings of joy and sadness, the laughter and mourning they shared with the Sichuan people, as well as the love, care, and compassion that they had for the Sichuan people, returning to Hong Kong with 57 enlightened hearts humbled by the spirit and hope of Sichuan and the local missionaries.

i-Partner

China ActionLove Volunteer Association

It was founded in March 2008. There had always been underground churches in China but the snowstorm that hit early 2008 spurred the leaders to step up. At the beginning, the house churches were only focusing on evangelizing but they realized it didn't work. There was preparation to be done before to prepare the soil for the seeds of the gospel.

When disaster hits, and relief is needed, all you can do is to grieve alongside those who are grieving, to comfort those who are traumatized. These works are indeed the preparation for spreading the gospel (福音的預工). After the earthquake, the Anxian government chief asked the founder of CCAL what could be done. The founder HL prayed about it and suggested: cultural enrichment; leisure activities; counseling; health care. The government chief liked his offer. These are the needs of the villages with or without the earthquake anyway. In the end, it became an invitation from the government and they wanted CCAL to set up a cultural and health center at every village. The plan was to build 300 community centers within 2 years. CCAL realized it was indeed a lot to accomplish and HL didn't take any action two months after the agreement was signed because of financial difficulties. He started talking to

some of the contacts he had from Taiwan and one of them was Joseph's church. Joseph realized he shared the same vision as HL and joined his team at CCAL. Together, they worked out a revised plan: 100 community centers within 3 years. Between December 2008 and February 2009, they built a few model centers to show the local government. The government liked the sample. By the end of June 2009, they were anticipating 20 centers to be opened, with 70 volunteers enlisted. By the end of the year, they are expecting 40 centers to be opened with 150 volunteers. Within the next 3-5 years, they are hoping to equip and send out ministry workers to other regions of China.

As of May 2009 (just a month before the opening of the 20 centers), the team is still recruiting volunteers and struggling with funding. Joseph recalled the story of Moses leading the Israelites to flee Egypt and facing three days of drought in the wilderness. He thinks that the struggles they are facing now are a great preparation for all the volunteers — to know that there is and will be spiritual warfare.

So why did God let the 5-12 earthquake happen? Joseph's response: "God gives Chinese churches a service opportunity. Churches can go into society, care for the society and impact the society. It is an opportunity for all the local churches to be united and that's God's intention."





INDIA LIVE A LIFE OF LOVE

April 8 – 16

● India

In April, a team of 8 from Island ECC went to Southern India, to the State of Andhra Pradesh where they visited the Touch of Mercy Children's Home (TOMCH) and the Dayspring Children's Home & School, for a week and a half. Both are run by the Sandipudi family who has been Christian for 5 generations.

Be imitators of God therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

EPHESIANS 5:1

They spent every day with these 15 kids and learned what it meant to really love from these children and the Sandipudi family. **"You think that you are privileged, 'we've come to love you.' But we were so loved by these kids; from them I learned how to love and receive love,"** Vivian said.

What was unexpected was being treated with such welcome, honor, and love by the hosts and the children. They called their guests "sister" and "brother" at every turn. The Sandipudis busied themselves with organizing the food, transport, and luggage;

they had even blown up the team's pictures and attached these as a banner outside each of the homes, and they repeatedly introduced their guests as people who had come from a long way away to do God's work, that they had made sacrifices to be away from family to come visit. **"To have people who had devoted their entire life to God's work and who wanted nothing more than to continue that work until the day they die, say this about us—was incredibly humbling,"** said Faith.

One of the most memorable moments for Jenny was on the second day, when she saw the kids very excitedly getting themselves ready to go to the beach to fly kites, one of the older boys Kumar was helping all the younger ones "dress up" — putting talc powder on their faces (it acts like a sunblock) and combing their hair. Sagar, the youngest boy, danced like a Bollywood superstar, with a smile to match. The whole team was rather smitten by him and Sagar got quite used to posing for pictures for the team.

"I burst into tears every time I think about the way the kids looked at me with their beautiful, genuine smiles, telling me that they were fulfilled by the love, that they knew they were special in the eyes of God, that they were grateful ... Looking at them, you just trust these kids will grow up to become people who honor God," Jenny said.

The team went to worship and do ministry in two of the slum areas around Visak, led by the Spirit. Adam Sandipudi liked to put people on the spot. He would say "Sister Brenda has a message for you," "Sister Sarah would like to pray for you," "Sister Janice will lead us in prayer" and then each person would have to say something, so they had to be sensitive to the Spirit. **"We were there to serve not to observe,"** Sophia said.

Russell remembers in particular the whole team praying for the Sandipudis and staff of TOMCH on the roof of their home, with Hindu singing going on around them. **"This was a moment of realization of the spiritual warfare that we face everyday,"** Russell said.

Both homes accept children of other faiths and the children are not pressured to convert. Our partners there clearly hope each child will grow to experience the depth of Christ's love for them. The nightly prayer time and weekly Sunday school for the kids result in all the kids knowing more scripture than their average counterparts in the developed world. **"Not only are these children able to recite verses, it is the light of Christ shining on their beautiful angelic faces that speaks volumes,"** Sophia testifies.

God said to Joshua to be strong and courageous because He would do it. He could do anything through anyone, but could also do so through no one; but by His grace, He chooses partnership with us, and changes our hearts to see less of ourselves. **"I thought I would go do something worthwhile but what happened was God provided abundant encouragement and refreshment and opened my eyes to more of His work. I experienced a week of concentrated love, joy and peace,"** Faith said.



I-Partners

Background
The children at Touch of Mercy and Dayspring Children's Homes come from the Dalit or "untouchable" caste. Dalits, which number somewhere from 150–250 million in India, form the lowest part of the Indian social and economic order. Traditionally, Dalits are relegated to types of employment considered to be below the higher castes including jobs regarded as dirty or dangerous.

Most Dalit children suffer the most extreme conditions of poverty. Often Dalit families are unable to adequately feed themselves and children find themselves begging, living on the streets or in government orphanages.

Touch of Mercy Children's Home (TOMCH)
TOMCH was founded in July 2006 with financial support from Island and Kowloon ECC.

During an ECC-sponsored trip in the spring of 2006, the need for a children's home in Visakhapatnam (Visak) was presented to the team. Leftover funding from the church's tsunami-relief offering was given to start this new children's home. Individual sponsors for 2007 and 2008 were signed up to cover the sponsorship costs for the 15 children who live at TOMCH. The number of children living at TOMCH is limited to 15 in order to facilitate a family environment. Munnai and Teena Sandipudi run TOMCH.

TOMCH currently has a waiting list of over 30 children. In light of the success of TOMCH, the Touch of Mercy Limited intends to establish a second home.

Dayspring Children's Home & School
In the early 1980s, Adam and Eliah Sandipudi began opening their homes to 20 orphans who lived in railway stations. Dayspring in Rajahmundry now cares for over 150 children and is a registered charity in India.

