

## Prayer letter March 2012

*I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will sing praise to thy name, O thou most High. (Ps. 9:2)*

### Smile

"Uhm ... Did I do well or not? Am I rude or not?" Actually, you cannot tell this from the reaction of people to your actions. Often this reaction is only a smile. Always and everywhere you see people smiling in Thailand. That's the reason that Thailand is called 'The land of the smile'. Even if Thai people are angry, they smile. During the culture study, we learned that a smile can mean anything. The Thai are not used to show their emotions. Confusing and difficult for us foreigners. It seems that the Thai themselves are well able to distinguish between different types of smiles. We are curious and want to understand this art.

### Culture study

The past 2 months, we have studied the Thai culture. We did this by reading books about the culture, (church) history of Thailand and books on Buddhism. Besides the necessary reading work, we also interviewed people: team members



Flower offerings for the spirits

and Thai people, Christians and Buddhists. Also we tried, wherever possible, to mix with the Thai. For example, by buying fruit at the market, going to the hairdresser (with interesting results!), by talking with the teachers of Celeste's school, and so on. This mainly with hands and feet. Most Thai people hardly speak English ... and our Thai is also not that good yet... much more than 'hello' and 'thank you' we cannot say. Yet we have all in all a reasonable picture of the Thai culture. We also got to know our team and its work. It became clear to us that there is great spiritual darkness in this country. Everywhere you see temples, monks, small offering houses and so on. There is much superstition. People live in constant fear of evil spirits. These are propitiated by sacrifices in the form of e.g. incense, flowers and food. Sins are redeemed by good deeds in return. Few have heard of the Lord Jesus, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life! We are therefore eager to talk to Thai children about the Lord Jesus!

### Prayer requests:

- Thanks for the good relations we have with the team
- We are thankful that the children are adapting to live in Thailand
- Thanks for the great housing we have in Lop Buri
- We are thankful that the first few months we already have learned a lot about Thai culture
- Pray for the success of language study
- Pray that the children will adapt well in Lop Buri again
- Pray for sufficient support
- Pray for the children in Thailand

## Farang



Celeste and Irene with some children from the neighbourhood

*'Farang, farang!'* Almost every day we are named like this by neighborhood children. *Farang* means foreigner. As a *farang*, we are very interesting for the people, especially for the neighbor kids! In our street live quite a few children. After watching shy for a few days, they soon came to the area of the house. They wanted to come and play. Our girls kept themselves somewhat apart first and preferred playing by themselves, but now they find it very fun to play with Thai children! Nice to see that this is possible, though they can hardly communicate with each other. Not just for kids,

for adults too, we are an attraction. Like once we were watching a parade with our camera ready to take pictures of beautifully dressed participants. We noticed that many participants and spectators took photos of us! We asked ourselves who was looking at who: we at the parade or they at us ...

## A very different life

Slowly we begin to get used to our new life. We are grateful that the children are doing so well. Celeste went even a few mornings a week at a Thai primary school! The team with whom we work mostly consists of young families and that means lots of peers (11!) for our children! David learned to walk in a very short time and Irene amuses people by greeting them with the traditional *wai* - the hands, palms facing each other under the chin and a slight bow. Thai people love it when she does this! The only thing that makes us worry a little is that we have a deficit of around 17% in our budget. We hope and pray that this will be provided! Meanwhile we are perched in Lop Buri, provisionally our last move. Here we will do a year of language study. Next time we'll tell about this.



Our family

Sincerely,

Mark, Anne-Marie, Celeste, Irene and David

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