



Monthly Missions Focus: Thailand



Location: Southeastern Asia, bordering the Andaman Sea and the Gulf of Thailand, southeast of Burma
Area: total: 514,000 sq km – slightly more than twice the size of Wyoming

Population: 64,631,595 Capital: Bangkok 10 mill
Ethnic groups: Thai 75%, Chinese 14%, Malay 3.8%, Mon-Khmer 3.4%, Tibeto-Burman 1.1%, Meo-Yao 0.2%, Other 0.6%

Religions: Freedom of religion is guaranteed in the constitution, which was modified in 1998 to loosen ties between the State and Buddhism and increase harmony between religious communities. Buddhist 94.6%, Muslim 4.6%, Christian 0.7%, other 0.1%

Languages: Thai, English (secondary language of the elite), ethnic and regional dialects. All languages 75.

Answers to Prayer

- ☉ Rising interest and more church growth in the 1990s could signify an impending breakthrough.
- ☉ Christian radio, the JESUS film, drama and a growing prayer movement are all giving a new level of spiritual response.

Challenges for Prayer

- ☉ The land is in bondage to a complex web of culture, spirit appeasement, occult practices and Buddhism, with a social cohesiveness out of which few have dared to come. For many Thai, their nationality and religion are inextricably linked.
- ☉ The rottenness at the core of Thai society can only be fully excised and cleansed through a turning to God.
- ☉ Pray for high standards of holiness in church life. Church leaders need to squarely face up to syncretism, a high rate of backsliding, misuse of church funds and a tolerant condoning of sin resulting in failure to discipline leaders who err.
- ☉ There needs to be a true indigenization of the Thai Church. Thai music, hymnody, art forms, worship patterns and architecture need to be encouraged and developed under the Holy Spirit's guidance.
- ☉ The tribal peoples, largely marginalized through lack of personal documentation and ignorance of the Thai language, have begun to respond in significant numbers.

Central Thai people



The Central Thai people call themselves the Khon Thai, meaning "the free people." They inhabit the rich central plain of Thailand, including Bangkok. This is the dominant people group in the nation. They love their country and have a very strong national identity.

Politeness and respect are virtues of the Central Thai people. They especially respect the elderly and those with high rank. While the official religion of most Central Thais is Buddhism, what they actually practice is a mixture of Buddhism, animism and ancestor worship. Out of approximately 28 million Central Thai worldwide, there are only about 100,000 known Christians. After nearly 500 years of missionary work, the church in Thailand is still very small. The largest barriers to Central Thais coming to faith in Jesus are their fear of/allegiance to society and their familiarity and comfort with Buddhism. They simply see no need for change. (*Global Prayer Digest – July 30, 2006*)

NE Thai (Thai Isan) People



Don't kill, don't steal, don't lie, don't drink alcohol, and don't commit adultery. These may sound like teachings from the Bible. They actually come from Buddhism! They are known as the Five Precepts, and the Thai Isan people focus on them even more than Buddhist teachings having to do with subduing fleshly desires. They also try to treat others kindly and generously. But the problem is that they believe that these virtuous actions will bring them a better life in their next reincarnation.

Ironically, these Buddhists are named after Phra Isuan, the Hindu god of destruction. This name dates back to the days when a Hindu empire influenced this part of Southeast Asia. Most of the 22 million Isan people live in northeast Thailand, a region known as Isan. Despite government coercion, most Isan people continue to speak their own language at home rather than Central Thai. Christian radio has produced some knowledge of Christ, and it is encouraging to see some professions of faith. There is a need for more Christian workers. Since the Isan live in such a widespread area it is difficult to disciple new believers. (*Global Prayer Digest – July 28, 2006*)