

Stories from SOUTH EAST ASIA



10 Days
Prayer Guide

Christ's love
compels us to pray

South East Asia



CHRIST'S LOVE COMPELS US TO PRAY

for those who are “harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”

Whenever I travel in South East Asia there is always the same call, “do you have more workers you can send to us?” I am often deeply moved by this as I recall the words of Jesus that the harvest is plentiful but the labourers are few. Whether it’s seeing masses of people living in fear of spirits, or one migrant woman struggling to cope with her HIV and AIDS diagnosis, the Gospel is Good News to those living and dying without it.

I am moved by the need but also convicted by the power of prayer. I can think of times when our team and organisation have prayed fervently for God to raise up more workers in hard to reach communities. In response, we have seen God do incredible things and provide in extraordinary ways. We have seen labourers raised up, teams established and people become the first believers in their least reached communities.

Would you join in praying for the region of South East Asia? Would you pray for more Gospel workers? Would you pray for God to remove barriers to His Gospel? Would you pray for many to taste and see that God is good and put their trust in His Son?

By prayer,

Dr Diane Marshall

SIM Leadership Mentor/Researcher





day

1

HOPE FOR LIFE: HIV and AIDS

Fon's story isn't just about the experience of a poor orphaned girl who suffered abuse and was sick with HIV from her first husband, who was polygamous. Although, that certainly is part of it. Fon's story intersects with a larger issue in Thailand: access to healthcare, particularly for migrants, and especially for undocumented ones.

When Fon first came in contact with SIM's Hope for Life (HFL) Thailand's ministry, she was dying. She was an undocumented worker, one of many in Thailand from countries like Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos, and didn't know how to get help. A HFL Thailand team member took Fon to hospital where she was able to buy insurance and access antiretroviral medication. They helped to educate her about the medication and how to manage her HIV.

Fon's story is a miracle - an orphan with no family or country, once sick and dying - now registered as a migrant in Thailand, married, with friends and family, healthy and alive. Perhaps the greater miracle is that she has not let bitterness stain her life but has instead chosen a life of joy. For those who, like Fon, once were without a family, country and identity - there is a God who loves and cares for the orphans, widows and foreigners.

PRAY

- For SIM's Hope for Life Thailand team who work with vulnerable sectors of Thai society, including migrants.
- For people in Thailand living with and affected by HIV. Pray they find Hope for Life.



day

2

Identity and the Arts

Story from SIM Australia
Worker in Asia

“This is the first time I have felt that I can be a Christian and an indigenous person at the same time.” (Workshop participant from the Bla’an people group)

This is the kind of comment we receive after we run ethnoarts workshops for indigenous Christians in the Philippines. In our workshops participants think through all of their own creative art forms, including music, drama, verbal arts and visual arts and which ones might be appropriate to use in worship and to spread the Gospel (using the Bible as their authority).

Our goal is to encourage indigenous believing communities to consider using their own languages and art forms to worship and teach others about God. Often church planters here just copy the church culture that they are familiar with in new locations, leading indigenous people to struggle to see how Christianity relates to their everyday lives.

We are working in a country where certain ethnic groups have been labelled

“Christian”, others as a religious minority, and still another ‘animistic’. How can one follow Jesus if not from a Christian people group? Our participants’ art forms are deeply connected to their ethnic identities and it is interesting to see them come to grips with what it means to follow Jesus within their people group and cultural setting. Participants have learnt that they can be themselves, in their community that God has placed them in, and still follow Jesus.

PRAY

- For more people gifted in the arts to serve God through cross-cultural mission.
- For missionaries using local artistic communication forms to effectively spread God’s word.

day

3

Matt Tingle
SIM Australia Mission Worker



'The Centre' presents a unique opportunity for Thai university students to practice conversational English with native English speakers and to connect with a loving Christian community. Students enrol in English classes and have the option of 'hanging out' to eat together, drink coffee, play games, participate in social nights and chat. For most students this is the first opportunity they have had to meet a Christian and to hear about Jesus.

