

Mission to the World Thailand Andrew & Becky Bronson – May 2007

“Stay in the car for now...” said our pastor as we pulled into the detention facility where 150 Hmong-Lao refugees had been held for the past three months. We were in Nong Khai and accompanying pastor Samran and his wife on a visit to the refugees. Any white people are considered journalists and the detention facility had become wary of any more press for the refugee situation. The Hmong are an ethnic group from Laos (Thailand’s neighbor to the north) which formed a strong resistance to the communist takeover of the nation in the 1970’s. Over the past few decades the Laos government, still communist, has kept a close eye on the Hmong who have survived, even those outside its borders. When a large group of such were found living in the mountains of central Thailand, the Laos government demanded they return to be tried (most likely persecuted, tortured, and perhaps even killed). The Thai government labeled them “illegal aliens” that must be deported. Their unfortunate fate was certain until a number of human rights groups, and then the UN, got involved. We had a chance to visit this small community for an afternoon in February. We made a list of their requests and were able to buy a number of groceries, supplies, diapers, etc. using money donated from a Lao community at our own home church in Dallas. It’s a small world! And it’s an honor to see how God’s people reach out to others in trying times.



Here are some of the Hmong receiving the goods we purchased. Becky is in the far right corner with Kanika, the wife of pastor Samran

Summer in Thailand

Greetings from Thailand. We are well and hope this update finds you the same. The last few months we’ve been living in the perpetual sweat of Thai summertime. Temperatures have soared and kids have swarmed the streets during their break from school. Our ministry center has become a daytime home to many during the break. We’re thankful that the community is growing in how they view our center, as a place for their kids to come and go freely. We also realize and pray against one injured child or offended neighbor that could do great damage to that image.



This is Fert, with a shy friend at the park.

We write this in disbelief that we have been here for eight months! Time has flown by and we’ve been busily involved with all kinds of ministries. Life on the mission field, we’re learning, is filled with loads of, for lack of a better term, “necessary distractions.” We spend a lot of time hosting visitors and short-term workers, communicating with family, friends, and our home office in the states, managing the finances of the team, and other such duties that are definitely necessary, but are outside the traditional definitions of church planting (which is the main goal of our team and Mission to the World). The constant challenge we then face is how to stay disciplined in those core competencies that actually build churches – namely: prayer, relationship building and evangelism, language learning, etc. Pray for us in this, as we continue to learn how to balance schedules and depend upon the Lord in all we do.

Making Friends

Not to give the impression that we aren’t doing some of those missionary things, because we are. We have been so thankful for some of the relationships the Lord has been developing. One example: we have been getting to know one woman who rents a food stall in our local market (where we eat almost daily). Her name is Awe and one day recently, and completely out of the blue, she really shared what was on her heart with us. It turns out she has been having some pretty significant marriage trouble and we got the impression that she doesn’t have many people to

talk to. We are thankful, not that she has problems of course, but that she views us as people who care about her and will listen, support and pray for her. And we’re thankful that we can understand most of what she says, plus communicate our sentiments back to her – completely in Thai.

The Lord has also been blessing our relationships with English students. Here is Becky getting a lesson from two students on how to make spicy Thai papaya salad – a definite favorite.



There is a constant demand for English teaching here. It’s an easy and steady source of meeting Thai people. The challenge has been finding the balance in offering many classes so we have an opportunity to meet many, but not so many classes that our schedules are loaded down with teaching. After eight months, we’ve seen some classes evolve into small communities, where the students become good friends with us and with each other. We’ve also seen some classes fail to really catch on, and after finishing a set of lessons, we’ll try to plug those students into another class or dissolve the class all together. Our prayer is that these small communities of students that do catch on, would be exposed to the Gospel through the friendship of their teacher, and the many ministry events (and Thai worship) that we invite them too. We could see the Lord changing the hearts of an entire class all at once, as they come to hear about Jesus all together for the first time, and they share that experience in community. Pray for this with us!

