

# Reflections from Bangkok

## Please pray for:

- Lisa and Resty, who are hoping to join us in April. Pray especially for Lisa's fundraising and for Resty's visa application.
- My health, as doctors are working to stabilize my thyroid condition and treat a heart arrhythmia.
- Dave as he gets ready to leave the field in June, and Kevin and his family as they make plans for returning in July.
- The upcoming Songkran holiday. Pray for Lexie and Michelle who are travelling upcountry, and for good bonding during our community's festivities.

By Sara Stephens

April, 2008

## There's a reason Jesus sent them out in pairs...

After living in my current slum community by myself for over a year, I finally have a teammate with me. Christy moved to Bangkok and into my house in January and has been a huge blessing to both me and our community.

Having a partner in Phothong has made an immense difference in almost everything. From being able to speak English with someone, to making neighbors feel more comfortable coming into our house, it is a whole different experience living and serving in my slum now.

One fun development has been a new friend named Gop. As Christy is learning Thai she has been on the lookout for language partners. Recently a woman from a few houses down asked us about doing a language exchange— helping Christy with her Thai in exchange for some simple English lessons. We've been meeting with her 3 times a week now, with my main role being translating between the two of them. It has also been a great opportunity to ask questions about Thai culture, the slum, and her life. At our last

meeting she asked about Jesus and I got to share my faith with her— she seems definitely interested, as does her mother, Tia, who has come to visit a couple times, too. Pray for this family!



Christy and I with our neighbor Yaai Gai at her grandson's birthday party.

Our children's program is currently on hold as our Thai partners have had to stop helping out. But one of Christy's strengths is with working with kids, so we are hoping to start up again soon. In the meantime, we have been enjoying cooking for neighbors, singing karaoke together at community parties, and sharing our faith in simple ways.

## Working with two of my favorite Thais, Jin and Fai

In the Thai foundation we partner with, I am overseeing and working closely with two Thais my age, Jin and Fai. I have been blessed by their friendship and inspired by their faith in spite of difficult life circumstances.



Jin, our visa worker, and Fai, our foundation's bookkeeper

They are also both hard workers and full of integrity. Jin has taken over the role of our previous visa worker who moved to Ghana, and has been such a servant to our mission

team. She had to learn her role quickly, and ran into some difficulties with a couple volunteers' visas, but I never hear her complaining. I've been helping to train her to keep track of visa and work permit renewal tasks, but she hardly even needs my help. She also did an amazing job leading the kids' ministry at our recent church camp.

Fai is our bookkeeper and I have been working with her to develop year-end reports for this financial year. Neither of us have an accounting background, but together we've been able to get the job done. Next I'll be training her to use a new accounting computer program that I'm still configuring for our organization. I've been grateful for her patience with me as I'm learning all this for the first time, too!

April, 2008

## The Spirit is moving in Phothong

This wasn't the first time I had talked about faith in Jesus with the family at the back of lane 2. They had shared previously about going to church, and how Christians believe in a God who just heals people on our command—lay hands on someone and poof! They're as good as new. I got the sense that Christianity seemed foolish to them, too easy, a lot of smoke and mirrors.

But I can't remember—maybe Jit wasn't there during that conversation. Because on this afternoon, as I was inviting the family to our Easter party and talking about the resurrection, her tone in remembering church was very different.

"When I first started going I couldn't read at all, and I had a health condition that made my whole body hurt. After just a few weeks I could read the whole Bible, the song lyrics—everything. And I was totally healed physically. I believed!"

She told about other miracles. Her Thai neighbors

were listening, engaged by her testimony.

"But then the woman who would take me to church moved away and I didn't think I could get there on my own. So I decided I should probably just go back to being Buddhist, the Thai religion—it's what I was raised as and I should be faithful to that."

Pray that Jit would return to her healer and maker, and that we would be able to foster a worshipping community within Phothong. Would God use us to bring the church to her!

Lots of people are talking about faith these days. People are asking us questions, about 15 women and 30 kids came to our Easter party (and themselves shared with newcomers that the occasion was to celebrate Jesus' resurrection), and folks just generally seem more open to exploring faith in God. We currently have no Thai Christian partnership and are even more dependent on God to work here. Pray for Jesus to plant his church in Phothong!



Our neighbors Jiap and Jit

## Church camp at the beach

Last weekend our house church network held a church camp at Jomtien beach. It was exciting for a number of reasons. At our first planning meeting we nearly canceled the camp entirely because of a number of obstacles. But we remembered together that every year things come up that make it appear impossible for the outreach to happen, but then God responds to our faith and clears the way.

This year was the most Thai-led camp we've had, with missionaries playing supporting and consulting roles, but staying mostly in the background. Three of the four speakers and most of the small group leaders were Thais, and all of the logistics and scheduling was done by Thais. Newcomers seemed to feel comfortable there, even the many Buddhists who attended. I

think it helped them see that they can follow Jesus and still stay fully Thai.

My main contribution was devotionals for each morning, which we went through as pairs. A number of these pairs were evangelistic, pairing believers and non-believers, so I wrote the devotionals with that in mind. I got a lot of feedback that they were very helpful.

My devotional time was one of the highlights for me. I met with an older woman, Ba Suphorn, who poured her heart out as we met. She shared things she said she hasn't shared with anyone. I was able to pray for her and she said she thanked God we were paired together. It was really joyful to be used in that way.

**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:

- These women in particular who we have the most relationship with in our slum: Yut, Nong, Gop, Jit, Jiap, Gai.
- My preparation of year-end financial reports for the foundation and the configuration of our new accounting software.

### Coming up:

- Team retreat to Koh Chang, April 30 -May 3
- My final Chalmers class on church-based informal microfinance, April-June
- A trip to the Isan province in May with neighbors

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