

# News Letter

MART-JAN &  
TALITHA

JOY  
MICHA  
AMY



Guard your heart above everything else

Ecclesiastes 4:23

## Our life is in God's hand

Only a short while.....then....!  
Do you recognise this sentence?  
It came back in our mind a lot  
when we were on furlough in the  
Netherlands.

A bit more than a week before we would board the aero plain, Micha got his foot between the wheel of a riding motor. He hurt his foot badly. On that same afternoon, teacher Eva and her mother were involved in a motor accident too. They too came to the hospital in Kampot and had to travel soon to a hospital in the capital. So much impressions in just a few hours' time! It became a bizarre, intensive, one and a half week in which unexpectedly a lot had to be arranged. Together with Talitha, Micha was in the hospital in Kampot, about forty minutes away from us. Micha's foot had been caught in such a way that the skin turned totally black in one and a half day. Several surgical procedures were necessary to remove the dead tissue.

This resulted in a leaping hole in his foot unto the bone. Meanwhile there was the transfer of Shalom Valley, the support of Eva and her family, insurance jobs, getting packed for travelling to the Netherlands etc..

Saturday evening Micha returned home again. Sunday morning we said goodbye to our friends and travelled to the airport of Phnom Penh. On Monday we arrived tired, but safely in Middelburg, the Netherlands. Up there we had to enter again the medical treadmill. This process didn't go smoothly, but we can testify that the Lord was with us and gave us again and again strength, wisdom, sweet people, humor, comfort and the energy we needed. Micha still teases Mart-Jan that he was privileged to fly business class. Mart-Jan took of course the opportunity to hop in for a nice cappuccino.

We spare you all the medical details of transplantation, resistant bacteria etc.

Now, 5 months later, we are grateful to see how Micha runs around, plays soccer and romps with the other children. To be honest, we have to say that his foot is still fragile and already has been open several times. But also that those wounds heal well and that we see the scar grow smaller. He can't wear shoes yet, but happily that is not necessary up here.

Was our furlough a failure? Not to our perception. Most things went different from our "only a short while....then...", but we were able to do a lot of cool things and learned a lot. We are grateful to have met a lot of people and were able to share with them about God's work in (our) lives. When we share God's greatness with each other and enjoy consciously what He gives to us, even during heavy times, than we will be encouraged, comforted and we will receive new strength to go on. God is good!

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This News is sent out about 4 times a year in order to inform you well about the things that are happening in our lives and enables you to pray with us. Feel free to forward this letter to others.

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## SHALOM VALLEY UPDATE

Recently we send you a [photo-update](#). When everything went well many of you must have received these by e-mail.

Shalom Valley is becoming really beautiful, but it still takes more hard work too. As we are writing this newsletter we only have two weeks before the first Alongsiders camp and there is still a lot to do. Full power ahead we go.

A little impression.. This week we will connect the Solar-system which will supply us from electricity, and set the bio-waste water installation to work and we will do the last part to the water well and its management. The whole campsite is off grid which means that we have no utilities, but have to arrange everything by ourselves. I (Mart-Jan) enjoy this faze a lot: many of the ideas I thought about so long are becoming reality now. I go to Shalom Valley with a lot of joy (and return most often very tired).

From next year February the camp has to be operational and we want to have all basic facilities ready. That is quite a challenge, but not impossible. In February we can loge about 110 people and will have all facilities, like kitchen, meeting rooms for guests, available. There will be a large sport field, a fishing pond, and a river which groups can pass in different ways. They can do this just for fun or we can lead it otherwise and make a real teambuilding activity of it. Activities like these are hard to find in Cambodia, so we think this will be a real blessing.

From November a new second director came on board. His name is Phearom. Having been the only director at first of Shalom Valley, we can now work together. Phearom will focus on the operational part of Shalom Valley, and I will maintain overlooming and directing the development of the campsite. I experience his coming as a gift from God. It takes some pressure off for me. Delightful!