Dayspring School was set up in the 1990s to meet the educational needs of the children living at the Children's Home. This school also provides education to underprivileged children from the local community.



Ethiopia

ETHIOPIA HIS GRACE IS ENOUGH

June 13 – 20

During the summer of 2009 Pastor Brett and Chris Glover went to Ethiopia to conduct a week of classes through the AWEMA program. As most pastors in this area don't have the luxury of any formal seminary training, AWEMA's goal is to bring the seminary to them.

Students come for 4, 4-week segments over a 2-year period to get further training and encouragement from the Word. AWEMA brings in 8 teachers for each semester to equip these men and women. Chris and Brett taught for one week, each taking on 20 hours of classroom instruction. Chris taught Christian world view and apologetics, while Brett taught on Jesus and leadership.

Chris prepared extensively with PowerPoint and video excerpts, thinking that the students will benefit from the multi-media techniques that they could then adapt to their ministries. But when they arrived they found out that there was no consistent electricity in the training room, so no laptop or projector could be used. Thankfully, the plan for the first day was to get a feel for the class attendees, to get to know their ministries, their societal roles, their target group as a church, key strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats that they each faced in their respective ministries.

They went through this exercise and found out that the significant majority of them were targeting orthodox Christians and the remaining few were targeting Muslims. Both had little need for arguments about the existence of God, evolution, and some of the main topics of apologetics that are more relevant in the Western secular world. The attendees were very well versed in comparative apologetics.

Knowing that apologetics were their strengths, the bulk of the teaching time was then focused on exploring the meaning of

Christianity. These wonderful leaders were trying to convince their "target" groups to join Christianity, but the general impression from their targets is that what they do in Christianity is not really that different from the religion they are already in. That is, if you follow these rules and rituals then you will be accepted by God.

Using some Tim Keller materials they brought along, they began to work through the nature of the gospel that they were trying to present to their targets. It is learnt that many of the "requirements" they were asking their non-Christian friends to fulfill weren't actually required by the gospel. As it is said in the word:

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. MATTHEW 11: 28-30

What was determined is that they have to be extremely careful that they are not presenting another form of religion to their targets. Rather, they have to present the gospel of grace, which means there's nothing we can do to add to God's acceptance of us besides receiving the free gift of salvation provided through His Son Jesus. They spent the remaining time talking about the implications of presenting the "gospel" and not "religion" in a ministry context; and how to fashion the ministry and church to present the gospel in a way that emphasized the beautiful grace. And Lord willing, this will expand His kingdom in marvelous ways. It was a great discussion time filled with a lot of energy and excitement.

The team left Ethiopia with a feeling that they had been used by God to show the Ethiopian ministries the beauty of grace. Although some things did not go as planned, they could see the providential hand of God working amid them. The team was once again reminded of the most important belief that sets us apart from other religions. His grace is enough.



India

YOUTH OUTREACH

PHILIPPINES / July 1 – 5

You hear this a lot about mission trips: "God did something we didn't expect!" and that cannot be more true for us. In July, the middle school students of Island ECC travelled to the Philippines to work with International Care Ministries (ICM) in Bacolod City. At the start of the trip we expected to see 5 people come to Christ, but God generously gave us 10

conversions on this trip. When we went to bless the locals, we felt more blessed by them.

At the beginning of the trip we expected to actually build houses for people who lived in the slums, but instead we found ourselves digging ditches. It was as though God was continuing to humble us. Everyone wants to go build

a house, but no one is passionately motivated to dig a ditch. We found our strength in PHILIPPIANS 2:7-8: *... but (Jesus) made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant ... He humbled Himself and became obedient to death — even death on a cross! We humbled ourselves by being obedient to what God called us to do. To God be the glory!*



Philippines



INDIA / June 19 – 27

Our experience in India took "God did something we didn't expect!" to a whole new level.

We were scheduled to serve in India for 7 days — 3 in Hyderabad teaching kids at a Banjaras School how to evangelize, and the remaining 4 days in Vizag with orphans from Touch of Mercy. On the second day, after arriving in Hyderabad, one of the members developed swine flu-like symptoms. Naturally, we took this individual to

the hospital to get her checked out. Unfortunately, she had swine flu confirmed and the whole team spent 5 days in quarantine. A parent flew over to buy us pizza hut because we didn't want to eat curry for breakfast, lunch and dinner. We prayed and slept a lot. This may have seemed like a big waste of money and effort, but because of the ample amount of time we could spend with each other, we developed really close relationships — as can be imagined

in a quarantine! During our 5 days in isolation, we prayed, asking God to continue the work without us. We came to a harsh, but freeing reality: God doesn't need us! Praise God because His heart is to see all nations come to Him. Without a shadow of a doubt, God did something we didn't expect. And we were utterly blessed by each other's company.

EGYPT

“IT’S NICE TO LIVE IN DANGER WHEN YOU HAVE A SAVIOR.” June 10–20

In this historically significant place, the team witnessed some of what God has been doing for the Egyptian people. This year marks the first time that Island ECC has sent a team to Egypt.

God has blessed the team by establishing a foundation from which to launch future projects. It was the beginning of a relationship with Island ECC’s partners in this part of the Middle East. The team went to two cities, Alexandria, where they visited a children’s camp, and El-Minya, 250km south of Egypt. They topped off the mission trip, literally, with a trip to the peak of Mount Sinai.

While at El-Minya the team woke up at 5.30am every morning to do devotional by the river Nile. Celeste said, **“One of the amazing things about doing devotions in Egypt next to the Nile, is that Exodus really came to life.”** Celeste also had an opportunity to speak to a church planter about his challenges, which was **“discipling people once they become Christians, to provide them with training and leadership skills, and equip them to do ministry work.”** But what struck Celeste was his attitude: **“He didn’t moan; he spoke about the challenges in a joyful way.”** He also recounted about how whole villages come to Christ after people have the same dreams about Jesus. That’s how God is working in the Middle East.

Jennifer candidly admitted she wasn’t very excited about the trip and that she only went because her husband was going. But **“in Egypt, God was telling me: ‘Get to know me.’ Ironically in a country that seemed to be so unChristlike, God called me to look into my life.”** Having gone on charitable trips in the past, she felt the profound difference of going with Christ in her heart this time: **“I would’ve come back feeling fortunate ... But this time it wasn’t really the poverty that I saw. It was God’s unconditional love. These Egyptian Christians are as spiritually wealthy as they are materially poor.”**

Security in Egypt is tight but Joon miraculously managed to travel without a passport: when the team arrived at Mount Sinai, Joon realized she had left her passport back in the hotel. The policemen were coming around to check everyone’s documents. Joon put her face down, and prayed. Somehow God blinded their eyes and she passed without being asked for her documents.