Kheeng* has been hanging out at the centre for the last six months. He has observed a lot- various events where testimonies have been shared, staff prayer meetings, house church. He started by joining in socially and on a surface level, revealing little of his deeper thoughts and feelings. This last week Kheeng has started asking questions, *"I bought a Bible last week but it is very hard to understand, how does it all fit together?" "Can you read the Bible with me?" "If a person wants to be a Christian what do they need to do?"*.

Kheeng has said that he is not ready to follow Christ but we praise God for how His Holy Spirit is obviously at work. Please continue to pray for Thai students like Kheeng who are seeking something more in life.

*Name changed to protect identity

PRAY

- For students like Kheeng who are asking questions. Pray they find Jesus.
- For the teachers to have wisdom and perseverance as they connect with students.



The Ministry of “Hanging Out”





day

4

Serving God through Sports

PbeeMai was out drinking – it was two in the morning but he hadn't had enough and wanted to keep going. He somehow wound up on the side of the street, sitting on the sidewalk and feeling like he was fighting a battle with himself for who he wanted to be and the feeling of helplessness that he couldn't do it.

"I wanted to be good," PbeeMai says. "I wanted a saviour. I knew I couldn't be a good person and get to heaven on my own."

That realisation pushed him to turn to Jesus, and today he works with Sports Friends, coordinating the ministry in the Bangkok and Isaan region in Thailand. He builds relationships with the volunteers and kids. It is something that touches his heart – seeing the relationships sports can foster.

"I love the kids and I feel so encouraged by the coaches. Some of these kids don't even have soccer shoes at some of the camps we

do, but they still come," he says.

There were parts of PbeeMai's life that he left behind when he began to know more about Jesus, and grew in deeper relationship with Him; the anger and pride, the need for popularity, the nights out drinking and partying.

"I never thought that there would be a way for me to serve God through sports. I had no idea."

PRAY

- For more coaches like PbeeMai who can use their own experiences of deciding to follow Christ to mentor kids in their communities.
- For the hundreds of local football clubs that are currently mentoring youth throughout Southeast Asia as a result of Sports Friends coach training.

Loving the Persecutor: The Bamar

"We've got some interesting reactions from people when we tell them we want to reach the Bamar," Sandra says. "There are a lot of people who have seen them as oppressor of others"

Myanmar has a long, complicated history when it comes to its ongoing ethnic conflict. The nation is comprised of over 135 ethnic groups, with the majority Bamar people making up about two-thirds of the population. The Bamar control the military, and thus hold power – and it is the Burmese military that has been raging a bitter, long-standing war against ethnic armies.

"With religion and politics, it goes hand in hand," says Ron, a lecturer at a Christian seminary in Yangon. "The Bamar see the ethnic groups who are Christians as traitors, followers of the West," Ron says. "And the ethnic groups see the Bamar as colonisers, suppressors. The British might have left, but then the Bamar came and have suppressed us."

While the ethnic armies are not exempt from committing abuses, the Burmese army has been the main perpetrator of some of the worst violations of human rights against the ethnic groups such as

the Muslim Rohingya people: murder, torture, rape, forced labour, and much more.

But these are the people Sandra and Tim hope to reach out to – the people seen as oppressors in a nation with a long history of oppression. They want to live alongside these people, speak their language, and build deep connections with them.

"It's pagoda after pagoda after pagoda. It's really the heartland of Buddhism there," Sandra says of the central region. "Even though there are Christians in Myanmar, there's a group of people [the Bamar] that don't know the living God. That's the one thing that has kept us here: we feel that God has called us to be here to tell people of the living God and Jesus Christ."