During the coming months we want to, next to the finishing of the present buildings, build about six bungalows to be used by families and as retreat. We also want to extend the possibilities for sport and group activities. Among those are a number

of learning stations where groups can learn. For example about creation and how we could take care of it. To plant flowers and trees and grass takes time of course but this will be done over the next year as well.

Another theme is the theme of justice. On the Shalom Valley premises we have a bomb-crated that will help us learn about that. The bomb crater is from the time when the area was bombarded by the Americans. We have interviewed local people and asked them about their stories and remembrances from that time. So much pain and sorrow has been effected by war and violence. The crater we have on our land is a good example of it. This has also something to say to us. How do we live? Are we bringing injustice to others? Maybe we don't throw bombs, but maybe we do exploit others.

The opposite of injustice and exploitations is peace, God's Shalom. His presence in everything. This kind of peace is based in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who came to people like us to make peace-Shalom between God and us. Do our lives radiate something of His peace and do we share this peace to the people around us?

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## MISSIONARY DAY

In October we had a meeting day again together with other workers from Kep and surroundings. It is every quarter of a year again an encouragement to take a day of rest and time and fellowship together. To listen to each other, sing together, to pray with and for each other and to eat together, to walk together or play a game. These are some ingredients of such a day. It is so cool to see how the Lord works in the lives of people and to amaze about it together. It is a blessing to be able to encourage each other, comfort and urge each other when there are times of discouragement and sorrows in which we only seem to be able to go on with clenched teeth. We are all totally different, but we need each other so much. We can learn a lot from each other. It is special to taste in local workers the desire to follow the Lord Jesus and to see them share their lives with the people around them.

This time we shared with each other the live lessons that we learned during the time that we lived and worked abroad. A time that varied from shortly ago until over twenty years.

We shared specific things for the place where we work now but also more common, but valuable lessons. We asked ourselves the question if what we work for is part of God's greater project: the church.

God doesn't need us but chooses to use us in His plan in unexpected places and ways. A lot of times this goes against our own ideas of logic and efficiency. This keeps us humble and small. It is obviously not our, but God's power that is working, going through our weaknesses and shortcomings.

We often came with ideas 'to change the world', but we experience all how

God is busy every time again to change ourselves. God uses that altering process in our own heart in the lives of the people around us.

We experience all, that the Lord forms us enormously by taking us out of our comfort zones, and placing us on places where we feel ourselves regularly 'foolish' and 'uncomfortable'. Even when we are in the field for a long time. God calls us every time to know Him and to love Him, there where we are. To live in the 'now' and to give our time, attention and focus completely to what He gives us to do.

We talked about how not to have to run away from our mistakes but in a sense to embrace them. We are all broken people that live in a broken world and we all make mistakes. We can ask the Lord for discernment when we have made a mess of things again. In order to learn from our own mistakes as a possibility to grow and to serve others.

## KIDS CLUB AND BIBLE STUDY

It is good to see how Pon and Srey An, during our absence, led the kids club and Bible study faithfully. From a distance they were involved with us together with the children and we with them. Because of the enormous rainfall during the rainy season the amount of children that came decreased enormously. Our house was at times not really reachable. And the clubhouse was with this severe rainfall often soaking wet. Some children chose to visit other activities in this neighbourhood. We pray every

time that God will send those children that have an open heart to learn more about the Lord Jesus or just need a loving arm and coziness around them.

After our return there still is a relatively small group of children that comes faithfully. It is nice to see that Joy as well as Micha both have a local friend with whom they pull up together regularly.

From a student from Cornerstone (the Bible school in Beugen) we got two audio-players on solar as a gift to try out in our neighbourhood. On it is a part of the Khmer Bible and the children like to listen eagerly. It is a lot easier to them as reading the Bible and it is a joy to see how much some of them (in detail) memorise. This week one of the girls had listened ten times to Exodus 1-20, the part from which many stories at the club were taken this past time.

## FURLOUGH AND HOME AGAIN

We will add some pictures to give a small impression from our furlough. Enjoy it!

