

Thailand - May 2006

Sunday 19th May 2006 saw from three different directions, a new re-assembled team from BMI meeting in Song Khla, southern Thailand, veteran missionaries Tony John, now based in the south, together again at last with Ivor Heaton and the novice, your reporter, Mike Smith.

First step immediately, was a meeting and fellowship with the pastor and his wife and the leaders of Hope church, Song Khla, Tony's local church. Fruitful discussion and prayer about the supply of the much needed Bibles and possible help from us, for a recent small church plant on a Muslim dominated island in the Andaman sea, of the border of Thailand and Malaysia.

The Hope church is in several countries including one in London and probably the largest church in Bangkok. The vision at Song Khla is for a church planted in every village of the southern provinces by the year 2015. They have a membership of up to 3,000 winning 8-10 new converts every week in Song Khla, mostly from the Buddist community. Praise God!

For the BMI team, we were there to take a supply of Bibles and musical instruments to the Hope Church at Amnat Chorean in the north east of Thailand, at least a two-day drive. This followed an attempt on a previous trip by Tony to locate and find a little Asian girl once supported financially by a couple in own home church, from a well known charity but for whom the funding had stopped due to irregularities within the charity project. Amazingly Tony had found the girl with the help of local pastors and interpreters. The English couple that had sponsored her were not satisfied with a 'replacement' and desired renewed contact with Wana, herself. God moved, the little girl was found and contact and sponsorship continues.

The visits to the local church in Amnat Chorean saw some very excited and grateful spirit filled believers, clearly full of the love of the Lord and ecstatic about receiving musical instruments to help them worship our God and witness to their community. Following a veritable feast laid on for us with the leaders and the band, there was a time of wonderful worship, prayer and fellowship with people who gather to pray every Friday, Saturday and Sunday evening as well as other times. Having met with gifts for Wana and a suitcase full of gifts such as children's instruments, stationary and toiletries from my own church, Amesbury Baptist centre, we felt God's hand clearly guiding our efforts.

The long return journey to Song Khla in the south brought home again the nature of our work, the interest of our spiritual enemy and the dangers of the land we were in. Sustained pressure on the vital unity and harmony of the team, encounters with corruption, strange happenings in hotel rooms and local activities all had to be overcome. After part of the drive through extreme torrential rain in the north we learned that close by the resulted flooding and landslides had claimed over 50 lives, with others lost and hundreds of villages destroyed. One of Thailand's worst tragedies. More national news from the area where we were based in the south and to which we were returning to, told of how 100 villagers stormed a school taking two female teachers hostage and brutally assaulting both, one still in a coma and the ensuing shoot out with Police leaving three dead. The land that needs the Gospel.

The Lord blessed us again; the spirits were lifted at the finale of the trip in Bangkok meeting again with the director and team of Thailand's Christian Prison ministry. A time of fellowship, a Bible study, worship and prayer. They were pleased to hear of the 800 English Study Bibles from BMI for the Prison ministry and keen for a further 500 Thai Bibles to meet the needs of the recent 2,000 converts in the prisons of Thailand and Bangkok.

It was another trip when the little people were helped along the way. Gifts and money to the needy, to the desperate Italian tourist and the stranded Russian traveller. The Gospel shared! And more doors opened, to the newly planted church on the Muslim Island in the south, eagerly looking for a building, Bibles and musical instruments for worship and for the 50 new converts, to the Bangkok prisons and an invitation to minister to the unfortunate incarcerated English men. The work continues, our God reigns.

Mike Smith