A final example of how the Lord has been slowly growing our friendships with Thais has been the weekly women’s brunch that meets at our house. There have been about fifteen different women who have come over the last few months, and an average of about eight attending each week. The time has mostly been spent chatting, cooking and eating, though Becky, and a couple of the Thai women on our staff, are trying to intentionally grow that group towards a Bible or book study in which we can introduce them to the Gospel. Pray for this!

สามัคคีธรรมเมืองใหม่

This is the name of our Thai church which began worship services in March. The name in English means, “New City Fellowship.” This is the logo we use on flyers and bulletins.



We’ve enclosed a copy of a recent Sunday worship service bulletin. We know you probably can’t read Thai (if we’re wrong about that please let us know!), but you can use it in your Bible as a bookmark and reminder to pray for this small and new body of

worshipping Christians (and some still Buddhists) on the other side of the world. This is really the most exciting thing we’re a part of! And we’re so thankful that you all continue to support us and God’s work with your prayers and finances.

We’ve averaged about twenty or so at our weekly service, including five to eight staff members. Several regulars have been a group of teenagers from the Mahatthai slum neighborhood we work with. Below is a great picture of a few from the group. Please pray that others we know in the community would come to worship and that as the Scriptures

promise, the Word of God would go out, and would not return void (Isaiah 55:11).



English Camp

Our team recently said goodbye to thirteen folks from two churches in the states, who were here working with us for a long week. During the week we planned a weekend-long English Camp outside of Bangkok. About forty of our one-hundred or so English students attended. It was a lot of fun and an opportunity for our students to hear what it means to be a Christian, and build deeper relationships with our team, both American and Thai. We personally made some great new friendships with Thais over the weekend



Here's a good representation of the mission field: missionaries, short-term team members, local Thai Christian staff, and non-believing Thai friends and students.

Our Ministry Center

Below is a picture of our ministry center, which serves as a church, school, temporary housing facility, you name it. We have really been blessed in leasing this particular facility given its location and size. In Bangkok, the average store operates out of what is called a "shop house." Simply put, it's a four or five story building where the bottom floor opens to the street and is usually used for the family business. The upper floors are where the family lives. Our ministry center is made up of two adjoining shop houses.



Also enclosed with this prayer update, is a letter from our pastor and team leader Dave Veldhorst. Several months ago, our landlord approached us with the news that they would be selling our ministry center. Our lease provides us a right to purchase before any other buyer. Typically we wouldn't be in the real estate buying business, but we feel the Lord has given us a great

facility given its layout and location. Thus, we are seeking to raise the money for the purchase. See the attached letter if you're interested, and thanks for your consideration!

Simply "Christian"

So... that is a quick update on our lives in Thailand. We continue to learn a lot about living overseas in a non-Christian environment, and we have certainly had our moments of feeling overwhelmed by the immensity of the task before us. Though in those times we can turn to the promises of Scripture like Psalm 127:1 which says "Unless the Lord builds the house, its laborers labor in vain." Then we remember that this work is the Lord's and its success ultimately does not depend on our own abilities and efforts.

At other times, there is a sense in which being part of this work is the most exciting undertaking we could possibly imagine. Specifically one thing we've noticed is how refreshing a simple definition of the Christian faith can be. When you live in a country where less than 1% of the population calls Jesus Christ their Lord, a Christian is simply a Christian. When you live in a country where doctrine and denomination hasn't had hundreds of years to develop, Christianity is simply Christianity. Believers here are typically so excited about their faith in Christ. In a bad way, that can cause us to look back towards America with some cynicism. But in a good way, it causes us to yearn for the name "Christian" to mean more to the masses who claim it in the States, like it does to the few here in Thailand. Our prayers are with you, who arguably have an even more immense task before you at home than we do here in this Buddhist nation!



"I pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel..."
(Philippians 1:4-5)

Thank you for your continued prayers, specifically...

- for less "necessary distraction" and more time spent in prayer, language learning, and evangelizing.
- that the Lord would transform the women's group which meets at our house weekly into a Bible study.
- for the fifteen or so children regularly attending Thai worship, and for more to come and believe.
- for our hearts, that we would be missionaries who really believe Psalm 127:1.

Thank you all for your prayers and support. Keep in touch!

*For His Glory,
the Bronsons*

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