2005

Presenting The Gospel Message In Thailand

Khamsay Phetchareun
Andrews University

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ABSTRACT

PRESENTING THE GOSPEL MESSAGE
IN THAILAND

by

Khamsay Phetchareun

Advisers: Rudi Maier,
Bruce L. Bauer
ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: PRESENTING THE GOSPEL MESSAGE IN THAILAND

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Problem

There are over 62,000,000 Buddhists in Thailand. Current Christian approaches to presenting the gospel message to Buddhist people in Thailand have not yielded satisfactory results. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has had negative growth during the past ten years. In addition to approaches currently utilized by Christians there is a need to develop more effective approaches to present the gospel in Thailand.

Method

Buddhist students at Mission College were chosen as a case study. A survey of Buddhist attitudes and a cultural analysis of Thailand form the basis for this strategy.
Library research, questionnaires, interviews, and observations were all used to help develop a new approach. This strategy is being field-tested and results have been produced.

Results

A strategy was developed to field-test a new “relational-contextual” approach. Partial implementation has been made and early results were promising, with the number of baptisms increasing. If proven to be effective, this approach will help the Adventist Church in Thailand to improve their results in reaching Buddhist people.

Conclusion

A relational-contextual approach to presenting the gospel to Buddhist people in Thailand will increase the effectiveness of the ministries of the Adventist Church. More Buddhists will find the Savior and enjoy personal relationships with Him. Buddhists will no longer find the Christian message too difficult to understand and their attitudes towards Christianity will be positive. Those who have become Adventists will have meaningful worship experiences.
Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

PRESENTING THE GOSPEL MESSAGE
IN THAILAND

A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
Khamsay Phetchareun
June 2005
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS** .............................................................. vii

**LIST OF TABLES** ........................................................................ vii

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS** ................................................................. viii

**Chapter**

I. INTRODUCTION ........................................................................ 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subsection</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problem</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justification</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Assumptions</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitions</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outline</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

II. PERSONAL THEOLOGY AND SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION ............... 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subsection</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Journey</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Laos</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Foreign Lands</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual Journey</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As Buddhist</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As Christian</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality and Spiritual Gifts</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temperament</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual Gifts</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership/Interaction Styles</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present Ministry</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Ministry</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theological Understanding of Ministry</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humans Conditions</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humans Need Help</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Commission</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God's Mission</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through His Word</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through His Son</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theological Understanding of the Church</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body of Christ</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temple of Holy Spirit</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God's Kingdom on Earth</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God's True Church</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Mission</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preaching</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing Remarks</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. HISTORICAL, POLITICAL, SOCIAL, AND RELIGIOUS ANALYSIS</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Situation</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Conditions</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy and Poverty</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poorest of the Poor</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty and its Impact on Society</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty and Prostitution</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corruption</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crimes</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ihttipol Mued</em> (Dark Influences)</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A New Universal Healthcare Scheme</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS)</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Factors</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhist Influence in Thai Society</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhist Revival</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adventism in Thailand</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing Remarks</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. PRESENTING THE GOSPEL IN THAILAND</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Approaches to Buddhist Evangelism</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonial Approach</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confrontational Approach</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue Approach</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-Size-Fits-All Approach</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contemporary Approaches to Buddhist Evangelism</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contextual Approach</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational Approach</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational-Contextual Approach</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy Development</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attention Stage</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messenger</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attraction Stage</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messenger</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attachment Stage</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messenger</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance Stage</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messenger</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing Remarks</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. BUDDHIST EVANGELISM: A CASE STUDY OF MISSION COLLEGE, THAILAND</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of Strategy</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Goal</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Purpose</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation of Strategy</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messenger</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inputs</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Resources</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Resources</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring and Evaluation</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring Plan</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation Plan</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context Evaluation</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation Evaluation</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome Evaluation</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing Remarks</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. MONITORING, REPORTING, AND EVALUATION</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation Report</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messenger’s Activities</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialize with Buddhist Students</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Train Adventists in Friendship Ministry .................................................. 171
Help Buddhist Students with their Studies ........................................... 173
Self Evaluation .................................................................................... 174
Message Development ......................................................................... 175
Rewriting Textbook .......................................................................... 176
Presenting Message ........................................................................... 176
Evaluation .......................................................................................... 177
Program Methods .............................................................................. 177
  Culturally Sensitive Spiritual Programs ........................................... 177
  Christian Functional Rituals and Ceremonies .................................. 178
  Evaluation ........................................................................................ 178
Lessons Learned .................................................................................. 179
Recommendations .............................................................................. 181

