

World Mission

NEWSLETTER

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In January, eight students from North Park Theological Seminary (NPTS) and two professors traveled to Thailand for two weeks to live in the slums of Bangkok and to experience the challenges of poverty firsthand.

Covenant World Relief helped sponsor the trip, led by Covenant missionary and seminary professors Paul H. De Neuvi and Richard Carlson. Student team members were Chris Birkland, Erik Carlson, Jen Dvorak, Kirsten Kronberg, Nicole Robinson, Elizabeth McColl, Dan Young and Dee Young. In this issue, two students and a professor share some of their experiences.

Recruiting Generation Next

by Paul H. De Neuvi

God has called a gifted and diverse group of men and women to seek training for ministry at North Park Theological Seminary. Of this year's new students, fully one-third are seriously considering service in a culture outside their own. It is an exciting time to serve in mission studies at our Covenant seminary.

One of my greatest joys has been to see students discover God's mission at work in other cultures. My first task, after arriving on campus in the fall of 2005 as visiting assistant professor of world mission, was to design an annual course that would take students and faculty to Thailand to experience a different culture and to see what God is doing in another part of the world.

We dive right in and live for one week with Thai families in slum communities in Bangkok. These students, future Covenant leaders, will never forget the lessons they learned, and how their understanding of Christ came alive again while seeing God at work in Thai culture. They were transformed through mission.

Retired world mission professor Wayne Weld established a core of three courses in missiology (the study of missions) at North Park. These classes cover the biblical, cultural, and strategic elements of missions. As the world gets smaller and more connected, missiology becomes vitally important—whether you are in Thailand or in Minnesota. As immigrants from other faiths move to North America, and a growing number of people have no church connection, missiology becomes an essential component of ministry preparation. I thank God for the chance to impact the lives of our next generation of ministers and missionaries in the Covenant. □

Paul H. De Neuvi, a Covenant missionary to Thailand, is visiting assistant professor of world mission at North Park Theological Seminary.



A view of Buddhist temples and office buildings in Bangkok



The NPTS group outside the Emerald Buddha Temple and Palace



Paul De Neuvi (front) in conversation with a Buddhist and a Muslim

Jesus Lives in the Slums of Bangkok

by Kirsten Kronberg

Each morning the world awakes anew. The rooster cock-a-doodle-doos, the Thai bird sings “guwah, guwah, guwah,” the neighbor dog, Mi Mi, yips at the door to go outside, the claws of some small animal scratch on the tin roof above my head, water drips into the Rubbermaid bin containing the cool water we will soon pour onto our heads for a shower. In the distance, a motorbike zips away. These are the sounds of morning in a Bangkok slum.

The light is still dim, but shadows slowly begin to fade. It is ten minutes after six. After only four days in this community, I have learned to tell time by the morning symphony that spon-



Houses in a slum community

left rural areas, where jobs are scarce, to find employment in the city. There are now between 600 and 1,000 slums around the city. All of them are squatter communities. Railroad companies own much of the land on which these communities have developed. In order to have electricity, residents string a wire from their houses to a single line at the main street. There are 200 homes in the community where we stayed.

Though we felt safe and welcome

there, we learned that the permanent residents like Di have little security. Because she spoke English well, our friendship developed quickly. While she shared pictures with us, we asked her about how long she had lived in the slum. She told us she had been here her whole life.

Not long into our conversation, Di told us about the burnouts. Be-

cause homes in the slums are so close together, if a fire starts in one house, the whole community burns. Anyone who wants to get rid of squatters can do so by starting a single fire.

Later that night as I stretched out on the firm mattress (Di’s own bed that she had given up for us), I thought about what she told us. Staring up at the blue mosquito net above my head, I realized how quickly people who have “nothing” can lose everything. Di told us how, during the last burnout eight years ago, she took her two young children and ran to safety. They were all that she saved.

It was humbling to be given so much by someone who possesses so little. Di gave us delicious meals, cooking lessons, even her own bed to sleep in. She reminded us that material possessions do not make a person rich.

Di is not a follower of Jesus, but the evidence of the Spirit drawing her is very real. Her hospitality and the warmth of her smile point to something transcendent.

Often many go on mission trips thinking we will share Jesus with people and it comes as a surprise to see the ways that Jesus is already working. He was living already in the slums of Bangkok.

Missio dei is a Latin term that roughly translates: “mission of God.” Throughout the whole earth, God is *already* working to draw creation to himself. We are privileged because God invites us to join him. God was already in the slums of Bangkok. God was there and he invited us to join him. □



Buddhists making offerings of incense and flowers

taneously brings forth music just before sunrise. The foreign sounds and sights are quickly becoming familiar.

I wrote those words, while a guest of Di, a gregarious mother of two in her fifties, at her house in a Bangkok slum. Di had welcomed two of us, myself and another seminarian named Elizabeth McColl, for the week.

The Bangkok slums were settled by families who had



Kirsten Kronberg with Di, her host

Kirsten Kronberg, a second-year seminary student, is a member of Community Covenant Church of Goleta in Santa Barbara, California.