PRAY

- For the Lord of the Harvest to raise up more workers to witness to the Bamar people.
- For God to grow His Kingdom amongst the Bamar.

day

6

Fallen through the Cracks: Ayutthaya

The ruins that remain in the ancient Thai city of Ayutthaya speak of its magnificence and grandeur in an era gone. Stretching back to 1350, the city was the capital of Thailand for more than four hundred years. The ruins of the old city, including temples and monasteries, have been recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Today the city is home to approximately one million people and teeming with factory workers, university students and forgotten rural communities. The city is very much hidden in the shadow of Bangkok, which is perhaps why the city has fallen through the cracks for mission agencies and church planters.

The majority of people living in Ayutthaya are Thai Buddhist with many citizens seeing themselves as part of an ancient community. Many take pride in their Buddhist heritage that runs deeply in their identity. Roughly ten percent of the population are Muslims, and there are no known missionaries or local Thai believers working amongst or engaging this community.

Ayutthaya is home to eleven churches and made up of mostly Christians from other provinces. For each believer, there are roughly 1500 people who have not heard the Gospel. Please join us in praying that God would raise up resilient and godly men and women to plant churches amongst the Ayutthaya and be Christ's witnesses.



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PRAY

- For workers with the following skills: university ministry, language teaching, sports ministry, business, and Missionary Kid education.



Burrito Blessings: Transforming Lives through Business

Pawn is beaming as she finishes wrapping a burrito – stuffed to the brim with marinated pork, beans, and salsa, amongst other fresh ingredients and swathed in a homemade tortilla – and leans across the side of her truck to hand it to her customer. Pawn is the owner of Border Run, a food truck in Chiang Mai, Thailand that sells burritos.

Before Border Run, Pawn worked as a maeban, a house helper. Pawn is a single mother raising two daughters – one is her niece, her late sister's daughter – and at the time, her maeban salary wasn't enough. She would also have to look for another job whenever the family employing her left.

Pawn's Border Run business opened in February 2016. The SIM missionary family that helped coach Pawn with her business has now returned to the United States, yet Pawn has been standing on her own two feet, taking care of her business. She's hired

two employees and on busy days, sells up to 60 burritos. She has been able to pay back her start up loan ahead of time.

"Everything has been God's plan, and God has blessed me the most. I'm so thankful", Pawn said.

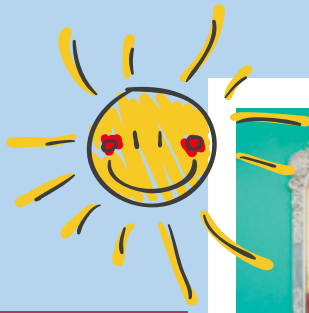


PRAY

- That missional businesses would embody Christ-centred values and relationships. For more people skilled in business to use their profession for mission.

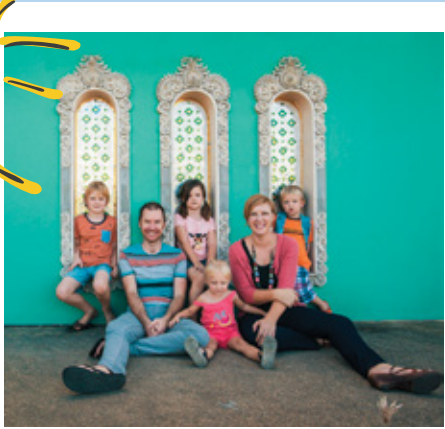
day

8



Seen and Unseen: Families on Mission

SIM Australia Mission Worker
in Thailand



Just outside the window where I sit in my favourite coffee shop is a spirit house. There are so many here, I don't really notice them anymore. A cup of Fanta, a snack and incense are offered in hopes that the spirits will stay happy and AWAY. These little gods we can see, in all their beautiful colours and shiny gold have caused confusion for my children. My youngest proudly prostrated herself before a shrine in a local shop; she had "bowed to God". One of my sons has helped his Buddhist friend make offerings to the spirit dog, and later was a little confused why we don't do this. They are caught in a battle between the seen and unseen in a way I never had to face as a child. We've tried to explain the reality of spirits and the need to respect them, and that we don't try appease the spirits with offerings. We have nothing to fear because our God is big and powerful. He can't be seen, but has His angels all around us. But for my children, there is a tug between the seen gods and the unseen God.