On the plane from Cairo to Doha, Joon was sitting next to a young Indonesian gentleman. They started talking, and **“he asked me if I was Korean. I said yes. He asked if I was Christian. I said yes.”** It turned out he was studying in a university in Cairo to train to be a Muslim leader, and now was on his way back to Indonesia. They disembarked the plane, and went their separate ways. Joon suddenly thought of the cartoon book, and asked Brad for a copy. The team had taken 120 copies of this cartoon book to distribute at the children’s camp. It uses manga graphics and simple language to tell the gospel in a non-religious way. Miraculously Brad had one last cartoon book left: **“It seemed like God was multiplying the copies of the book because there always seemed to be one in the bag when we needed it,”** says Brad. Joon looked for the man at the gate to Indonesia. She found him waiting there, and she gave it to him. She told him, **“I want you to have this book. But promise me you are going to read it, because if you won’t read it, I won’t give it to you.”** He promised to read it. His name was Mohammad. Since then, **“I’ve been praying for Mohammad that someday he will realize that Jesus Christ is the only God.”**

Celeste concludes: **“These church planters and ministry leaders are compelled by God’s love.”** That is what drives them. When they asked Pastor Menes Abdul Noor from Cairo how they manage to serve and do outreach in a country where the state religion is Islam and open evangelism is dangerous, he replied: **“It’s nice to live in danger when you have a savior.”**

i-Partner

AWEMA

AWEMA (Arab World Evangelical Ministers’ Association) — the organization that hosted Island ECC’s first short-term outreach trip to Egypt — provides theological training in the Arab world through the Augustine Theological Institute (ATI).

The mission of ATI is to train Arab leaders who can train others to reach the unreached in the Arab world. Training is Bible-based and balances theology and ministry skills so that participants can immediately practice what they learn. Participants are vocational Christian workers and volunteers serving as evangelists and church planters throughout the Arab world.

The institute has four sites: Algeria, Egypt, Ethiopia, and Tunisia.

Lincoln from Island ECC taught in Egypt for 5 days in June. There were three other instructors — all of them from Egypt.

Each one taught a different course to 24 participants, mostly church workers and ministry leaders serving in different parts of Egypt: Dr Yasser clarified the difference between preaching and teaching; Pastor Samir gave instructions on how to prepare a sermon; and Pastor Ezzat spoke on how to communicate creatively. Lincoln taught on how to study the Bible inductively (observe, interpret, apply).

Each day started with 45 minutes of worship. Singing in Arabic moved seamlessly from one song to the next without stopping. A single guitar played with utmost skill added to the reverence of the moment.

“It was absolutely sublime,” raved Lincoln. **“I’m glad I went. Now I’m praying for the opportunity to return. Soli Deo Gloria.”**





RWANDA STANDING ON THE ROCK

June 21 – July 4



A team went to Rwanda for 8 days; for some it was their first time to Africa, for others it was returning to see old friends; for several they had gone previously as singles and returned this time with their spouses/fiancés.

It has been 15 years since the genocide that ripped through the country in 100 horrific days, pitting neighbor against neighbor, husband against wife. In the Kigali Genocide Memorial Center, an institution dedicated to remembering and educating the public about the genocide, Meng remembers reading about a boy, **“6 years old, his favorite food was chips, the previous day he was playing with his sister, he was killed by being thrown against a wall by his neighbor.”**

The path to racial reconciliation and forgiveness is a slow but present process in Rwanda. Forgiveness and reconciliation are universal struggles, but *He will heal the brokenhearted and bind up their wounds.* PSALM 147:3

Mercedes remembers walking through the Kigali Genocide Memorial Center with Sylvan, one of the YWAM staff, who had felt the effects of the Tutsi-Hutu divide, and fled to Uganda before the genocide. He now runs a church, an HIV/AIDS ministry, widows ministry, an orphanage with 12 kids, as well as raising his own family—a daughter and a baby son with his wife. His prayer was that God would use him more. As they walked together in the garden of the memorial center with another group member, they prayed for Rwanda and for the forgiveness and healing that were taking place in a country with a past filled with violence and bloodshed and its consequences: widows, orphans, homelessness, HIV/AIDS and psychological trauma, among others. The local Rwandese were moving forward from the effects, from counseling services to establishing orphanages to various employment strategies and the outreach work of HIV/AIDS ministries.

Refugees who had fled to neighboring countries are returning to their homeland. Reconciliation between races, although slow, is evident, through open discussion and educational programs regarding past injustices and the beginning of mixed marriages between Hutus and Tutsis. And finally, there is an emergence of a number of gifted, talented and devoted individuals investing

in their country, its history, and its people, especially the youth.

The team witnessed their friends graduating from DTS and deciding to devote themselves to God’s work, and the setting up of a Christian-based foundation aiming to restore and empower the lives of youth and children at risk through social rehabilitation. Some of them were youth from Harvesters, YWAM’s youth ministry, now making and acting in films. One DTS graduate became the headmaster of the Rise and Shine school at the YWAM base. Noel wants to go to film school in South Africa and make movies to showcase Rwanda to the world; Gabe wants to go to art school in Hawaii; Gabe’s wife MK wants to take counseling studies in Hawaii to return to Kigali to minister to families of the street kids in the Harvesters ministry. They dare to dream big.

God led Mandy to an encounter with a special woman, an ex-prostitute who had a son with an unknown father. She is now part of a group of women ministered by YWAM to make bags and baskets for sale. She and her baby were infected with HIV. When asked to pray with someone in the room, Mandy randomly approached her to pray, and she had a vision of lush garden for her. The woman smiled and shared that she suffered from untreated asthma. Mandy agreed to support her financially. In the end, this woman and the other ladies performed a Rwandan dance for the team, dancing with joy and gratitude.

Serieux, the leader of Harvesters, has ministered to street teens (aged 16–25) in Kigali for many years. Through soccer outreach, Serieux has shared Christ with these young men, imparting to them God’s hope for their future. Even though he didn’t have the worldly qualifications we think are required to do the job, in the areas lacking, whether financial or in business acumen, God provided.

One of the boys in his ministry was Jean Pierre, 14 years old, gifted with a beautiful, amazing singing voice. Priscilla heard him sing and was blown away. She asked if he could come back in two days to the base where the team was staying, to be recorded. He nodded and was off. She didn’t know if he would turn up, or how to find him again.

Sure enough, 2 days later, he showed up at the base. Jon and Ross had also just arrived from the airport, and barely having a chance to put their bags down, Jon picked up his guitar and Ross started connecting the sound equipment. That day, Jon and Jean Pierre made beautiful impromptu music together. They heard Jean Pierre’s story: orphaned, living on the streets most of his life, he always had songs in his heart. He attended a Christian concert, and that night accepted Jesus into his life. Since then, he started singing songs about God. This young boy’s dream was to open an orphanage for street kids like him. He wants them to know God like he knows God.