Appendix

1. QUESTIONNAIRES ........................................................................... 183
2. ARTICLES .......................................................................................... 192

BIBLIOGRAPHY ................................................................................... 217
VITA ......................................................................................................... 228
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Map of Thailand ......................................................... ix
2. Thailand Adventist Mission Growth Rate ......................... 94
3. Buddhist Spiritual Journey Chart .................................... 106

LIST OF TABLES

1. Distribution of “Ultra Poor” Household Heads by Levels of Education ........................................ 59
2. Poverty Table—Year 2000 ............................................ 64
3. Distribution of Household Members by Occupation ................. 66
4. Health Table .................................................................. 79
7. Logical Framework ...................................................... 142
8. Terms and References .................................................. 143
10. Activity Schedule (Subsequent Years) .............................. 149
11. Resource Schedule ..................................................... 156
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To all classmates who have been sources of inspiration and encouragement. You are simply a bunch of good peers to me.
Map of Thailand
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Problem

Buddhism, as a religion, is not hostile to Christianity, but very few Buddhists have embraced Christianity. Despite efforts by many Christian organizations and several approaches developed in order to present the gospel to Buddhist people in Thailand in the past 450 years, only 0.5 percent of the 65 million Thais have accepted the Christian faith.\(^1\) The results, in terms of additions of new members joining the Seventh-day Adventist Church, are similar to that of other Christian denominations. After 100 years in Thailand only about 13,000 people have joined the Adventist church.\(^2\) The Thailand Adventist Mission (TAM) also has very few converts who were formerly Buddhists. Most of its members are converts from animistic and tribal religions, and many of its workers are also from rural and tribal backgrounds.

What causes Thai Buddhists to resist the preaching of the gospel? What keeps

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the majority of them from accepting the message of salvation? Is it possible for Christian evangelists to find better ways to reach out to Thai Buddhists after more than 100 years of trying?

Justification

The limited success rate should not be a deterrent to Christian efforts in presenting the gospel of salvation to Buddhists. The Great Commission commands us to preach the gospel to all nations, nationalities, and peoples (Matt 28:19-20). The Buddhists in Thailand deserve to hear the gospel in a way they can easily understand, so it is therefore imperative that new ways of preaching the gospel message continue to be explored and employed. The Lord's mandate is for Christians to preach, teach, and baptize people, including Buddhists.

The majority of the population in Thailand is Buddhist. Since the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Thailand has had very limited success in evangelism and since 1993 has seen a decline in membership a new approach is urgently needed.

Not only does the Thailand Mission have few members who are from a Buddhist background, but it also has very few workers who were formerly Buddhists. In order to reach out effectively to the Buddhist population it needs workers who are "insiders"; that is, people who truly understand Buddhists. This project aims to


2Membership of the Thailand Adventist Church in 1993 was 13,992 and 13,569 in 2003. This represents a growth rate of -0.3 percent. See "Annual Charts and Statistics."
develop an approach that, after having proven its effectiveness, will be utilized to reach Buddhists with the gospel message.

Presently there are only three Thai students who are preparing for ministry by studying theology at Mission College. If this situation continues the Thailand Mission will experience a shortage of pastors to preach to Buddhist people. Something needs to be done to improve the situation. Thus, not only is there an urgent need to preach the gospel to Buddhists, but there is also the need to encourage former Buddhists to take ministerial training so that they may carry the good news to their own people.

In Myanmar, another Buddhist country, fewer than 100 people out of 24,237 members of the Seventh-day Adventist church are from a Buddhist background.¹ An effective method of preaching the gospel needs to be found so that successful outreach to Buddhist people in both Thailand and Myanmar can be achieved.

Over 400 students at Mission College are from a Buddhist background and at least 90 percent of the 220 students from its Bangkok campus are Buddhists. Very few of them make a decision to accept Jesus as their personal Savior, even after four years of studying at the Bangkok campus of Mission College. There is a real need to find a better way to convey the gospel to these Buddhist students. Therefore, choosing Mission College as a case study to field test the project is most appropriate since there are many Buddhists staying together in one place. This situation makes it more convenient to test new approaches.

Purpose

The overall aim of this paper is to produce an approach to presenting the gospel to Buddhist people in Thailand. Mission College students, especially first year Buddhist students, have been chosen as a case study. The project’s primary aim is to increase the numbers of baptisms of Buddhist students at Mission College. Ultimately the project aims to have an impact in a wider context by utilizing the approach to reach out to Buddhist people in Thailand.

