

## THAILAND UPDATES

The work is starting to require scaffolding which means working off the ground and therefore added risk. Of course it also means that we are moving closer to completing the walls. Today the first window frames started going in which means the bond beam will soon be able to be poured to tie all of the walls together as a solid base for the steel trusses.

Running 2 welders, a cement mixer, a cut-off saw, a brick saw and various other power tools is placing quite a load on the electrical system with fuses burning out and circuit breakers often tripping. Running repairs need to be made on a regular basis.

Welding of the trusses has progressed well with all of the large trusses completed and painting is in progress. Several smaller trusses also need to be made and it is expected that they will be completed today.

Overall progress is steady and running close to plan, however there is still a lot to do to complete the task we have set for ourselves. In God's strength and timing we are confident we will achieve what he wants.

### **Praise points:**

- Praise God for the progress we are making, the building is really taking shape.
- Praise God that we are suffering no serious illness and that there has been no serious injury.
- Praise God that the team continues to work well together.

### **Prayer Points:**

- Pray for God's sustenance as we work through the heat and tiredness.
- Pray for extra protection as a lot of the work starts to be done at height using scaffolding
- Pray for cooler weather.
- Pray for safety in relation to the use of electric tools.

### **Thursday 1st October and Friday 2nd October**

As we head into the end of the first working week it is unlikely that I will be able to prepare another update before Monday. Good progress continues to be made and the team is working well with all members showing a lot of flexibility in terms of tasks assigned. There have been a few cuts and scrapes that needed to be attended to. Some are still struggling with the culture, the climate and the distance from home but continue to press on towards our goal.

Jeff shared some of his story with us about how God called out to him and led him into service such as trips like this. Jeff also specifically spoke about God's love and how it is absolutely free, no strings attached and available to us even before we are aware of God or his love.

Some of the Thai workers helping lay blocks have not been consistently arriving to work. Unfortunately we did not realise that they needed to be paid each day which may be part of the issue. Hopefully any related problems can be resolved as they are a key part of the team in terms of reaching our goals.

We will be attending church across the road from our hotel on Sunday and also hope to visit some local villages and a waterfall on Sunday.

### **Praise points:**

- Praise God that the weather has been good for working and that we have been able to progress well.
- Praise God that overall the team retains good health and dependence on his sovereignty.
- Praise God that we have the means to share our work around the world through technology.
- Praise God for the great food that we can eat here including the fresh fruit.

### **Prayer points:**

- Pray that cuts and scrapes will not become infected.
- Pray that the monsoons affecting the Philippines will not affect Northern Thailand and that we will have fine and cool (relatively cool at least) weather to work in.
- Pray for spiritual and physical protection as we travel in the Golden Triangle area on Saturday and locally around Chiang Rai on Sunday.
- Pray that possible issues with the local block layers will be easily resolved and they will be happy to work with our team.
- Pray that the leadership team will maintain focus on God and His targets not our own

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## **Saturday 3rd October & Sunday 4th October**

Not exactly Saturday but we finished of the working week at The Naga Hill resort with a refreshing dip in the pool, some cool drinks and a very nice meal. Naga Hill is just across a valley from BNJ so we could look across and see our progress for the week. It was quite satisfying to see how far we had come from an empty slab.

Saturday was an opportunity for a short sleep in (up at 0630 instead of 0530) for breakfast at the hotel and then off in mini-vans at 0730 for a tour of the Golden Triangle area. The Golden Triangle is infamous for the Opium trade. These days thanks largely to the King's mother there is not much opium and more coffee, gardens and micro-industry in the different villages spread throughout the area. We stopped to view various Buddhist temples and I couldn't help thinking how sad it is that the monks sacrifice so much in the vain hope that their family will do better in the next life. They need to know that the gift of life is freely available from the living God not from a gold idol.

We visited the main lookout at the Golden Triangle overlooking the river with borders to Laos and Myanmar. The water was relatively low thanks largely to dams further upstream in China (sounds somewhat familiar for those in SA). We then travelled to Mae Sai (pronounced May Sigh) which is the border crossing to Myanmar. The people in this area are quite different with quite a few people groups represented. The border area has a lot of busy and crowded markets and the sense of oppression is quite strong.

After lunch we drove into the mountains to visit the gardens of the King's Mother. As part of her work to help the poor and to give the people a means of income instead of opium she built a large 'palace' and extensive gardens. The temperature was thankfully much lower in this area.

The TTG Uniting team members headed back to Chiang Rai straight after lunch to meet with 'Little' (sorry not sure of spelling) who had previously spent some time at TTG. She had driven with her mother from Chiang Mai (some 4 hours) for the afternoon meeting. The time together went well.

The team all arrived back at the hotel by 6pm and some headed into the markets while others just got food at the local market. A long but rewarding day that increased the sense of God's heart for the people of this region and the burden that we have to share the good news with them.

Sunday provided an opportunity for an even longer sleep in. Church was at 1000 just across the road at Baan Athitan Church. The service was bilingual including the worship time. The message was focused on the responsibility of men and husbands in particular. After the service lunch was provided and Gary and myself met with a few people who are interested in other building opportunities here in Chiang Rai. These will be followed up and considered in due course based on leading from God.

Sunday afternoon was spent looking around the local area using the mini-buses again. We stocked up on bananas in Banana Road (30THB about 1AUD) bought a large bunch of small but very sweet bananas. We passed by a 'dump' for old spirit houses (these are pretty much mandatory outside your house to offer sacrifices to the spirits) on the way to a Hmong village

in the hills. After some friendly bartering most of us bought something, this is a key source of income for the so called hill tribes who are not fully recognised as citizens in Thailand.

We travelled further into the hills to another village of Yau people. We wandered around the village for a while before heading off to visit a waterfall. There was a bit of a hike to get to the waterfall but it was certainly worth it as the scenery was great and the water very refreshing.

After a very full weekend the team was starting to look forward to work for a 'rest'. The opportunity to look around a bit was a fair reward for the amount of work done. There is a long way to go but the consensus is that we past the half way mark in brick work on Friday and are also well advanced on building the trusses for the roof.

### **Praise points:**

- Praise God for taking care of us and providing fine weather for the first week to allow us to make a lot of progress.
- Praise God for the opportunity we have during the weekend to look around the north of Thailand a little bit and gain a deeper understanding of the culture and of God's heart for these people.
- Praise God for the progress made in the first week and for the flexibility of the team.
- Praise God that opium is no longer the source of income for local peoples.

### **Prayer points:**

- Pray that the free gift of eternal life will be shared with and accepted by the people of Northern Thailand.
- Pray that God will speak to us clearly about other proposed building projects here in Chiang Rai.
- Pray that the people of the Hill Tribes will be properly recognised as citizens and that they will have opportunities for income generation.
- Pray that the good news of the gospel will spread through the hills of Northern Thailand like ripples across a pond.

## **Tuesday 6th October 2009**

Properly back into another working week now. Yesterday was very hot and today is the same. There has been no rain to speak of since we arrived which is good but the downside is that the days gradually get hotter and hotter. The team are flagging a little with the constant hot weather and the overall pace of the work.

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