Jacqueline, an HIV-positive woman the team visited, shared her life story: abuse from her family, poor health, contracted HIV from the man who cheated on her; wanting to end her life. **“As we were all thinking in our minds words of encouragement for her,”** Rosalyn said, **“suddenly her attitude changed completely. She recounted how she was born again when she accepted the Lord.”** The team was shocked and in tears, to see with their own eyes the power of hope to comfort the brokenhearted.

“Like threads on a carpet, each one weaves together into a beautiful collage of God’s character,” said Florence.

In the weeks leading up to the trip, someone gave Meng a prophetic vision of “white clothes”; he did not know what it meant. Separately, team leader Praise had a vision of the team giving her old clothes and putting on new clothes, with Jesus in the middle — to leave behind a part of their old selves and to emerge as a “newer” version of themselves.

And they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments... REVELATIONS 3:4-5

For Somesh, who came from 35 years of Hindu/semi-atheist background to accept Jesus Christ as his savior quite recently, his time in Rwanda showed him that **“I truly need to start rebuilding my own house on solid rock, and that transformation is indeed possible with Him.”**

Mike had been working in Taiwan as a missionary for three and a half years when his doubts overcame him and he quit the mission field in 2007. In Taiwan he felt like God was so far away. In Rwanda, **“I finally saw Him. He is in Serieux, Noel, and Sylvan, and the members of the team. God is alive in us.”**

Praise said, **“Being in Rwanda we experience what it is like to be in Heaven and Hell all at the same time.”** Rosalyn concludes: **“Heaven is in our hearts.”**

*They prayed for what they say
My tender heart encased in scars of war
In the midst of torrential tears I saw
Your heart to redeem and restore*

*I have discarded my old clothes
And put on new robes of identity
I pray for my patients because I believe
God is sovereign and cares for their eternity.*

— from the journal of Zita, doctor





● Mongolia



MONGOLIA THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

July 27 – August 14

If the team learned only one thing, it is not the little that three weeks could achieve, but the hopefulness of what the power of God's love, joy, and hope can bring to His precious ones.

For more than ten years, a team (of 37 this year) mainly composed of Island and Kowloon ECC-ers, have spent their summers in the countryside approximately 400km north of Ulaanbaatar, Outer Mongolia, to put on a 2- to 3-week summer camp for children and youth, aged 5–15. The children stay at a government shelter in the capital and attend bottom-ranked schools for

three seasons of the year including cold winters, and reside at the countryside camp during the three months of summer sunshine.

Every morning began with the sound of cows mooing. The sun would start to beat down on the land. The teachers sounded the trumpet, rallying kids for roll call. Everyone was woken up as kids vacated the cabins. As the sun started to scorch, they moved indoors, and each member sat with a family for lunch. Each day various activities were organized, from arts and crafts, to sports, to photo workshops, to breakdance sessions, to watching wild life documentaries, to

drama games.

Every morning and evening when the whistle sounded between each activity, the kids would stampede and line up by families (the kids were divided into families which contained younger and older kids). Older kids cared for and showed love for the younger ones. This is in light of the fact that many of them have only recently come from living a rough, hardened life so they still had tendencies to fight, not having grown up with long-term intimacies of familial love.

Indeed, the "street children phenomenon" is a relatively new social problem "created"

during Mongolia's transition from a centrally planned economy to a market economy after the 1990 Democratic Revolution, which presided over the collapse of the single party system along with the sudden removal of its social welfare net. Most of the street children are victims of poverty, alcohol-induced family violence and premature parental deaths. Living on the streets or in underground manholes, they eke out a living by physical labour, begging, stealing, and even harlotry. To keep them off the streets, some children at the camp had been rounded up by officials and taken to the government

shelter, while some joined the shelter because their families could not afford to keep them. Siew Ling also noted the large proportion of single-parent families, usually single mums, who have to raise their children alone.

One night, Daniel discussed with the boys what it meant to be a man. He told them being a man is not to fight with others, but to support other people. The boys were very quiet. Daniel shared with them a story, about how he had been in charge of the water station. As washing and water are rare for the people here, Daniel brought some of his own soap to the station to share with

the kids. Within half an hour, all the soap he had left there was gone. Later that day, one of the boys went up to Daniel and gave him a bar of soap. Daniel said, "I thought this was going to be a great story. How they had gone back to the camp and asked who took the soap and returned it to me. As I was walking back to my tent, I took out my own soap, and it was a different size and brand from the soap that the boy had just given me. I realized this kid had given me his own bar of soap."

The Mongolian travel companion and administrator Tsogtbaatar emphasized to the team that one moment of happiness shared with any of the kids could have

great impact. A little boy fell asleep in the bosom of the fatherly figure of Tony during one of the kids' music performances this year. When he woke up, he told a translator that it was one of the sweetest naps he had had in a long time. Since he did not know how to express the joy he felt, he got up very early the next morning and picked up all the rubbish in the campsite, making the ground as pristine as possible. The team witnessed how it was the overwhelming overflow of love that spurred his act of selfless service.

Jeannie said of her camp experience: "Like a perfect meal that took hours of toiling in the kitchen to prepare but only

minutes to devour, so our camp for the kids in Mongolia has come and gone in the blink of an eye. God has blessed us tremendously and we all came back changed."

Lettie, who went with her husband and 2 teenage daughters, remembers in particular an 18-year-old boy. "When he didn't come for the activities, we just loved him and asked after him." His aspiration was to be a wood carver. During the last family meeting he pulled out from his drawer a wood carving of two love birds, one being Tony, one being Lettie. "I was overwhelmed," said Lettie. "Why do I deserve this? Did I serve God? No! God

out-served anything I put down. The team out-served me. The children out-loved me."

Said Chris: "That we made ourselves vulnerable to love the kids, our hearts were wrung and broken. Not able to keep them intact anymore, the Mongolian children have become a part of our lives. Therefore, I had to stay behind at the camp for three more days last year, when the Hong Kong team was scheduled to fly back. Therefore, Stanley has been staying behind for the past two months, visiting the kids back at the government shelter in the capital. Therefore, Susan has stayed behind in Mongolia for a decade, working with the poorest of the poor children and families in

Ulaanbaatar. Therefore, Gary, Teck Yion, Siew Ling, Judith, Simon, Carolyn and Ann, Brenda, Sarah, Nathan and so on have been returning to Mongolia for the past few years.

May the Father of lights shine in your heart to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in your life today."

i-Partners

Flourishing Futures
Flourishing Futures is a Mongolian organization that works with Mongolian children. They aim to give vulnerable children in the poorest district of Ulanbaatar hope by providing education.

Founded by Aase Sims, who decided at retirement age of 70, to go to Outer Mongolia, where she resides today, FF is now mainly run by Susan Griffiths. Susan came to Mongolia about a decade ago, and helped run FF until now. She is the main coordinator for the camp. A few years ago, she also started Rinky Dinks travels, which provides

authentic Mongolian living experiences and nature tours (it got onto Lonely Planet recently), with mainly Scandinavian and European clientele, consisting of missionaries and Christian groups, amongst other groups.

