

July/August 2023



Dear Friends and Supporters of Team Thailand,

What a blessing it is to serve God here in this needy country where, in a land of spiritual darkness, our light for Christ can shine all the brighter! The longer Team Thailand lives and serves here, the more we see the devastating effects of Satan's control over mankind through the deceptive tool of works religion. While the Devil labors to preserve the façade on this false religion called Buddhism, a culture of deviance oozes through the cracked veneer of *wais* (Thai greeting consisting of a slight bow, with the hands pressed together in prayer-like fashion) and smiles to tell the real story.

Thailand has been known as a nation of Buddhists, going back some 900 years throughout the kingdom's history. The tourism industry, the Sangha (Buddhist priesthood), and Hollywood love to present Buddhism as a peaceful, meditative, Eastern religion, which is governed by wizened abbots and monks, who are quietly puttering around centuries-old gardens and temples. Tourists by the millions flow in every year and walk through these ornately decorated temples and gawk at orange-robed monks strolling the grounds, barefooted and serene.

Yet under the golden paint and the carved-glass tiles behind the hand-carved gilded doorways lies a sickeningly vile culture of pride, greed, gambling, covetousness, dissimulation, sodomy, and child abuse. In 2019, the *Bangkok Post* published an article entitled, "Temples No Longer Safe for Children." The article goes on to tell of an abbot (head monk of the temple) who had imprisoned a 13-year-old novice and abused him for many days. The boy was able to escape one night as the abbot slept and place a call to his family. Thankfully, the boy's family lived close by and were able to remove him from the temple. Sadly, these cases are rarely reported, as most boys who become novices are orphans or come from poor families who often live hundreds of miles away. Can you believe that a mother would drop her seven-year-old son off at a temple filled with middle-aged men and just hope for the best?! This cultural, religious tradition feeds into the deviant plans of these sexual predators, and the tragedy is repeated ad nauseam.

I often hear news of temples closing throughout the country due to a lack of local support from the laity. Other temples are left abandoned because there are no monks available to fraternize there. The Thai government has released studies over the past four decades, which thankfully show a general decline in the number of monks and novices. In the early 1960s, there was one monk for about every 50 citizens. Today, there is approximately one monk for every 250 citizens. Some Thai temples are now forced to recruit monks from Myanmar, as fewer and fewer Thai boys join the Sangha and fewer still go into long-term monastic service.

More and more, the people are beginning to suspect that they have been duped, that their families have been deceived, and that their hearts and minds have been hijacked by a false religion that is little more than a complex industry designed to siphon money from the hands of the poor and send it directly to the pockets of the wealthy. Everyone who lives here knows the ugly truth, but most are afraid to speak of it openly for fear that it will tarnish the reputation of king, country, and religion.

In 2022, one temple was left completely empty after the four monks and abbot stationed there were removed by police. And why were all the monks removed? They all tested positive for methamphetamines and were sent to a local drug-rehab facility. The local laity were interviewed and claimed to be in distress because now, since the monks were gone, they could no longer make merit. (The local people make merit by donating money to the temple and giving food to the monks.) What irony! The people could no longer earn credit towards Heaven because they could not donate money and food to a group of men who were using their money to get high?!

But Where There Is Truth, There Is Hope!

The Word of God; Bible-preaching, soul-winning churches; and faithful Christian families are all multiplying in this nation that is drowning in false religion. We are constantly throwing out the lifeline of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Weekly in our ministry and daily throughout the country, sinners are being converted, and souls are being saved!



Continued Church Growth

In our last update, we mentioned Pi Oot and his wife Pi Ooan and the visitors that they have brought to church this year. Several of their visitors are now faithful members of the church in Hua Hin. Even though they live an hour and fifteen minutes away, they get on a bus every Sunday morning, several hours before the services start, to make the long trip to International Baptist Church of Hua Hin.

Update on All Building Projects

Two houses are currently being built on our main property in Cha-Am. These houses will be used by our ministry caretakers. These men and their families will be in charge of guarding the property and caring for the grounds. The houses are being built according to plans drawn up and approved by our local *Au Pau Dtau* ("Land Development Office"). The next phase of this building project will include building a six-room Sunday school/office building and a multipurpose pavilion that will initially serve as our main church meeting hall and will be used permanently as our youth ministries building.

Our second land-acquisition project of International Baptist Church of Nong Phlap, to which many of you recently donated, is currently deciding between four pieces of land in two areas. We are leaning towards a larger piece of land a bit out of the city center that has good electric, water, and road access already. Please pray for wisdom in this decision.

Pray with Us for Future Plans

In October, Missionary Mark Holmes and his family will be visiting Thailand for the first time. I have invited Bro. Holmes to come and work with our team in planning our Summer Bible Clubs. (Our school break is the month of October.) Bro. Holmes runs a very successful Bible Club ministry, known as SMITE, in Nigeria, where they regularly preach the Gospel to hundreds of children and families. He will teach our staff for several days, and then we will go out and implement what we have learned. Please pray, as we plan to host five Bible Clubs in our local areas surrounding the churches. I am praying that God will use this program and increase it every year henceforth.

Pray for Our Team

God has given me the wonderful opportunity to work with dedicated, diligent, sacrificial Christians. Please continue to pray for:

- My family – Tim, Melissa, Lauren, and Mark Shook
- The Inman family – Chad, Sarah, Harmony, Autumn, and Forest
- The House family – Shari and Evelyse
- The Jomhong family – Sakrapee, Udomlak, and El
- Pastor Pong, his wife Da, and their son Jack
- Pastor Sangad and his wife Joom
- Pastor Star and his wife Rain
- Pastor Tan and his soon-to-be wife Pim
- Damalaku, James, Joshua, Joseph, and Grace

All of these dear servants of God are faithful to work and make Team Thailand a success. Your financial support and prayers are constantly enabling our team to forge ahead and fulfill that Greatest of Commissions!

With gratitude and thanksgiving,

Tim Shook & Team Thailand