

A Trip Postponed – The leaders who oversee our mission work have advised us not to travel into Myanmar on March 1st as scheduled. Our visit and on site work at the Light and Life Bible College in Yangon will be rescheduled due to the concerns for the corona virus. We know this was a difficult decision for our leaders to make but we love and trust their hearts and decision. We will instead travel into Chiang Mai and begin to set up our “base camp” for ministry in SE Asia. From there we will stay in contact with the national leaders and mission staff we serve with across SE Asia.

Into the Neighborhood – I am forever impacted by Eugene Peterson’s paraphrase of John 1:14 in The Message Bible – “The Word (Jesus) became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood...” Whether as a follower of Jesus, a pastor, or a missionary we know no other way of serving other than to “move into the neighborhood.”

We have become such a regular at National Car Rental here in Chiang Rai, that the Manager (a sweet woman named Nok) has given us her personal phone number. She now picks us up at our apartment when we reserve a rental car and drops us off again when return the rental car. We have traveled to national parks, hiked to remote waterfalls, felt the warmth of natural hot springs, and traversed the Golden Triangle with its historic temples and museums.

A few quick stories – we made friends with a woman at her fruit stand. After our third trip back, she started giving us an extra piece of fruit in our bag as we paid her. And her price kept coming down the more times we came back. One of our favorite Grab drivers (the SE Asia version of Uber or Lyft) happened to see us out for one of our afternoon walks the following week and pulled up next to us insisting that she would give us a ride where ever it was we were going. Each morning we walk to a simple little market next to the Blue Temple where there are among other things multiple stands to order coffee (a hot latte for \$US 1). The ladies who run these stands each smile and welcome us on our return as we rotate among them on our morning walks. As we arrived at one national park we discovered hundreds of boy scouts and girls scouts encamped. They welcomed us as we joined them on the trails and even encouraged us to join them on some of their adventure initiatives. On that trail we met two hot air balloon pilots (one from Albuquerque and the other from Albany OR) who were in Chiang Rai for an international balloon festival. At an open air diner for lunch at the Golden Triangle we met a man from ID wearing a Boise State Broncos jersey. He and a friend were riding motorcycles across Thailand.

We have discovered lanes and alleys that crisscross our city and houses with sleepy dogs and houses with dogs full of bravado. We have neighbors that now recognize us and engage us in conversation as we pass daring to test their limited English and our limited Thai. Our apartment has a small fitness center where we spend 30 minutes a day on an elliptical, tread mill or stationary bicycle. Between that time and our hour+ long walks every day, we are averaging about 8 kilometers each day exploring our city. Once our Grab driver was unsure of our destination, so we found ourselves giving directions on where to turn.

The locals smilingly refer to us as “farang” which is Thai for “gringo” which is Spanish for “that guy better not stay out in the sun much longer.” They are gracious and encouraging at our feeble attempts to begin using Thai. As we have already said, they are warm and generous and hospitable. For the most part, we feel very welcome and quite safe and secure among them.

We have two more weeks in this period of rest, orientation and immersion. We are excited to join the amazing mission team here in SE Asia in fulfillment of a life on mission with our God of unfailing love. Thank you again for your love and support and prayer.

A friend,

Roger and Ellen