



Shining the LIGHT into Dark Areas

As you know one of our primary ministries is to keep track of the growth of the Thai church. From this information maps and reports are created to motivate, inform and encourage the Body of Christ to spread the Gospel into all of Thailand.

For example, one key point we share is that over 60% of the people in Thailand live in sub-districts with no church. 39.5 million people live in these sub-districts. If we want to see more Christians in Thailand these sub-districts need churches.

Earlier this month I traveled with our staff to the mountain village of Nong Jet Neui to attend the 57th Thailand Karen Baptist Convention (TKBC). The TKBC is the largest group of Evangelical Christians in Thailand, they make up 15% of the Thai church. About 5,000 Karen Christians were in attendance at this convention.

The staff set up a booth where information on the Karen churches could be updated from the hundreds of pastors in attendance. I was also given the opportunity to speak to the leaders of the TKBC on the state of the Thai church and the desperate need to reach these sub-districts that have no church.

Without a church how will people living in these areas come to know God?



One of the points I shared with the Karen pastors was that if this nation is to be reached for Christ, the Karen people must play a major part. There is no other Christian group in the world that understands the customs and language of Thailand and yet has so many Christians, over 200,000. There are already many Karen missionaries working among the Thai people but we still need thousands more.

From the data we discovered 45 sub-districts in Thailand that have Karen villages but do not have a church. They were very happy to receive this information. This is a major benefit of having a church database. We can create reports and maps from many different perspectives and highlight areas where the Gospel has not yet reached. Without the database we could not expose the dark areas so that the Light of Christ can shine into them.

Please pray for the Karen Christians; that they would have a burden for their Thai brothers and sisters and that they would be used by God to reach this nation for Christ.

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Riau Islands—Indonesia

While writing this letter Mary Kay and I are on Bintan Island, which is the largest island in the Riau Islands Archipelago. Riau Islands is the fastest growing province in Indonesia and consists of 3,200 islands. Two of the most populated islands in the province are only an hour ferry trip from Singapore.

We travelled to Bintan to meet Pastor Irwan who is the head of the missions department of Gereja Bethel Indonesia (GBI). The GBI is the largest Protestant church organization in Indonesia.

Pastor Irwan's church is located in the City of Tanjungpinang, the capital of the province. We visited him because he has a vision for reaching Indonesia with the Gospel. However, he doesn't have a clear picture as to where the dark areas are in his province. This includes not only physical locations (i.e. islands or districts) but also groups of people.

I first met Pastor Irwan in January at the Global Church Planting Network that was held in Chiangmai. At this meeting I shared about the work we were doing in Thailand. He was very excited about what he heard and asked if we could help do the same thing for Indonesia.



Riau Islands Province of Indonesia

That is why we are here on Bintan Island.

Since Indonesia is such a large country we will initiate the church database/mapping system for the Riau Islands Province. Once this province is up and running we plan to expand into other Indonesian provinces.

Pastor Irwan has already spoken with evangelical leaders from other provinces. He stated they are very interested in adding their churches into the database so they can find out where the dark areas are in their areas of Indonesia.

Please pray for this project as we get it started. Pray that the many dark areas in this country will be exposed to the LIGHT of Christ.

Short-term team to Sukhothai Province, Thailand

In March we hosted a team of college students from Birmingham, Alabama. We went to the City of Sukhothai which is in the province of Sukhothai. Sukhothai is the birthplace of Thai culture and a very strong Buddhist area. During the first part of the week they taught spoken English to about 200 high school students. The latter part of the week they taught 150 Thai school teachers. At each location they shared about their families, food, holidays and other things about life in the United States. However, the most important thing they shared was why they believed in Jesus.

There were several teachers that asked questions about Jesus and how Christianity was different from Buddhism. One man especially had a lot of questions and was very interested in what they said. We are grateful that Pastor "Ken" Authrapon and leaders from his church are able to follow up with those who showed an interest in Jesus.

One of the amazing things about the trip was that the mayor of Sukhothai was so pleased the team had come he organized a cultural show for us and invited all the city leaders to attend. Even better, he paid for everyone's room and board for the whole week! This is the first time I have had a public official pay for a short-term team to come and minister in their city. Because of this unexpected blessing the team was able to bless Pastor Ken's church with an extra gift. Praise the Lord!