This year, previously-U.S.-based Troy and Shari (and their 3 kids) felt God's calling to Mongolia and they now help out at FF and Rinky Dinks.

Alpha Communities
Alpha Communities mainly runs several homes for foster kids. Ex-ECC congregant Helen Tijsterman fosters kids and serves full-time here.



UGANDA BUILDING FROM THE INSIDE OUT

July 24 – August 3

Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing. 1 :THESSALONIANS 5:11

The team was in Uganda for 12 days, participating in 3 ministries: Watoto, Kampala King's School and Cherish.

It got off to a rocky start for Vicki, whose mother unexpectedly had to go into an emergency heart surgery the day the team left for Uganda. During the Thailand layover, her dad was sending over her mother's will, but miraculously, Vicki had a sense of peace through it all. **"I really felt surrounded by the church SWAT team."** And praise the Lord, the surgery was successful.

Watoto

Many people from Island ECC are familiar with Watoto, whose choir came last year to perform for the congregation one Sunday service. "Watoto" means "children" in Swahili, and is an organization that rescues orphans, and gives them an education, a foster mother, love and support. The Watoto Choir provides the children with the chance to travel and perform and proclaim God's glory around the world. The children show signs of confidence and hope. The ministry was started 16 years ago with 3 children and now has grown to 1800. The team was there to help build a classroom for Watoto.

When the team toured the orphanage they went into a room of sleeping newborn babies, and they were told that the room was where the babies rested as they worshiped the Lord. For Bobby, this was a significant moment: **"I felt Jesus telling me 'isn't this better than anything you chase, Bobby?'"**

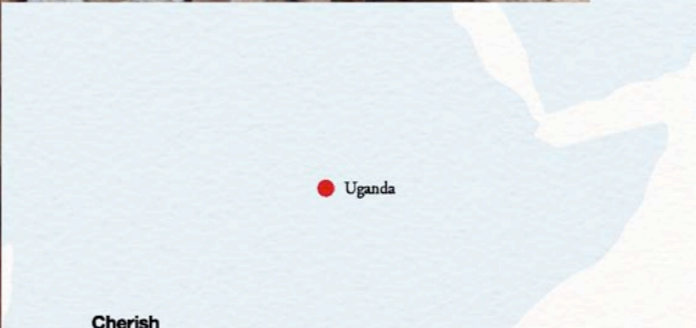
Kampala King's School

Kampala King's school is a private school dedicated to providing proper and affordable education to the poor that is unattainable even in the public schools. The students number almost 100, but they barely have desks or chairs or enough learning materials.

The school is truly a prime example of giving all you have back to God in His glory: the school is set up using the founder Teacher David's own money and he never asked anything for return. The tuition is used solely to cover the teachers' tuition and the running cost of the school. The school motto is: "with God, all things are possible." Janet, a teacher at HKIS, wanted to cry at Kampala. Not because of the lack of materials but because the children were singing the Ugandan anthem, and doing the morning prayer with such enthusiasm. **"They really had the spirit of education, which is about equipping each individual to do fabulous things and to have hope,"** said Janet.

On the last day the team gave each child a small bag of goodies, which they received with great excitement. **"Suddenly all the kids raised a simultaneous shout of exuberance!...A huge wave of joy rushed towards me and shattered my heart of stone ... I realized either I have never been in the presence of such joy, or I have long forgotten feelings associated with it,"** said Ricky.

Veronica recalls their response when they made an unplanned stop to say goodbye to the children: **"A number of the kids spotted us and dashed across the field towards us and crowded around the van. They were extremely excited at seeing us and started cheering and jumping as though we were some superstars!"** She exclaimed: **"I would never forget how happy some of the kids were when they successfully touched my hand! The happiness radiating from their smiling faces was simply priceless."**



● Uganda

Cherish

Cherish is an orphanage that is dedicated to taking care of HIV-positive children in Uganda. In a country severely stricken by war and poverty, HIV children are usually abandoned. Cherish takes them in and provides them with medical care. Started in 2007 by a 27-year-old woman from England, they are now caring for 40 children, and have built 5 homes.

The medical outreach team ministered to the local community surrounding Cherish. The rural community that they go to is impoverished and marginalized to a state where the local clinic is run by nurses because there are no available doctors. The response to the event was overwhelming — there was a line of parents and children in front of the clinic when the medical team arrived.

Carol, a pediatrician, remembers her first 2 patients very vividly: **"They had several non-specific symptoms so I made a few recommendations and was going to send them away when Milly (the full-time nurse working in the clinic) stepped in. She gently reminded me of some of the more unique afflictions that were common in this area, and quoted me the current WHO's current treatment recommendations."** The volunteers were humbled and awed by the knowledge, dedication and wisdom of those who serve the needy full-time.

The team worked as quickly as they could for 2 days. By the grace of God they were able to finish seeing everyone — close to 60 patients in total. The team prayed with almost every family and everyone was full of patience and gratitude. **"You could feel God's presence among us,"** reflected Carol. She returned to Hong Kong with a renewed invigoration for channeling her career in medicine towards this kind of service.

There was also a subteam doing Chinese outreach, as there is a population of Chinese immigrants who have come to Uganda to open shops and start small businesses. These people work hard and rarely have days off. The team was there to bring the gospel to them.

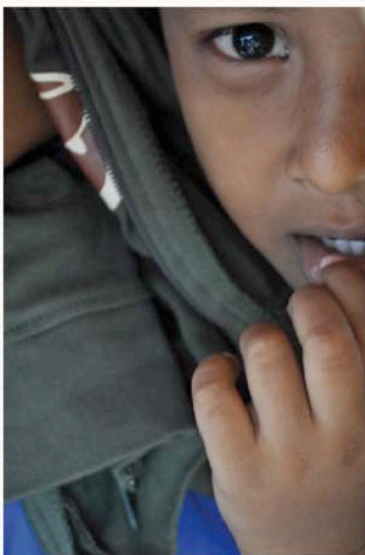
Alda, although initially apprehensive about doing outreach in an unknown country and on her first mission trip, was quite nervous but she, along with her partner Yvonne, prayed about what to say to these overseas Chinese.

The team went to build and to give, and yet the Lord was faithful and cleansed them from the inside out meanwhile. Justin, who considered himself an "entry-level Christian" when he went on the trip, said: **"I was praying that I wouldn't be chosen to lead devotional."** One evening he was asked to lead devotional. He grabbed a brother on the team and told him, **"I don't feel comfortable leading,"** but this brother told him, **"It's not about you. It's about serving."** By the grace of God Justin led the devotional, his first time ever. The topic of the devotional was, funnily enough, serving.

"A serving heart for the weak and poor will give you so much more enjoyment than a heart focused on 'receiving,'" reflected Bobby. **"You will experience God, and you will be transformed."**

INDONESIA BUILDING BRIDGES

August 9–19



● Indonesia



This trip was about building bridges to Indonesia, the most populated Muslim country in the world. The main purpose was to support our partner ministries in Indonesia—local libraries, and the Sundanese Christian Fellowship.

