

# April 2020



Dear Friends,

We hope that this update from us finds you well in these extraordinary times.

In Bangkok we have been on a recommended - though not enforced - lockdown for a week, and a night-time curfew with the threat of a 24-hour a day curfew. As flights have nearly all ceased abroad it is a challenging time to be away from Leah and Natalie and our family. Both the girls are in lockdown in the US and UK in safe places, for which we are thankful. Here, we have both had what would seem to be the virus but testing is expensive and not widely available. Joel has remained healthy and it was likely we caught it from a staff member who was ill about six weeks ago. Thankfully, we sent her home and, except for staff helping her, she was isolated so there is no report of the kids catching it. It has been a long-lasting and unpleasant illness for me (Gillian) and John has come down with shingles again on the back of it. But praise God we are recovering.

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Here, the exact figures are hard to determine but we remain very concerned about the communities we serve, with most being forced to continue to work any job they can in order to survive. The housing of whole families in one room without glass in the windows makes it very difficult to isolate and so social distancing is not a part of their experience in the cramped communities they live in. Neither is staying indoors in the tropical heat in corrugated shacks with no air con. We are keeping the foodbank open and trying to observe social distancing for everyone. We are wearing masks and observe isolation procedures so that the most-needy can have the food they even more desperately want with so many job losses and all the malls and non-essential shops closed. For instance, one of the grandmas came on Friday, who looks after four grandchildren, and whose husband works as a motorbike taxi driver. No-one wants to get taxis at the moment as they are scared, so work and money has dried up. And another grandad who has sole responsibility for two grandchildren, and had a lung removed last year, usually collects rubbish and sells it to survive. But he is struggling to find enough to sell in these desperate times. One of the ladies who came today

has a tracheotomy and lives next to a rubbish dump. She was so very grateful for food to eat for this week without having to worry about where to find it.

We were also able to give care packages to the kids two weeks ago and were able to give them an Easter care package today with a simple craft to make, an Easter card to colour, and some basic food and snacks. When the children are not at school, they don't always get fed at home adequately and with the families struggling more at the moment, this will help them. It was good to see some of the kids today, unable to wait until they even got out of the gate, stuff biscuits into their mouths with big smiles on their faces.

We have had to shut the clubs and discipleship groups due to government advice but being able to work from home some days is enabling us to prepare for the opening of the Learning Centre, as well as work through the mountains of foundation and visa paperwork. We are also making videos, one staff member each day, to encourage our three discipleship groups and keep them trusting in God. They are being appreciated.

Please pray for the children and their families in such difficult times, for the many who have lost their jobs, for those without income, for Leah and Natalie and our family to stay safe, especially when we can't get to them.

Figures of infection in Thailand were initially second to China, but officially they are not as bad as European countries now, although we are not sure of the accuracy of reporting. We are praying and fasting with our church each week for Thailand and the UK, as well as the rest of the world.

We continue to pray for you all. Please continue to pray for us to have much wisdom from God in these times about how we serve such needy people.

With love to you all,  
John, Gillian, Leah, Natalie and Joel xx



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