

# Insites



April 2016

It was early in the morning and still dark at the start of our 4:30am journey. We were hurried through the city of Siem Reap and then down a dusty road, through a dense jungle, past a nipping horse and out onto a broad path. As the dim dawn light crept forward and the rooster crowed we saw our first faint glimpse of Angkor Wat. We had come for the sunrise and were not disappointed as this perfectly oriented temple complex was revealed in the early light.



The temple has a quincunx architectural form with four towers at the corners of the square and one central tower which is symbolic of Mount Meru the dwelling place of Hindu gods. If you approach from the long causeway at the front center you see only three towers and the whole is only gradually revealed as you move through the complex. It is both complex and beautiful offering vignettes for contemplation... towers, covered galleries, carvings, porches, courtyards, etc. It is in effect - through its geometric pattern and in its kinesthetic experience - a three dimensional mandala. Once inside even the steps force you to pause and look, contemplating your place in the world. Angkor Wat is in many ways a replica in miniature of the cosmic universe.

Mythical Naga, seven headed serpents, form a balustrade that leads you across the causeway over a moat, symbolic of the cosmic ocean. You feel compelled inward past two libraries to the six pair of stairways with platforms leading to a central courtyard. The scale of this structure, a temple covering over 500 acres, is hard to imagine from photos. With entrances large enough for elephants, it is the largest active place of worship in the world.

Yet, because of the detail of the architecture and the carvings it is remembered as an intimate space. From the high towers shaped like lotus buds to the framed views from long galleries to beautifully carved reliefs our optic senses are continually engaged. The reliefs are varied in subject, whether celestial Aspara dancers, Khmer battles or back to the beginnings in the creation story of the Churning of the Sea of Milk, all have a unifying program related to Hindu cosmology.



Angkor Wat was constructed in the 12th century as a funerary temple for King Suryavarman II. This is seen not only in the programming of the reliefs but also in the orientation of the structure as a whole reflecting the symbolism of the connection between the setting sun and death. Seeing the temple come to new life with the rising of the sun is truly amazing.



The power of this temple is such that even with 6,000 tourists per day it is still possible to feel the strength and intimacy of its symbolic meditation on the meaning of the universe.

## Events:

NPM  
Convention

Houston, TX

July 11 - 16,  
2016

FDLC  
National  
Meeting

Albany, NY

October 5 - 7,  
2016

Dallas Ministry  
Conference

Dallas, TX

Sept. 29 - Oct. 1,  
2016

## Webinars:

Sacred Art & Ar-  
chitecture within  
a Multicultural  
Church

Rebecca Berru  
Davis

April 21, 2016  
1:00 PM EST

## New

## Members:

Greg J. Lewis

Allied

Beaverton, OR