The library, though owned and managed by Christians, is not a “Christian” organization, and thus the team was told specifically “for your safety, do not evangelize.” (Laws in Indonesia are strict on evangelism). The ministry workers related how they were faced with opposition when they went into a community and could give no “reason” to be there. The library has given them a reason to be there; it is actually a platform for believers to help meet the educational needs throughout Indonesia and in turn build relationships that tear down walls between the Christian and Muslim world. With these walls abolished, hearts can be open to hearing the gospel. Indonesia has one of the lowest literacy rates of Southeast Asia, so the government is keen to improve in this area. The library ministry is 100% financially supported by Island ECC. It has been so successful that the government has officially recognized it.

The team also worked with Sundanese Christian Fellowship ministry in reaching out through education. With five professional teachers on the team, one of the purposes of the team going there from overseas to teach English and train teachers was that it lent credibility to the ministries in the eyes of the community and the government. “**Education is a strong way to reach out,**” said Mike.

The team took on 4 main areas: 1) showing local teachers creative English teaching techniques, 2) spoken English time with university and high school students, 3) daily English camps for all ages, and 4) reading time in a village school. They went into many schools, giving exposure to the ministry platform, which allowed them contact with Muslim children. Jasmine said, “**Children were so eager to learn that even though their lesson was over, they pressed their faces on the glass to see what was being taught at the next session.**” The team also held teacher trainings, phonic and drama workshops. A huge number of teachers showed up. One lady travelled four hours just to attend a workshop. The schools ranged widely from state-of-the-art facilities to downright dilapidated.

Before they left to visit the Island ECC-sponsored library, the pastors told team, “**They [the community] hate Christians here, especially white people,**” thus the Caucasian ladies had to stay in the van while the team visited the city. “**It’s a harsh reality to face that you can be hated by people who do not know you,**” said Becky.

As they drove around the community, they saw green buildings everywhere and were told that this is how Muslims identify their homes in this area, which is considered 100% Islamic. They pulled up in front of a Christian pastor’s home — one white house in the midst of green. “**They know he is a believer. It took him months to find someone to rent to him here.**”

For someone to become a believer in Indonesia, they face being cast out by their family, exiled from their community, and hated by strangers. The ministry workers live in harsh reality, but they go because they realize that, *If God is for you, who can be against you?* ROMANS 8:31. Their lives give testimony to this fact. Time and time again God has pulled

them out of danger. Mike said: “**We were meeting a lot of Christians who were formerly Muslims ... what struck me was the cost of being Christian. One of the guys actually converted a Muslim leader at the mosque. He couldn’t tell anyone that he had accepted Christ, he was still doing the readings at the mosque for two years, without believing in it. It takes two or three years to build up your faith to prepare yourself for the persecution.**” So the Sundanese Christian Fellowship’s strategy is, instead of reaching out to individuals, they minister to entire families, because it’s difficult for an individual to change their religions without being ostracized by their family.

During the trip, Will experienced his most unique church service. In this particular church, they didn’t have a preacher, but they sang out the message through their songs, which they wrote themselves. “**From the side streets, people just started to walk in. This Muslim family walked in, the guy was smoking, because he didn’t even know he was in church. I’ve never seen someone smoke in church!**”

Becky recounts: “**I arrived in Indonesia and realized that with all my preparation for the trip, I had nothing until I let go of my fears of working with Muslims. Throughout the trip we taught Muslim teachers, interacted with Muslim students, and in one city had to watch as only local believers were allowed to interact with Muslims. But throughout the trip God reinforced that ‘without love you have nothing.’**”

But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. LUKE 6:27-28

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. MATTHEW 5:11

i-Partner

Sundanese Christian Fellowship

Indonesia is the world’s fourth largest country with more Muslims than in the entire Middle East and 130 major unreached people groups that comprise a population of 129 million people.

Our Indonesian partner, Sundanese Christian Fellowship, focuses on reaching 3 people groups — Sunda, Banten, and Betawi.

The Sunda are the largest unreached people group not only in Indonesia but in the entire world: 34 million, less than 1% Christian. Some parts where they live have no churches, no missionaries, no Christian activity.

The Banten are very committed to the Islamic faith. Visitors are reminded of the presence of Islam by street signs bearing the 99 names of Allah similar to other fanatical areas. While staunchly Islamic, the belief system of the Banten people is still deeply rooted in animism (black magic).

Entrenched in Islamic faith, the Betawi have no value for education. Many of the young people leave school early which has led to an undereducated population subject to marginalization in society.

SCF’s church planters enter communities as social workers, teachers, or merchants. They become involved in the community and participate in the village’s welfare. It often takes several years for a Sundanese to come to faith, so as friendships and trust are formed, opportunities open up to speak into people’s lives, to pray for sick loved ones, and to help in other practical ways.

In 2008, they were able to share the gospel with 413 families and 39 of these families have committed themselves to Jesus. In addition, 67 individuals came to faith and 37 were baptized. They trained 27 church planters in 2008. Most of them enter into full-time church planting in Muslim areas.



PHILIPPINES BUILDING HOUSES; BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

September 16–20

Philippines



A team from Island ECC headed off to the Philippines to partner with ICM (International Care Ministry) to help build houses in Bacolod for 5 days.

Upon arrival, the team was struck by the stark reality that so many people lived in such poor conditions. The scale of poverty was inescapable around the city, in the old/rudimentary commercial and residential properties and the transportations that roared on the city streets.

Medical facilities were not exempted from these conditions: tuberculosis clinics and the clinic operated by ICM keep a long waiting list, because their treatment capacities are solely determined by the available funding coming into ICM and its partner Gawad Kalinga.

Ivy was particularly touched by the contrast in faith that the people had in spite of the physical conditions — **“When I was visiting their church I saw that it was broken — to a point that it was heartbreaking, but yet they are singing ‘I will trust in you, God’. I was in tears; I do not know what I would be singing if I were in their position!”**

In spite of the poor and stricken conditions, smiles, friendliness, and simplicity were abundantly given to the team throughout the 4 days of construction. Enoch said: **“In terms of construction, we had a very modest performance. We started building a small house from foundation. By the end of the trip, we had only done half of the work. Some may ask would it not be more cost effective if we donated the money and hired some professionals and machineries? Yes indeed things would be done more effectively, but that misses a very important point: that we are messengers — we let the Filipinos know that God loves us so much that we would reach out to the Philippines to share His love.”**

The people they saw were filled with joy, warmth, and gratitude. The team was awestruck to be a part of what can only be described as “love in its purest form.”

The many children near the construction site welcomed the team with open arms and spirits: they took delight in helping the team construct a house for a family to dwell in by moving dirt, passing cement, and making the building process a joy-filled experience rather than hard labor. By this simple act of exchanging kindness and gratitude with the team, these people demonstrated God’s work to build relationships through the love of Christ.

