



Prayer Guide for Thailand 2022



Welcome

Welcome to the 2022 edition of the Prayer Guide for Thailand. The Buddhist Lent period extends from July through to October, the rainy season in Thailand. Buddhists use this time to cleanse themselves of the “bad” in their life and often make pledges to abstain from certain practises such as drinking alcohol.

Buddhist monks spend this time at the temple studying Buddha’s scriptures, meditating, and chanting. It is common practise for a Thai monk to wake well before the sun has risen to chant, meditate and pray.

We know there is one true God who hears our prayers. We want to invite you to pray with us during this lent period for the Ethnic Thai people. This guide will help you to follow the needs and prayer points of the Ethnic Thai people and the intercultural team members in the Baptist Mission Australia Ethnic Thai Team.



Ethnic Thai Team 2022

Row 1: Grace, Zoe, Libi, Muana, Luke, Villy, Glenn, Liz, Carolyn, Petina, Daniel, Seb

Row 2: Yindii, Dema, Salem, Ollie, Belle, Isaiah, Judah, Levi

Inset: Margaret, who will be joining the team in 2022

Living among the Ethnic Thai

Ethnic Thai culture is steeped in the belief that the cycle of death and rebirth continues until it's broken through enhanced personal wisdom. **Buddhism is an intrinsic part of Ethnic Thai culture with many believing to be Thai is to be Buddhist.** This makes it challenging for Ethnic Thai people to see how they can follow Jesus without rejecting their culture and community.

God is at work among the Ethnic Thai. He is drawing people to Himself. Over the past years, the team has built relationships within their community, begun to share stories of Jesus, and walked with people as they have chosen to follow Him. This journey to faith is by the grace of God.

Praise God that numerous faith communities are now regularly meeting and local leaders are being equipped to teach and lead their own people. These small faith communities are discovering what it means to follow Jesus in a distinctively Thai way.



Khao Phansa

Buddhist Lent - Opening Day

In Thailand, “Khao Phansa” directly translates to “entering the rainy season”. **Traditionally this was the first day in which Buddhist Monks remained in one place during the rainy season to avoid killing insects or trampling on growing crops.**

Offerings of candles and garments were made to the temple to provide necessities, such as lighting in the days of no electricity. It is believed that the candle represents brightness.

Nowadays the opening of Khao Phansa is celebrated with many ceremonies held at temples all over Thailand. These ceremonies involve offerings of giant candles, a symbol of the traditional practises.

Monks chant from the Buddhist scripture and share teachings on abstaining from; killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and intoxication. This year Khao Phansa is celebrated on Thursday, July 14.

Prayer Points

- » Please pray that, at this time of renewed spiritual activity, doors of dialogue between followers of Jesus and our Buddhist friends may be opened. That the truth of Jesus will be shared.
- » Please pray that Jesus may reveal Himself to people through dreams and other encounters. That He would be revealed as the true Light of the World.
- » Please pray for opportunities for the believers in each Community of Faith, that they would be bold during this Lent period to share with others their faith in Jesus.

Farming and Livelihoods

For many people in Northern Thailand, farming is not only their way of life, but their main and often sole source of income. Many are subsistence farmers; that is, growing just enough food for their family for the year.

Rice is the staple crop, but other crops such as corn, rubber, fruits and vegetables are also grown and sometimes sold. As such, **Thai farmers are highly dependent upon rain for their livelihoods, particularly as rice needs continual, steady rainfall to grow.**

Without decent rain, crops suffer, impacting livelihoods. Many of the believers in the Communities of Faith are subsistence farmers.

Prayer Points

- » Please pray for rain. Pray that this nation will receive the rainfall it needs this year to sustain the livelihoods and wellbeing of its people.
- » Pray that the crops and farms of the people will produce good fruit and be plenty for themselves and their families. Pray for good prices for their produce.
- » Pray that people will trust in God to provide for their needs and that of their family – that He will send the rain and they will know it is from Him.
- » Pray for the Holy Spirit to rain down on this nation and produce strong fertile crops for God's Kingdom.

Ethnic Thai Team

The Ethnic Thai team is spread out over three locations in Northern Thailand. The team meets together four times a year for team meetings. These meetings are a great time of fellowship, encouragement, strategic planning, learning and prayer.

The Ethnic Thai team values unity and encourages individuals within the team to use their own gifts, to build each other up and to support each other in ministry. **This year sees many changes, with some of the team's children leaving to pursue University studies in Australia and a new team member, Margaret arriving.**

Prayer Points

- » Please pray for team unity, and for the team to continue to love and care for each other.
- » During this time of major change and transition please pray that the team can navigate these changes and transitions well together.

Ethnic Thai Team

The Ethnic Thai team's role is to build relationships with people in their communities, to share Jesus with them. They do this through engaging in meaningful platforms, such as teaching English, beauty therapy and communities of practise. Deepening their cultural awareness and language ability allows them to share Jesus in a way that makes sense to the Ethnic Thai.

