

Reflections from Bangkok

August, 2007

Please pray for:

- My housemate and co-leader Nim who is recovering from a car accident in early August. She has a broken hip but it is healing well so far.
- One of our church members (and my second father when I lived in Permsup), Ratchai, who is healing after surgery on his cataracts
- Michelle's arrival in September and for the support-raising of the others who will join our team in December and January: Lexie, Lisa and Christy.

By Sara Stephens

Entering a new season of ministry and leadership

Now that I have a pretty good grasp on the Thai language (though I think I will always feel like I still need to grow) I am now in full-time ministry mode. I have two main roles: one with the foundation we partner with and one with the church in my slum, Phot-hong.



Kids praying during church in my house

I am now the "assistant to the director" of the Thai Peace Foundation, working to manage the administration and policy aspects of the organization. Some of my primary duties currently are:

- Overseeing our two Thai administrative staff
- Working to configure and implement a new accounting computer program
- Improving our program reporting and keeping us

legal

I am still helping to lead our house church in Phot-hong, which regularly attracts 15-20 kids. It has given me such joy to see them singing worship songs from heart, understanding Bible stories (and often asking me to tell them new ones), and praying to Jesus.

I am continuing to develop relationships with women in the community, and my landlord Nong has expressed interest in starting a small group to learn more about Jesus. I will probably begin this with Nong and some of her friends on Sundays, starting in September.

In the coming months I will also help to mentor our new teammates (all women) as they come and move into the slums with us.

I feel like I am thriving in this current balance of managerial work and relational ministry. Life and work certainly has its challenges but I still feel like there is no where else I would rather be right now!

Our first Servant Partners All-Staff Gathering in Ensenada, Mexico

Since Servant Partners came into existence in 1993 it has never had an all-staff gathering of any kind, until this August.

From the 12th to the 17th, nearly 100 Servant Partners staff from all over the world came together in Ensenada for Scripture study, worship and prayer, field site reports, and unity-building.

It was exciting for me to get to finally meet people I had only heard of. People who had moved into slums in the Middle East, so hostile to Christians they have to change their names. Others who are laboring in violent inner-city LA neighborhoods. Latino missionaries from our sending site in Honduras who feel called to serve the poor abroad, though they themselves are poor. Many of my current heroes of the faith were there. And it was so great to feel a sense of unity in calling, fellowship in suffering, and shared vision for our cities.

Our current and future Bangkok teammates were also all there, and we spent one full afternoon talking about logistics of future team life, sharing our hopes and concerns and praying for each other.

I came away from the time blessed with a deeper sense of hope and partnership in this work of serving the world's poor.

Studying Philippians at the staff gathering



August, 2007

God opens a door for my friend Muk

During my home assignment in the States I had the opportunity to visit my friend Tara Russell who I originally knew in Bangkok. She and her husband Jeff, who is getting his MBA at Yale, consider their calling to be using business to bring about positive change in the world.

I shared with Tara about my friend Muk who I lived next door to in Permsup, who is an amazing seamstress. Many of you in the States saw her handiwork in the Thai silk dress I wore a couple times. She made that for me using her foot-press sewing machine in her one-room slum shack. She works in a tailoring shop making silk outfits for the elite of the city, yet earns barely enough to live on. The lion's share of her work's profit goes to the store owner.

For quite a while now I have felt there must be a way Muk can earn a better living. With her skills, surely she can create something on the side that would be marketable, or get out from her current job situation and work more independently.

In one of those God moments, at the same time I was sharing about Muk with Tara, her husband was on a school-related trip to South Africa and met a businessman interested in starting a tailoring business and outsourcing to Thailand. Not long after he hired the Russells to set up the Bangkok-side of what will become an online tailored-shirts business.

Soon after I returned to Bangkok the Russells got in touch with me about Muk being a potential part of this business. In August Jeff came to negotiate with tailoring shops, order packaging, and meet with me and Muk. For now, Muk will help with packaging and shipping of the shirts once a week, and in the future the hope is to employ her as one of the tailors.

It has been fun to help out with this new venture, translating for Jeff in negotiations and working with Muk. I'm excited for this opportunity for Muk to earn some extra income and in the future to possibly have better work doing what she already loves to do. I have hopes that this could even lift her out of poverty!



Muk with her sewing machine at home

The Next Level Initiative— responding to how God is growing SP

The work of Servant Partners in slum communities around the world is growing! The most exciting part of this growth, to me, is the addition of Latin Americans to our family of missionaries.

We currently have training and sending sites in Brazil and Honduras, and in 2008 Servant Partners is planning on sending out 9 Latinos to the mission field: 4 Hondurans, 4 Brazilians and 1 Uruguayan. They will join teams working in places like the Middle East and India. Our teams are becoming more diverse and better reflecting the cultural mosaic of God's body.

These missionaries will raise support from their

home churches, but many of those members are themselves poor, struggling to support their pastor. Servant Partners feels called to help these would-be missionaries get to the field by drawing on the abundance of wealth we have in the States.

The organization will help with airfare, training, language learning and health insurance. For 2008 this will come to \$7950 for each missionary. If you would like to help with this goal, please send a donation with a note indicating "Next Level Initiative" to:

Servant Partners— 1550 E. Elizabeth St., Suite U-12A
Pasadena, CA 91104

Finances: My personal financial needs are met, but additional donations to my ministry expenses can always be put to good use. If you'd like to give, contact me or refer to the info on giving on my website (see below).

Please pray for:

- Wisdom for me as I balance my roles between the slum and the foundation office
- My financial support— as the dollar is weakening here, I may need to increase my budget
- My physical health, which is not as strong as it was when I arrived

Coming up:

- Michelle Kao will arrive September 13
- I will lead the manuscript study for our leaders' training in September, and a teaching on women in leadership in October
- I plan to begin an adult group of some form in Phothong for discipleship and prayer in the coming weeks.

Sara Stephens

*c/o Thai Peace Foundation *3750/9 Soi Lad Phrao 146/1 *Klong Chan, Bangkok *Bangkok 10240 Thailand
sara@santisukpartners.org <http://www.sarainbangkok.net> <http://www.santisukpartners.org>