There was one particular man that showed a passion to wash the team’s muddy boots after the rain, and they were mystified by it. They were later told that he was the beneficiary of a house that was built by the community and mission volunteers, which he can now call home. She mused: **“We might not be just building houses, but by giving them a house that they can live in, they can start rebuilding their lives and confidence to get a grip on their lives. It is more than a physical shelter; it is the beginning of a new life.”** His care for practical strangers stemmed from his own sense of gratitude of what had been provided for him. Witnessing such joy in his life gave great affirmation to the team that God’s seed had been planted once more and renewed.

Mitch reflected: **“This leaves me contemplating my own search for purity in much of the fruit of the spirit: love, kindness, gratitude, humility, peace and the list goes on, on how I can myself just as freely and openly express what was expressed to me as I realize how distant I am from God’s standard. I pray that I will continually receive God’s strength and wisdom so that I’d not become weary to do His will.”**

Ka described the scene on the last night that left a deep impression: **“Right before we left, it was dark, muddy, raining. The community was there, kids, hundreds of people, singing, dancing, hugging. It was dark; we could barely see their faces. I thought that was probably the closest thing to heaven. There was absolute no negative quality in this moment. All you feel is love, that’s it. Nothing else. You didn’t even know you were in the dirt.”** The team’s hope is that the seeds of God’s work were planted in the people of Riverside, and these works do not signify an end but a beginning of a relationship made in His image.

Mun was not a follower of Christ when she signed up for this trip but she wanted to do some good in the world and to help the needy. At the Special Medical Cases visit, she cried as each of the patients shared their stories. Initially feeling helpless, slowly she learned she could show her love and care for the people, and to trust in God that He will ultimately give sanctuary to these people. Witnessing the people’s simple and pure faith, she could not help but re-examine her priorities in life.

Two days after her return to Hong Kong, she attended an Alpha course and accepted Christ into her heart, with tears freely flowing. Afterwards, a sudden feeling of peace and calmness flooded her.

God’s timing is impeccable and through the trip He was softening Mun’s heart. As she commented: **“I went to the Philippines thinking I was going out to make a change and save the world. It turned out that the one who was changed and saved was none other than myself.”**



I-Partners

International Care Ministry (ICM)

ICM is a Christian humanitarian organization who works with the poorest slum communities to counter poverty and neglect. It was founded in 1992 by Sharon Tan Pastre, who was shocked by the poverty she saw during a visit to her domestic helper’s home town. Their programs are designed to equip local communities to become self-supporting through one-year programs, utilizing local slum churches as bases for its humanitarian efforts.

ICM helps over 200,000 people and as of March 2008 via five major programs: feeding; medical; education; livelihood; church empowerment.

Gawad Kalinga

Gawad Kalinga (GK) translated in English means to “to give care.” Its vision is a slum-free, squatter-free Filipino nation. Their strategy is to provide land for the landless, homes for the homeless, food for the hungry and as a result dignity and peace for every Filipino.

Started in 1995 by Couples for Christ in Bagong Silang, Caloocan City (the then biggest squatters’ relocation area in the Philippines), their goal is to build 700,000 homes in 7 years (2003–2010). To date Gawad Kalinga is in over 900 communities all over the Philippines and in other developing countries.



HUBEI LOVE ENGLISH CAMP July 11-19

● Hubei



Since 2004, Love English Camp has been organized annually with the cooperation of Kowloon ECC, partnering churches and universities from Hong Kong and overseas. This summer's camp was probably the most exciting and crazy; due to the swine flu epidemic, there were several moments when it seemed the camp might be cut short or cancelled altogether.

A team of 37 volunteers was coming from USA, London, and Hong Kong to work together with 17 student helpers from Wuhan, serving 158 student participants. With the swine flu outbreak, the authorities were worried about a large group of foreigners from H1N1-affected areas coming into China. Many other churches had had to cancel their trips to China already. At this point tickets had already been purchased; a dozen people were traveling all the way from London and Los Angeles to be teachers at the camp — so to cancel the camp would come at a great financial cost. But by God's grace, they were able to go forward.

Due to strict protocols, the team faced continual obstacles during the course of the trip. Even going to China by plane as a big group was risky, since any one person infected on the plane could result in the whole plane being quarantined. So they prayed that they could make it through the health checkpoint. Everything went well, except Joy indicated on her health form that she had a cough. Though she had no fever, this was enough for her to be taken to the hospital for overnight observation and to be tested for H1N1. Joy said of her time in solitary confinement: "I was a bit scared about being alone, but in the end I'm happy it happened because I was able to rest and have quiet time with God." Thankfully, she was cleared and released the next day.



Monday, the first day of the camp, went smoothly until they returned to the hotel to find that health officials had been sent to take their temperatures. They would have their temperatures taken every morning and evening, and any person with a temperature over 37.2 degrees would be observed and considered suspect for swine flu. So they began a daily ritual that gave opportunity for both humor and stress. "We became mildly obsessed with body temperatures. Many of us had borderline temperatures, no doubt in part due to the extreme heat and conditions of our work there in Hubei," said Chris. On Tuesday evening one young member from LA had a temperature of 37.6, which led to a doctor being called in to examine her. She faced a serious possibility of being quarantined. So they prayed. By the time the doctor came, she had taken a cold shower, and her new temperature was 35.8!

The health officials were giving indications that the team might have to end the camp on Wednesday and leave town. The following morning, all temperatures were fine and no official word had come to end the camp, so they proceeded. That afternoon, they heard from the school principal something very unexpected: they needed to end the camp on Thursday evening rather than Saturday morning as originally planned. The team asked for at least Friday morning to wrap up but it seemed unlikely. So they prayed.

On Thursday morning, their request was granted. So even though the camp ended earlier than they hoped, it also lasted much longer than seemed possible considering all the circumstances. The Lord had provided, and the time given was enough to see great fruit among the youth they were there to love and minister to.

There was no shortage of things to worry about each day. Nonetheless, the team lived day by day and the Lord always made a way. *Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.* MATTHEW 6:34 "Though each day seemed precarious, Jesus was gracious to us and gave us many opportunities to both have our own faith tested in prayer, as well as to cultivate faith in the young students we met with there," said Chris.

This was the first mission trip for 16-year-old Whitney. She found that the Chinese students had a spiritual hunger that Hong Kong kids do not seem to have. "When you tell them about God, most of them are immediately interested." They have high aspirations for the future: "When you see them you really think, wow, if these youth are the next generation, then China really has a future, because they're so passionate, kind, loving."

"At first, I tried to tell students about God, but they didn't really seem to listen, they would just walk away and I would feel really sad. Maybe because it was so different from what they learned in school."

When asked what she would do differently next time, Whitney replied, "I would've been bolder about spreading the gospel. We have to fight aggressively for God, we only have five days. We can't just sit there and be timid. I was afraid to tell people, because we had established a good relationship and I was scared at first to bring up this sensitive subject. But during the last few days I tried again, to tell them about how it was God's destiny that we would meet and become friends."

