

Partners, Family & Friends: Songkran Newsletter

Songkran Festival has come and gone again. For those who don't know what Songkran is or don't remember, here is an explanation: This festival occurs during the hottest month of the year, April, and celebrates the traditional Thai New Year's Day, which is April 13. Water is sprinkled over Buddha images as a ritual for cleansing and blessing. It is tradition to buy new clothes for the New Year to show prosperity and that the coming year will be prosperous. Buddhists also make merit by taking food, money and other things to a temple in their city and also to the provincial temple. Songkran is also a time where the younger people show respect to the elders by pouring a small amount of perfumed water over their hands and speaks blessings for the elder. The elder person then sprinkles some of the water back upon the younger and returns a blessing. Sometimes rice powder is mixed with water to form a paste which is applied on one's cheeks and/or forehead. Through the years the sprinkling has gone far beyond the original solemnity so that now if you venture out during Songkran you had better be prepared to be drenched in water. It is "officially" celebrated the 13th through the 15th but many places start "splashing water" about a week early and go for a day or two following. People throw water from the streets onto anything and anyone going by. Pickup trucks put large barrels in the back and people throw water from the trucks on people in the streets and at other trucks with people in them. Often two trucks will be driving side by side down the street have a battle between themselves throwing water while also battling the people on the sidewalks with their water at the same time. Anything that can hold water is used for "splashing": all kinds of squirt guns, plastic glasses, buckets, cups, etc. Then you sometimes have these huge trucks that haul cattle or merchandise and they will have many barrels of water with 20 to 30 people throwing water. It's like a battleship! You also never know when you will be hit with "naam yen" (cold water) where people put blocks of ice in their water. It is a bit shocking when it hits you but it's so hot it actually feels good after a bit. All this is done in a spirit of fun and celebration and is the highlight of the year for almost everyone.

If you have any questions about Songkran or other Thai culture, email us. We will be glad to hear from you and answer your questions.

DIANA'S DELIGHTS

We have two additional new children living at Home of Hope now. Yud is 15 and she is in 10th grade and is a hostel. Suchat is 12 and he comes from Mae Ja Rao. This gives us 15 at-risk children and 3 hostels and still a full house! We have received professional drawings for the new building free of charge from Peter (the architect God dropped in our laps a couple of months ago) and will now find some estimates and go from there. The children are excited about the new building like we are. We hope we can start soon and get it built before next May! Please pray for finances, favor with the local government officials and everything else that goes with building here in Thailand.

When Neill is finished with his surgery (see NEILL'S NOTES) I get to have root canal surgery! I hear that it's a lot of fun, right!? ;>) Even more exciting than that, the coffee shop is moving to a new location and has the space we need for doing all the ministry that was originally intended: main focus is evangelism, wifi, English classes, coffee & bakery, apartments for short-term missionaries, international church, training children in work skills and great location next to the Mae Sot Market. This is what we and Pastor John had first envisioned for the coffee shop but the other one was just too small. This one has about 10 times more room than the other shop for about double the rent. Neill doesn't get excited about many things but he is excited about this! This is an answer to prayer as the owner lowered the rental price \$100 per month. If you feel you can help with any of these ministries please contact us. You don't need to be a teacher to teach English, you just follow the lesson plans. If you have a heart to serve and compassion for the lost and broken-hearted, we can use you. Email us at: ndgthai@hotmail.com Pray for the financial support of this ministry as we are stepping out in faith to do this. Our target date for opening is July 1, 2008 but we are in Thailand so it could be later.

NEILL'S NOTES

I had a freak accident playing basketball, injuring the middle toes on my left foot as I landed in a crack in the cement just off the main court. If I hadn't injured the foot I would have done the treadmill stress test and probably not have gotten the CT x-ray for my heart (which I did have done because of the injury). The CT showed blockage in 3 arteries, one of 70% (serious) and 2 of 50% (mild). I understand the cardiologist to say he wants to put in two balloons and stints so after Songkran we will once again venture to Bangkok to have this done. They have a new procedure where they can go through the wrist instead of the groin. If going through the wrist I won't have to be lying down for 12 hours prior to the surgery. I understand, too, that I will be awake for the procedure which I am not all that keen on. I was awake for my vasectomy and the doctor and nurse kept saying, "Oops!" and "Oops! Don't worry, nothing serious." Yeah, right! At that time I didn't have a personal relationship with God but I sure was praying!! Anyway, if I'm, awake for this surgery I don't think I'll be watching the monitor, even though Diana is pretty excited about it.

PLEASE PRAY:

for people to come and serve with us for a one year or longer commitments -- secretary for Home of Hope and Coffee Shop; work in coffee shop; work in Home of Hope and other ministries

for the new kids to adjust well to their new surroundings and feel a part of the Home of Hope family quickly.

for Pastor John's leg to heal from a bad burn from a motorcycle. It was great to have Joe lead the kids in prayer for P. John.

for Neill's heart surgery.

for the new building -- finances, estimates, eventual blueprints, favor with officials and built by May 2009.

for safety and protection during Songkran. (many drunk, etc.)

for our partners (yourselves and other partners) in this ministry as God expands it. We could not be here without all of you.

for our families -- we miss them and I think they miss us ;>)

We pray for you, that God pours out His blessings on you and keeps and protects you and guides you as you fulfill the purpose He has for you.

Your partners in ministry,
Neill & Diana