

March 2020



# THAI LIGHTS



**THAI TOUR 2019** From December 6-16, 2019, we were very pleased to host our biggest group yet - 38 guests. It was great joy to show them all around Thailand and introduce them to mission work and Thai culture.



The first day we visited an Elephant Camp where where elephants perform - one painted a self portrait.



Some of the guests rode elephants - like we we used to do when we first came to Thailand.



The food during the trip was excellent. One place we even tried to make our own Thai food.



During the trip we joined in the dedication of Sasimum Church (Lao Song) in Nakorn Pathom.



The tour group sang "Angels We Have Heard on High" in many of the churches we visited.



At the Grand Palace in Bangkok, we had an excellent tour guide who patiently explained both the historical and religious significance of the buildings.



Our tour members tried hard to "adapt to the culture" - but sometimes could not.



A brief stop at the Kwai River, Death Railway Bridge and War Museum nearby.



We got to sail, swim and bathe in the Kwai River while at a resort nearby - even under a waterfall.



Our tour members really made the tour a wonderful success. They took the attitude that they were missionaries too - making friends and showing love wherever they went.



"Glad to have an umbrella!"



**NEED FOR SPECIAL PRAYER FOR THE TALAKO** From Jan 22-29 we visited **3 villages**; Laytongku, Bueng Klueng and Saw Mae as well as Umphang, the district administrative center, on the western Thai border. In **Laytongku**, we joined the Free The Opressed team (FTO) as they **put in a solar system and enhanced water supply for the Laytongku Health Center**.

While visiting the Center we **led 3 people to Christ**; a 72-year old Pwo-Karen man suffering from a stroke on his right side and 2 of his grown children. They were glad to cut off their spirit strings. After they prayed to receive Christ as Lord and Savior, we **helped the stricken father sit up, then stand, and raise his right foot and right arm a little**. The nurses promised to help him more with physical therapy and I encouraged his children to help him too. I went back to visit the next day and was shocked to learn that **they had gone back to Burma** for his grandchild's wedding. They said they knew a church there that they would attend. If their father did not get better, they would come back. Later, the Karen evangelist in the area called to tell me that **they had removed the father's catheter and he had died**. However he did receive Christ sincerely, so we trust he is safe with Jesus. This is an **example of the problems with treating people in the jungle**.

We went to **see the spiritual leader of the Talako**. I heard that he was no longer having ceremonies in their worship center which is mostly dedicated to "The One True God" (Kajao Yawa) - the same name that Christians use to describe God. There is even a cross representing forgiveness at one of their 7 worship stations. The Talako spiritual leader and the central council had all **prayed with me some years ago** to receive Christ, but they **refused to be baptized** - saying they had their own ceremony.

I learned several years ago that there is a tree in the Worship Center **where they worship a very powerful spirit**. They also have a **yearly spirit ceremony** around the perimeter of the village. When we started having baptisms, the village leaders called for a meeting where they **wanted all the new Christians to move out** of the village area because they could not have the spirit ceremony with Christians living in the village. The Talako would give them land and help them build new houses. **The meeting ended in a stalemate** without the Christians moving because we had come prepared with the Thai Constitution stating that you have a right to believe in any religion and live anywhere that does not violate Thai law. There are **now 17 Christian families and a thriving church** with more than 100 members in the village.

The last several times we've gone to **visit the spiritual leader**, I have always asked **"How can you hold on to Jesus with one hand and the spirit tree with the other?"**. All the baptized Christians only dared to remove and burn their spirit worship items on the day of baptism. This time when I visited, I asked the spiritual leader **why they stopped having ceremonies**. He said something like **"Now, God has anointed me** to represent Jesus before he returns for final judgement. **All Christians, Buddhists, Talako and others are to come to me**, and I will tie a sacred string around their wrists which will **deliver them from evil and make them righteous**. Those who do not come will not be saved when Jesus comes back to judge."

He asked me what I thought and I asked him, "If they tie the string, does that mean that all the Talako will **destroy their spirit shelves and cut down the spirit tree** in the worship center?". **He was silent**. After his silence, I said "The Bible tells about Gamaliel (Acts 5:38-39) who warned the Jews about persecuting the new Christians. He said that if it is of human origin, it will pass away, but **if it is of God we do not want to be against it**."

The **village head man is very concerned** about the spiritual leader trying to **gain power for himself and splitting the Talako**. During 3 visits to the head man's house, he and 5 adults in his imediate family **all prayed to receive Jesus as Lord and Savior**. They seem very sincere and ask us to follow up with Christian teaching for their children going to high school in Umphang. **Please pray that they make the decision to be baptized**. Our pastor is very close to the head man and goes with him to translate at official meetings in Umphang.

In Bueng Klueng, we **led a workshop for 15 pastors and evangelists** from 15 villages in the area. When we first came **57 years ago, there were no Christians** that we knew of in that area at all. In Saw Mae and Umphang we followed up with the new Christians in the churches that we helped plant and still help support.



Allan with FTO Staff installing new water pipes and solar power systems.



Praying with the headman of the village and his family members.



Meeting with the spiritual leader of the Talako.



Pan Rak Staff, the Blauer Family and Christian Leaders at Laytongku Church.



Workshop in Bueng Klueng. Adapting ancient Karen songs for evangelism.



Late Christmas gifts to pastors and evangelists.

**Thank you for your prayer and support!**

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