Prayer Points

- » Please pray that the team will continue to gain deeper cultural understanding and learn the language and worldview of the people they share with.
- » **Please pray that the team will be able to find genuine ways to share the truth of Jesus with people in their community and that they will be open to that truth.**
- » Please pray for the team's own spiritual walk with Jesus to deepen as they follow Him and minister in humility to those who have yet to hear about Him.

Ban Sra Community of Faith

The Ban Sra Community of Faith has been meeting together since 2006. Since then, Muana and Villy have moved to another ministry area. Although this faith community are still supported through training events and staff visits, they continue to thrive on their own. As they share their faith within their community, they are seeing family and friends come to know Jesus.

Prayer Points

- » Please pray for the leaders and this family network of believers as they bring light to this community.
- » Praise God for the group under the leadership of Long and Somneuk in their commitment to continue meeting during the season of COVID-19 by practicing collective worship even in difficult times.
- » Please pray for the seekers in the community to come to an understanding of the truth of Jesus. May they see the transformation He makes in the lives of others and grow hungry to know more. May they come to know the hope, love and forgiveness found only in Christ.
- » **Several seekers are listening to the Word of God through MP3 players.** Pray for the Holy Spirit to break through any barriers, and for the words they are listening to become real from seeing the lives of the believers.

Ban Luang and Ban Faa

The Ban Luang and Ban Faa Communities of Faith have been meeting together since 2013 and 2014 respectively. Many Baptist Mission Australia workers have worked with these communities, helping shape and grow them in their faith in Jesus.

After all these years, these groups are now being led by local leaders, allowing Baptist Mission Australia to seek new areas of ministry.

While these communities of faith have a strong leadership and faithful members, lately there have been some challenges in interpersonal relationships within the group.

Prayer Points

- » Please pray that as these communities become more self-sufficient, the believers will become strong in faith and continue to rely on God and His provision.
- » Pray for healing in relationships, and for believers to continue to mature in their faith and it's outworking in their relationships.
- » Please pray for wisdom and commitment for the leaders as they serve their communities of faith.
- » Pray that Holy Spirit will be revealed through dreams, healing, and revelation to those who are seeking to know Him more.

Chiang Mai and Sanpatong Communities of Faith

The Sanpatong Community of Faith is comprised of a group of believers and seekers. They are all related to one another and live in the same village. It started with Ot working in the city who had a burden for her dad. Ot's dad invited his cousin, sister and brother-in-law to start studying the scriptures together. After two years, she brought her younger brother Kasem along, who is now the leader of this group, and they now meet regularly in his front yard. There have been challenging periods of opposition from other members in the wider community.

The Community of Faith continue to learn what it means to be followers of Jesus and witnesses of the Gospel in their context.

Prayer Points

- » Please pray for Muana and Villy living in Chiang Mai. That God will equip them to love and serve the people there.
- » **Please pray for the Chiang Mai Community of Faith who continue to meet in Muana and Villy's home, that God will give them courage and influence in sharing the Gospel with their family and friends in their communities.** May their lives remain firm in Christ and may their witness produce much fruit.
- » Please pray for the empowering and equipping of the leaders, in leading and teaching their communities, and for the believers to actively practice their faith as followers of Jesus in their daily lives.

Chiang Rai – Eastside

Baptist Mission Australia has been working in Chiang Rai since 2016 and now works in two locations within the province. The Eastside location currently has three units serving in this area. **The main bridge that they use in their communities is to teach English at the local schools, as well as through Baan Sawang English Language Centre.**

This provides them with opportunities to not only serve their community, but also to build relationships.

It has been exciting to see God move among the Ethnic Thai in this location. A Bible study group has been meeting weekly to learn more about Jesus and to study God's Word together. As COVID-19 eases in the area, Baptist Mission Australia workers are seeing an increase in Bible study participation and faith and understanding in God's Word.

Prayer Points

- » Please pray for Dema and Carolyn, Petina, and Glenn and Liz as they live in the eastern side of Chiang Rai. Pray that God will equip them to love and serve the people there.
- » Praise God for the continuation of the Bible study group. Pray for the Holy Spirit to be present when they meet, and for God to give Carolyn and Dema wisdom as they minister to the group.
- » Pray that as people within this community become followers of Jesus, a vibrant faith community will be established to support and love one another.

Chiang Rai - Westside

The team has determined a new ministry location in Pa Oo Don Chai, which is south-west of the main city of Chiang Rai. Pa Oo Don Chai is a subdistrict with 21 villages and has a famous temple, Wat Rong Khun, otherwise known as the White Temple. Luke, Belle and their three sons have been in Pa Oo Don Chai since August 2021 and the team awaits the arrival of another team member, Margaret in late 2022.

There are opportunities for Luke to connect into the local art community and build relationships in that sphere, and Belle continues to teach conversation English in local schools and TAFE. Margaret will begin intensive culture and language learning upon arrival. As always, they will be seeking opportunities to make Jesus known in meaningful ways through their relationships.