Out of the 158 students attending the camp, 63 committed themselves to believe in and follow Jesus, and others were also interested in going to visit the church to learn more and receive a Bible. They were blessed to have a number of former students from previous camps — now believers and college students — stay behind to do the follow-up work.

Whitney was inspired by the fire in the Wuhan student volunteers: "The Wuhan student volunteers were really bold, grabbing students and telling them how God had transformed their lives. It must be God working through these students to tell them about His love. I was really touched."

This iGO reporter was in turn moved by the spiritual maturity of this 16-year-old, who had just made the age requirement for going on mission trips. *But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.*

1 CORINTHIANS 1:27





HONG KONG LOCAL OUTREACH

● Hong Kong

TIN SHUI WAI CHRISTMAS FOOTBALL CAMP December 30 – January 1

On the eve of 2009, Island ECC volunteers teamed up with local organization Breakthrough to run a 3-day camp for children from the Yuen Long-Tin Shui Wai area. At the Breakthrough Youth Village in Sha Tin, 40 kids and 20 volunteers enjoyed fun, games and sharing as they rang in the new year together. After a day of group activities, playing football and cheerleading practice, the evenings were devoted to sharing, watching Nick Vojjic's video and listening to Will Pritchard ("Uncle Will") talk about Jesus.

On the morning of the second day, June, one of the English teachers, lost her voice. She was supposed to conduct class that morning. The team prayed that God would still allow this to happen. Five minutes before going into the classroom, she miraculously regained her voice, and conducted the lesson smoothly. Five minutes after class ended, it was gone again.

That night, knowing that June had a sore throat, one of the kids (thinking she only spoke English) asked her, "Teacher, do you want a 'hou tong' (throat candy)?" June said no, it was ok. Later the boy ran into his room and came back out with a throat candy and gave it to her anyway. **"I was struck by how selfless and caring that act was,"** June said.

After Will gave his talk in the evening, the children were asked to close their eyes, and to raise their hand if they wished to be prayed for. He noticed while he was speaking that one kid who had been sleeping in English class that morning looked very moved. But this boy did not raise his hand. Will went over to him and asked if he wanted to be prayed for. The boy nodded. After praying, the boy whispered, with tears in his eyes, "Thank you."

Through the camp, 15 out of the 40 kids came to know Jesus Christ. Indeed there is no child that God would forsake, no corner of the city that God will ignore.

GATEWAY CAMP July 17-21

It is a unique, important time to be alive in a city like Hong Kong, a spiritual gateway to China and other countries. The Gateway Camp grew out of this idea. This year, the theme was "Joined in Destiny." The camp provided exciting opportunities preparing youth and families to partner with persons from other nations and generations, to serve in ministry throughout Hong Kong, China and the nations beyond.

Island ECC had a small team participate in the 5-day program of worship, rally, prayer, ministry, training, workshop, devotional and sharing.

For Katie, **"My fire for God was (re)ignited. He encouraged me to be bold, step out in faith, and not limit Him in what He may do in my life or through me. Amen!"**

Stella said, **"I learned: 1. Obey; 2. Let go (of my ways and personal goals, even the 'godly' ones); 3. Let God have His ways in me; 4. Trust Him (to guide me to personal goals in His timing and in His way)."**

For the team, the whole experience was like a spiritual spa, but they were also left with a reminder and conviction that they can stay on this "pleasure cruise," but there are people out there who are drowning. Are we going to get off the cruise to go get them? **"Everything we are doing here is for the work out there,"** said Paster Dale, founder and director of Gateway Services. People need to know Jesus not just for themselves, but most of all, because God deserves to have every one of His children back.

TIN SHUI WAI CAMP July 28-30

The afflicted and needy are seeking water, but there is none, and their tongue is parched with thirst. I, the LORD, will answer them Myself; as the God of Israel I will not forsake them. ISAIAH 41:17

This summer, Island ECC partnered with with Tin Yiu Life Lutheran Church and St. James' Settlement in the Tin Shui Wai area to run an English day camp for 3 days, with a trip to Noah's Ark on the third day. Through teaching them English using the theme "Life Is Precious", they hoped to show the children Christ's love for them and how each one of them has innate value, contrary to what society may tell them.

For Rachel, the best part of the outreach was the rare opportunity and privilege to serve alongside the brothers and sisters of the local church (Follow Jesus and Tin Yiu Church); from whom she has learnt about genuine servanthood, humility, dedication to God's service and fervour/passion for the Cross.

As it sums up in MICAH 6:8, *He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.* Rachel affirms, "God's love is a verb, not a noun."

TUEN MUN CAMP August 3-6

Originally the churches wanted to have the camp right after Gateway, but the camp site was only available two weeks after Gateway ended. God's providential hand was evident since a number of the volunteers got swine flu at Gateway, and actually used the two extra weeks to recover in time for the start of the camp.

The camp was struck with one more unpredictable element — the weather. Most camp sites cancel when the Typhoon 3 signal is hoisted. But during the 4-day camp, Typhoon 8 was actually hoisted for one of the days, and by God's grace, the camp allowed the campers to stay there, even though they had the right to send them all home. The team had God's blessing on unity and flexibility amongst the group leaders.

Joansa, one of the English teachers, was worried at first about bonding with the kids, but help came in the form of her teacher assistant Hazel and the youth members from Tuen Mun church, who were always there to provide assistance and come up with ideas to get the kids involved and pay attention. **"Their smiles and laughters will remain in my heart for a long time to come."**

Throughout the camp, the teachers tried to instill in the kids good manners, to say "please" and "thank you." After Ricki helped Matthew, 11, make a bracelet, he ran off, but suddenly turned around and came back and said "Thank you, Teacher." One volunteer said: **"Isn't that our attitude toward God sometimes? We should remember to thank Him always!"**

During the altar call, 37 children came to Christ. One whole group of 10 students accepted Jesus.

YUEN LONG CAMP August 6-8

Teaching basic English classes based on the biblical story of Noah's Ark, team building exercises and playtime encouraged the children of the Yuen Long area to seek a stronger identity of themselves in Christ and how they fit among their communities.

Many of these middle-schoolers grow up in troubled family situations. For Mitch, this was reminiscent of his own childhood: **"Manifesting love in fulfilling parental relations is something that is perhaps out of their depth and beyond their immediate reach."**

With the main mission of caring for them and loving them in ways that bring hope and renewed perspectives on life in this area, the team, through God's Word and by His strength, sought to change the social fabric of the younger generation by sharing the hope that they had found themselves within the gospel of Jesus Christ.

This was Island ECC's first time to partner with Xi Lin Cumberland Presbyterian Church youths to run a camp in this area, and our prayer is that those three days are just the beginning of making a permanent impression of hope for the future in the lives of the younger generation.



Here I am. Send me. Isaiah 6:8