



THAILAND HOUSE CHURCHES SEE EXPLOSIVE GROWTH



People line up for a mass baptism service at Khon Kaen, Thailand.

Over the past eight years, tens of thousands of people in Thailand have come to faith in Jesus Christ, and more than 4,000 house churches have been planted, according to a report from the Association of Free Churches in Thailand (AFT).

In 2016, a country pastor named Somsak sensed a call from God to establish 1,000 churches and welcome 10,000 new believers by the year 2020. It seemed like an impossible task, but Somsak stepped out in faith. He joined forces with Dwight Martin, a missionary born and raised in Thailand, who was serving as research coordinator for the Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand.

Martin had found that 95% of Thai villages did not have a Gospel presence. He and Somsak began to assemble

and train volunteer church planting teams to start the task of establishing churches in villages across the nation. By the end of 2020, AFT reports, the teams had established 1,087 house churches and had welcomed more than 11,000 new members.

The teams then set out to establish churches in every one of the more than 800 villages in Phichit Province, which had the reputation of being resistant to the Gospel. The church planting teams found, however, that many people were yearning for the Good News of Christ. The teams, about 40 of them, would begin with a prayer walk, exploring every road and lane in a village. Following the model Jesus taught His followers in Luke 10, they looked for “persons of peace,” non-Christians who were sympathetic to the Gospel.

When they met such people, they would share their testimonies, explain the Gospel and invite them to pray and put their faith in Christ. From that encounter, a house church would be born.

The teams use a smartphone app to keep track of new believers and their progress in discipleship, and they return weekly for 26 weeks to help establish the new believers in the faith.

Over two years, the teams established house churches in every village, and then

a “district church” in each of the province’s 12 districts. Across Phichit Province, nearly 20,000 people have put their faith in Christ, AFT said.

During 2023, church planters set a goal of establishing house churches in all 1,562 villages of Phetchabun Province, and at last report, that goal was close to being met. AFT has trained more than 800 volunteer evangelists as it continues to work toward the goal of establishing house churches in all 84,646 villages in Thailand.

As of late December, AFT had recorded more than 64,000 new believers in Jesus since 2017, with more than 18,000 of those being baptized. At a single service in November, more than 2,300 people were baptized, followed by a December service with 2,399 people baptized.