It was really nice that the temperature in the Netherlands during the first weeks of our furlough wasn't that much lower as in Cambodia.

We have had a couple of fine months, as well at the camping in Vrouwenpolder as at the Veerseweg in Middelburg.

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*"You might want to change the world, but God might want to change you.."*

We are grateful for all those people that arranged all kind of things for us. It helped to feel ourselves very welcome. Also the welcome in the diverse churches that we visited felt like a warm blanket.

And how fun and special it was, to be right away the first Friday after our arrival, at the wedding from Tom and Rianne, with all of us. We really enjoyed this festive day. It was enjoying to see Joy there, for the first time in front of a large group of people, playing a song from Mart-Jan on her violin.

But the best part from a furlough remains to us the contact with our family, friends, brothers and sisters from church and colleagues from the past. Strawberries and stroopwafels, cheese, fresh fries, endive stew, playgrounds, and a beautiful environment with the beach, the sea and dunes, we really appreciated. They helped us to regain energy and be at rest. And yet, the playing with nephews and nieces, friends and girlfriends, meeting people there where they are, in the nice and less nice things of life is what we experienced as the most valuable (and the most intensive). To be together and share your life is something else as meeting each other through Skype/Face Time.

The first weeks being back in Kep were really adjusting to all five of us. Some unexpected setbacks didn't help either, and we really had to pull through. But now we are back on track again.

We are grateful for the way our children communicate that they like to live here and that we can see that in their everyday life. Even though they do miss their family and friends and girlfriends in the Netherlands of course. After this furlough we found a nice new rhythm with a bit more rest

and variety between work, school and just being a family. We are glad with it.

Despite this new rhythm, the climate and the way things up here are more or less arranged, make the everyday life intense and strenuous. Most often it stays hard work every day.

For sure when unexpected things happen, a broken down water pump behind the house and no running water when the children just stand full of soap under the shower. To go outside in the dark to see if you can get it back to function again. And otherwise taking a bucket of water from the water container outside. And when that one has been repaired again the pump in front of the house spontaneously breaks down. And the spare part you need for that appears the next morning to be sold already. They make the promise that tomorrow it will be there. But you can never be sure. Mice. A dead one in the gutter, from which we use the rainwater to do laundry, take a shower, filter the water. So Mart-Jan climbs through a hatch on the slobbery roof to fish for it. Endless lines of ants come in search of sweet. All the coverings for on the bread have to be in the refrigerator every time. An enormous nest of hornets, with hundreds big wasps in our roof (with again great many thanks to Lucas – Erin who took it away just before we returned!)

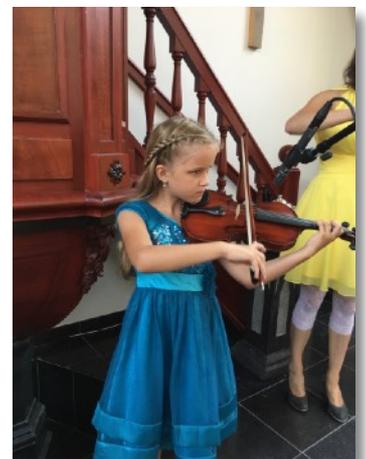
Lately even a snake must have entered the house as we found his skin

in Joy's bedroom. Hopefully only once (maybe because the house was less intensively lived in during our furlough). 'O, do we still have yoghurt for breakfast?', as the bread-bake machine did stop during the night when the power went off. Heavy rainfall during the night when the wind blows the rain inside the house (it pours) and to discover that you can't really do anything about it. So sometimes we run around into the night with a vat and old towels to prevent everything to get wet downstairs. This is not a complaint (!) and these are luckily not insurmountable things, but it might give you a glance on the things that take quite often our time and energy up here. For many things we find a creative solution, but it is sometimes intensive. That is honest too. We learn by falling and getting up again. Or to laugh about it loudly for a moment (or to cry) and then quietly move on again.