When I Get in the Way

by Nicole Robinson

I've never been a fan of rodents. I don't enjoy being dirty or bare foot. I'm not very adventuresome when it comes to trying new foods, especially spicy ones or foods I can't pronounce. I don't know how to speak, read, or even pronounce Thai. I get cranky when tired or hot or cold or hungry. I don't like cold showers and places without privacy, and especially don't enjoy squatting to go to the bathroom. During a recent trip to Thailand, with a group of seminarians, I realized how easily my selfish desires, bad attitude, and comfortable lifestyle gets in the way of God's work in my life.

So in Thailand, I spent far too much time much worrying and fixating on irrational fears and too little time learning about God from the people around me. I got in the way. Realizing this made me even more frustrated. I had lost precious time and missed valuable lessons from my new Thai friends.

I began to worry even more. Had I been so self-absorbed and preoccupied with my own discomfort that I had missed what God was trying to teach me in Thailand? Did I miss the



The NPTS team, left to right:
Dee Young
Dan Young
Elizabeth McColl
Chris Birkland
Kirsten Kronberg
Nicole Robinson
Richard Carlson
Jen Dvorak
Erik Carlson
Paul De Neu



A home in a slum outside Bangkok



Inchai and Ruth Srisuwan

whole point of the trip?

After arriving back home and sharing the experience with my church, friends, and family—as well as talking with other team members—I began to realize that despite my worst efforts, God was still active and present within and around me on the trip.

It is easy to be a hypocrite, to tell people what they ought to believe and how they ought to behave while never living it out yourself. It's one thing to think about going on a mission trip and playing with kids from the slum and holding hands with them and telling them how much God loves them. It's another thing to do it, and to be constantly looking for the hand sanitizer, wondering what germs you will catch from them. That kind of fear can stop you from the simple human connection of holding hands. It gets in the way of what God wants to do.

During the trip, we



Worshippers at the Temple Phra Borommathat

spent time working with the Thai Faith and Music Foundation, founded by Ruth and Inchai Srisuwan. Both are pastors. Inchai is president of the Thailand Covenant Church.

When I think about my friends at the Thai Faith and Music Foundation I realize that they did not let the world around them get in the way of relationships with each other or their relationship with God. Instead they embraced their life—freely choosing to live among slum dwellers, and enjoying their relationships with the people around them. Their lives of service and devotion speak loud and clear about what it means to follow God. ➤



The Thai Faith and Music Foundation staff leading worship

At the same time from my own actions, I am reminded of how I can get in the way of God's work.

But my selfishness does not have to be the end of the story. Instead, I can step back, evaluate my attitude, actions, and ask God to make me a humble servant. Otherwise my worries and selfish ideas and actions get in the way of something that is far greater than me.

Life is not about being comfortable or being fixated on irrational fears or converting everyone to my way of life. More simply said—life is not about me. I need to remember to humble myself, be flexible, patient, ready, and willing for how God may want to use me wherever I am. □

Nicole Robinson is a member of Port Allegany Evangelical Covenant Church in Port Allegany, Pennsylvania.



A Buddhist temple at the Grand Palace

Covenant Mission Personnel

Currently on Home Assignment

Gary and Pauline Carlson (Japan), until 7/07
Jay and Ellen Haworth (Japan), until 1/08
Galen and Jill Johnson (Burkina Faso), until 8/07
Jim and Heidi Peterson (Japan), until 7/07
Francisco and Stephanie Ramos (France), return date unknown
Eugenio and Pia Restrepo (Spain), return date unknown
Gary and Mary Lou Sander (Colombia), until 10/07

Future Home Assignment

Cathy Campobello (Ecuador), 8/07-9/07
Nils and Erika Clauson (Mexico), 8/07-11/07
Roy and Aleta Danforth (Central African Republic), 7/07-8/08
David and Ronna Husby (regional coordinators, Asia), 7/07-9/07
Tim and Andrea Johnson (Japan), 9/07-11/07
Fred and Kelly Prudek (Czech Republic), 6/07-9/07
Robert and Nancy Reed (Spain), 5/07-9/07
Ken Satterberg (Mosaics Project), 7/07-2/08
Jeffrey and Carolyn Stoker (Cameroon), 6/07-9/08

Special Assignment

Randy and Cheryl Bevis (Thailand), until 7/07
Paul and Gretchen DeNeui (North Park Theological Seminary), until 7/08
Keith and Florence Gustafson (Congo)
Nancy Jo Hoover (holistic development)
Bob Thornbloom (Congo)

Reactivation

Barbara Swanson (Mosaics Project)
Brian and Kerith Weld (Mexico)

Become a FOWM Member

Friends of World Mission (FOWM) is an international association made up of more than 3,000 members who have joined together to become involved in the needs of Covenant World Mission around the world. To sign up, contact fowm@covchurch.org or call 773-784-3000



4 Paths to Mission Service

Contact the Covenant Bookstore to request the 4 Paths to Mission Service brochure online at covenantbookstore.com or by phone at 800-621-1290.