Prayer Points

- » Please pray for creativity, flexibility and Spirit-discernment for the west side team as they figure out what God has planned for each one of them, and as a cluster.
- » **Please pray that the Holy Spirit will transform Luke, Belle and Margaret to be more like Jesus every day.** That those around them will see and want what they have in Christ.
- » Please pray for holy “interruptions” in their everyday that lead to conversations about faith, life, and ultimately God’s Kingdom and His Gospel. Pray that as people within this community become followers of Jesus, a vibrant faith community will be established to support and love one another.

The Stronghold of Spirits and the need to make merit

Thai people generally practise folk Buddhism, which is heavily influenced by animistic beliefs.

The life of a Thai person is affected by the spirit world daily. **Most Thai people make offerings to spirit houses, a small temple like structure usually located in the front yard of their home or business, to appease spirits and bring them good luck.**

The process of making merit is one that is often hard for a westerner to understand. It's based on the Law of Karma. They believe the good and bad affect every part of their present and future lives. Thai people measure a person's merit based on their material possessions and health.

The amount of merit making and appeasing of spirits needed in order to have a "good life" is impossible to know. As such, many Thai people are uncertain about their future. Continuing in an often disappointing and defeating routine leaves many still searching for the peace they are longing for.

Prayer Points

- » Please pray that the Thai people will come to understand that Jesus' sacrifice is all they need to receive freedom from their bad deeds and escape the cycle that holds them captive.
- » Pray that Thai people will find freedom in Jesus and be released from the fear of spirits, as it is written "perfect love drives out fear".
- » Pray that the power of the Holy Spirit will move over the nation of Thailand.

There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

1 John 4:18 (NIV)

Leaders of the Communities of Faith

The leaders of each Community of Faith serve as logistical support, teachers of the Bible and pastoral carers for the groups in which they serve. Thai people are very relaxed, and it is often left to these leaders to pull each group and its meetings together. These people are lay leaders with no formal Bible training.

Training weekends have recently started again after pausing during COVID-19.

Here, the leaders and potential leaders of the communities come together for further Bible teaching, learning contextualised leadership skills, and discussing issues within the groups.

During COVID-19, without this regular encouragement, the leaders found it more difficult to lead and engage with the groups.

Prayer Points

- » Praise God that leadership training has been able to start up again.
- » Pray for the leaders of each group, that they would continue to have the passion to lead their groups, even though COVID-19 continues to affect being able to meet from time to time.
- » Pray that they would continue to lead these groups with grace, love, wisdom, and gentleness.
- » Pray for wisdom for the Baptist Mission Australia workers as they find creative ways to train and encourage during COVID-19.

Workers for the field

Baptist Mission Australia currently has five units, including 9 adults and 11 children, (and another team members coming soon) working in three locations with the Ethnic Thai. The team needs more workers to come and help them share the Gospel, especially in the areas close to the established Communities of Faith in Nan and Phayao.

There are opportunities to serve in a variety of roles, including short-term volunteer (English teaching) and long-term roles both rurally and in Chiang Rai. **Baptist Mission Australia has a vision to see three new families or single staff members join the team as soon as possible.**

Prayer Points

- » Please pray that God would speak directly into the hearts of those He is calling to serve in Thailand with the Ethnic Thai.
- » Please pray for God to raise up a group of workers together to continue the rural ministry in the Nan, Phayao and Phrae areas.

“A large crop is in the fields, but there are only a few workers. Ask the Lord in charge of the Harvest to send out workers to bring it in”.

Luke 10:2 (CEV)

COVID-19

COVID-19 continues to impact Thailand economically and physically. There is some indication that the fear around the virus is subsiding. Restrictions have been lifted, and the numbers of cases each day have been high, but at the time of writing have started to decrease.

The country has been very slow in opening to international tourists, which is having a large impact on the economy and even now as the country opens the requirements to gain entry are deterring many. On top of this COVID-19 has had an impact on the Ethnic Thai team as team members have contracted the virus and been forced to isolate and caused many events and gatherings to be rescheduled or moved online.

Prayer Points

- » Please pray for the leaders of this country as they contend with restarting the economy.
- » **Pray for those that have been left with nothing due to the economic hardships, and the pressure this puts on their relationships.**
- » Pray for the people of Thailand to turn to the hope that Jesus gives to all who come to Him.
- » Pray for the team to be gracious and wise in dealing with the needs of those around them.
- » Pray for the team to remain healthy and recover quickly should they contract it.

Ook Phansa Buddhist Lent - Closing Day

“Oak Phansa” translates to “the day of leaving the rains retreat”. The end of the three-month Buddhist Lent period is here and the rains begin to clear.

Monks can now leave the temple, restrictions are lifted and life returns to ‘normal’.

Usually there is a Khatin around this time (a large community-oriented merit making festival). This year, Ook Phansa is celebrated on Monday, October 10.

Prayer Points

- » Please pray that as this Buddhist Lent period is now over, that God will continue to reveal Himself to individuals and groups in this nation throughout the next year.
- » Please continue to pray for Baptist Mission Australia workers, and all those who are working amongst the Thai Buddhists, that they will be equipped and strengthened for the task.
- » Please pray that people will be fervent in seeking out Jesus and the freedom and life He brings.