

The Haydens

Serving with International Community School of Bangkok in Thailand

October 2018

Sunny days are hard to come by in the rainy season, but today is a blue-sky exception. Our three ducks make the most of our small urban “yarden,” while humid breezes blow echoes of the singing contest between the magpie robins and our parakeets through the open window. Inside our house, we have put up the annual decorations of “autumn,” a season we can only imagine in Bangkok. As we celebrate each tradition, we are reminded that it’s the last one to have with our senior daughter Krista.

A chronically-screaming child down the street reminds me (Christine) that all is not well in the world. A few houses beyond this new young unhappy neighbor is where his relative, our laundry lady, P’Dtah, lived. She was the one I wrote about last year, who apparently participated in some kind of evil spirit activity that caused another woman to howl so loudly I finally went down to pray over the situation. August was the last month I saw P’Dtah. Her loud angry yells directed at that same woman brought all the neighbors to their front gates. I never found out what the problem was, but a few weeks later we heard that she was ill, then hospitalized. Our helper P’Lek kept careful tabs of her situation, and when one day I heard agitated voices, I guessed something had happened. P’Lek rushed into the house, crying that P’Dtah had passed away.

It was a sad end to a difficult life, someone we had tried to be salt and light to for the last 14 years of living in this neighborhood. In a way it was a trigger of discouragement for all the Thais around us for whom we have prayed but who have not made steps toward Jesus: my bright violin student, Clarisse’s best friend Plern, who seems to be intellectually distancing herself from God; our elderly friend Khun Pah, who still calls for English tutoring help but remains blinded to the truth; our Catholic friends P’Ouk and P’Juey, who sink further into debt and seem no closer to the Savior.

For encouragement, we look around to where God is working to join Him there. We’ve heard recent stories of how students and staff eagerly wanted to come to ICS, but were prevented by various circumstances. Watching God help them overcome obstacles makes us thankful for our school. God has encouraged us with the Body of Christ at ICS. Twenty-two years ago, Joe & Chris welcomed us to Bangkok. They mentored us through culture shock and inexperience of teaching. We in turn taught their son Zach at ICS. Years later, he returned with his wife to work here, and taught our daughters Krista and Alizabeth. Krista in turn taught their daughter Jordan in Sunday School. Joe & Chris now minister to international students in the US, to which we have contributed prayers and ideas. Their contribution of the school crest continues to grace our buildings. In a beautiful way, the Body of Christ ministers to each other. Other similar exchanges have happened with Philip & Sheila, whom we welcomed to ICS many years ago, and whose children we taught, who later returned to teach our children. At a recent ladies’ book club, we discussed how true Christian community has a balance of being mentored, having peer friendships, and mentoring others. Whether in person or by a book author, we grow to be more like Jesus.

So we brace ourselves to send Krista off to college next year. (She is already accepted at our alma mater, Cedarville, and has her eyes on a few options in Pennsylvania too.) We pray that as she leaves this Christian community, God will lead her into another. We try not to be alarmed by the reports of an American culture of gender fluidity, political divisiveness, and poor role models among church leaders. Seventeen is pretty young to be considered a missionary, but if she can take some of this gospel light back to her parents’ home country---under the guidance of Christ-following mentors, finding godly peers, and with the opportunity to serve others----we know we can entrust her into this next stage of life.

Thanks for your prayers for us to persevere in God’s work here, and for provision for her (and all the steps between now and then!).

Christine