PRAY

- For Missionary Kids to love the unseen God, and wisdom for their parents in a place where spirits are so feared and honoured.
- For the hearts of the Thai people to see the painted cement and wood that they are bowing to. Pray that their hearts will open to our unseen God.

Filipino Muslims

He saw the group of university students from a distance and approached. They were packed into a crowded public area on a campus that is 98 percent Muslim students. Ibrahim approached them with a simple introduction.

"I am a storyteller," he said.

They looked intrigued as he told them the Bible story of Jesus healing the paralytic man.

"We came to the part of the story where Jesus forgave the sins of the paralytic man," Ibrahim said.

"One student said 'I didn't know that Isa (Jesus) can forgive sins.' I heard the sincerity in his voice. I knew that he is searching for forgiveness of his sins and God revealed to him through the story that Jesus is able to

forgive his sins."

Ibrahim is indeed a storyteller. But he wasn't always. He grew up a Muslim on Jolo Island in the Philippines and it wasn't until his early twenties that he came to faith in Isa. In a region where religious hostilities have persisted for centuries, his faith cost him his relationships in his community and he was forced to sever ties.

Today, Ibrahim tells stories from the Bible to people who don't know Isa. He also teaches other Christians how to share the Gospel with Muslims through story. According to Ibrahim and many of his colleagues, oral Bible methods are a powerful tool for building bridges and he has a passion to see many more follow Christ.

PRAY

- For more workers. There are 1.1 billion Muslims in Asia but Christians willing to reach out to them are few. Pray for a wave of new workers with a passion for this ministry.
- Pray for the local Filipino church to be empowered to reach out to their Muslim neighbours.

day

10

God of the City: Church Planting in Bangkok



© Devin Kho

Bangkokians, like their fellow city dwellers, are well-versed in the urban pace of life in Thailand's capital and most populous city.

The way that global and Western culture mingles with traditional Thai culture makes for a city of extremes. Ancient ways of life juxtapose with modern living: monks in their orange robes on the BTS skytrain, and ornate Buddhist temples and skyscrapers coexisting in the cityscape. There is overwhelming wealth next to poverty, and the city's stratified socioeconomic classes are more apparent than elsewhere in Thailand.

Bangkok – with an estimated 9 million residents and 14 million living in the greater metropolitan area – is not what most people have in mind when they use the terms “unreached” or “least reached”.

Yet its people are still in great need of the Gospel – in a city of millions and in a country where Christianity hovers at just 1% percent of the population – the average Bangkokian may never meet a Christian or hear about Jesus Christ. This includes everyone from a child living in the slums to the most “hi-so” (Thai slang for “high society”) Thai ladies.

Reaching the city begins from within the church – building up and empowering Thai Christians in their relationships with God in the midst of an urban narrative that encourages fulfilment in career and materialism, while simultaneously fostering an environment where isolation and loneliness easily abound.

PRAY

- Thank God for the diversity of Bangkok, with a population of 9 million (and more who commute into the city for work).
- For Thai Christians living in Bangkok, that they would live out their faith in their workplaces and non-church settings.

WHAT DOES CHRIST'S LOVE COMPEL YOU TO DO?

Thank you for joining your prayers to ours for the region of South East Asia. May the Lord raise up many workers for the Harvest! For more SIM prayer resources please visit:

sim.org.au/prayer

If you think God might be prompting you to take a 'next step', please leave an enquiry with SIM Australia to find out how you can get more involved through praying, giving or going. Start a conversation with a SIM Australia Mission Mobiliser today! To enquire with us please visit:

sim.org.au/enquire





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