## HOME SCHOOLING

The new school year has started in the Netherlands. The children have enjoyed their time on the Regenboogschool in their own classes. To Amy it was a bit exciting at first, the first days, but after a week she got used to it nicely.

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We notice that Joy and Micha grow older and more independent to maintain friendships themselves, here in Kep but also in the Netherlands.

And now at home to school again. The children take it well. We can notice that we do this already a couple of years and have a good rhythm. There is space for some extra things next to the normal lessons. Joy and Micha play a lot of music. They can do this together more often. Also this we enjoy. And Joy started a new book about Sanne.

To teach three eager to learn children on different levels and with different subjects, sometimes is quite a challenge to Talitha. This challenge can be expanded by in and out of the house running children from our community. An open, not isolated house in a local community is cool, but also peppy. There happens a lot around the house, also during school time. Sometimes children from the neighbourhood decide not to go to school that day but enjoy playing with us.

But, even though we are a bit flexible they will have to wait until we have finished school. And they will, for hours in a tree in the garden, or on the

swing. Or, when I don't look for a moment, to stand on the threshold of the house to see for the tenth time in an hour whether we might have finished.

At the end of the week it sometimes spins around in my head. Then all the Khmer stories, the ideas that Amy delivers about the four seasons, parts of submarines (Micha), parts of the human body (Joy), topography of the Netherlands and Europe, the hunters and the farmers, long divisions, the wigs and revolutions, English and Dutch grammar (and so much more), it all mingles. Time to have weekend.

Next month, just before Christmas break, we can again welcome a new teacher from the Netherlands. God has supplied in a few extra hands that were necessary, without us searching actively for them. Jessica van Assche from Rotterdam will support us the coming six months with e.g. teaching. We look forward to her coming. To Joy this is very special indeed, because when she went with her niece to a 'Vast en Zeker-kamp' during our furlough, Jessica happened to be her leader. So they know each other already a bit!

#### GIVE THANKS WITH US:

1. For having a good furlough in the Netherlands
2. For Lucas and Erin; we are super grateful for the way they took charge of the tasks at Shalom Valley during our absence
3. For the progress at Shalom Valley – there has been done so unbelievable much work and it all looks so beautiful
4. For Jessica's coming

5. For our friends Pon and Srey An
6. For friends and girlfriends

#### PRAY WITH US:

1. For health. Micha just had an ear infection which stayed pretty long. Pray also for further healing of his foot
2. For Eva and her family. The latest news said that it goes, considering the circumstances, reasonably well with them. Eva's mother needs time to recover further, she fell the most awful and has fractures on several places and a hard brain contusion. We understood that with Eva the fracture in her hand didn't heal well and that she might need surgery.
3. For all five of us: to give these unexpected happenings and impressions from the past months a place.
4. For Jessica, as she is preparing to come to Cambodia
5. For Shalom Valley – that it will really be a place of peace for those who come there
  1. Wisdom and insight about hiring new people
  2. That new people will feel themselves welcome and will see something of the Lord Jesus in the team
  3. Safety during building work
  4. The first Alongsiders camps that will be held the coming month
  5. For Phearom; that he will feel himself at home in Kep soon and do his new task with pleasure
  6. For Mart-Jan in accompanying all those processes that go along with each other

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#### Financial support:

Alongsiders does not pay us a salary. We're very grateful for those who want to support us financially. If you want to do so, then please use the Dutch bank details as stated below:

Foundation: Nehemia (ANBI)

Please note: Project church-work  
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On [www.2followus.com](http://www.2followus.com) you can find more information about our Homefront Team and other people who are helping them so that you can stay connected to the work in Cambodia!



*"Our help and our expectation is from God, our Lord. He who created everything will not let go what He started. Grace and peace of God the Father, by Jesus His Son, Immanuel. He lives in us with His Spirit. Halleluja, Amen."* From: Sela ( a Dutch music group).

Kind greetings from us from Kep,

Mart-Jan & Talitha, Joy, Micha and Amy



# Furlough 2018

IMPRESSION