Significance

The project is the first of its kind to be attempted with Buddhist students in an educational setting. Once completed, the results and lessons learned will be shared with the Adventist Church and the Adventist Buddhist Study Center in Thailand. Effective approaches can then be implemented elsewhere in the country by other Adventist and Christian workers.

Basic Assumptions

It is assumed that the project director will continue to be available to implement the project at Mission College for the duration of the project, that the Christian Beliefs class in a Thai medium will be offered each year to new Thai students, and that a good number of Buddhist students enroll. It is also assumed that the college administrators will support the project and facilitate the implementation of it.
Limitations

This project is limited to Mission College, its scope being confined to Thai Buddhist students only, especially first year ones. The project aims to introduce the above students to Jesus only, and does not take into account any nurturing process afterwards. The project will not attempt to develop correspondence Bible lessons, but will produce a textbook for the above students that should be implemented within three years, i.e., from September 2004 to August 2007.

Definitions

There are several terms used in this project paper that may be unfamiliar, so that defining them will help to make the paper easier to read.

Mission College is an international tertiary institution, owned and operated by the Southeast Asia Union Mission of Seventh-day Adventists. It is located in Muaklek, Saraburi, which is 165 kilometers northeast of Bangkok on the Friendship Highway.

Thailand Adventist Mission belongs to the Southeast Asia Union Mission of Seventh-day Adventists, whose territory of work covers Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

The Buddhist Study Center is a General Conference Global Mission initiative established to study Buddhism and ways of presenting the gospel to the Buddhist world. It is based in Ayudhya and is currently headed by Scott Griswold.
A logframe (Logical Framework) is a summary of the project implementation plans in brief. In addition, there is an activity schedule and a resource schedule that are intended as more detailed summaries to better explain the logframe.

Culturally Sensitive Spiritual Programs are spiritual activities conducted at Mission College with elements of Thai culture embedded in the programs to make them relevant and interesting to a Thai Buddhist audience.

Methodology

Several aspects and actions were employed in the process of writing and implementing the project. For example, the project director’s personal and spiritual foundation for ministry was examined. Political, social, economic, educational, and religious conditions of Thailand were also assessed through library research, observations, and interviews, and a statistical analysis of the work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Thailand was studied and workers interviewed. Christian approaches, including Adventist, to presenting the gospel to Buddhists in Thailand were consulted, and surveys were conducted on faculty, staff, and students at Mission College on several occasions.

Outline

Chapter 1 introduces a brief overview of the project such as the problem, justification, purpose, significance, and assumptions and describes the limitations, definitions, and the methodology to be used.

Chapter 2 describes the foundations for personal, spiritual, theological, mission, and ministry of the project director. It also outlines his background,
temperament, spiritual gifts, leadership style, task-type preference, and the possible impact they could have on the project.

Chapter 3 is an analysis of the country. It describes the history, political, social, economic, educational, health, and religious contexts of Thailand that will form the basis for the new approach to preaching the gospel in Thailand.

Chapter 4 is a thesis of the new strategy. It explores several Christian approaches to presenting the gospel to Buddhists and describes a new approach. The Four-Stage Spiritual Journey of a Buddhist to Christianity forms the basis of the new approach, with the role of the messenger, message, and method changing according to different stages.

Chapter 5 depicts the proposed strategy in the form of a project proposal. It outlines the project goal, objectives, and activities in a logframe, and also contains activity and resource schedules. It further describes how the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the project will be done.

Chapter 6 is about monitoring, reporting and an initial self-evaluation. It shows what activities have been implemented and lessons learned. Finally, recommendations are made for further actions and modifications.
CHAPTER II

PERSONAL THEOLOGY AND SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION

Personal Journey

In Laos

It was in a jungle village in northern Laos during the Indochina War in 1958, that I was born. Only two years after my birth my parents fled for their lives when the battlelines reached our village. That escape marked the beginning of my life as a refugee. From that time, I was constantly on the move as the war pushed further into the government controlled areas around our villages. I do not quite remember how many times my family had to move away from the battlefield, but life on the run was very much a part of my early childhood. War was so familiar to me. I saw people die from gunshot wounds. The sound of gunfire, bombs, cannons, and rockets pierced my eardrums daily and I eventually lost most of my hearing from right ear.

During my teenage years, I often went fishing in the evening, leaving the net in the water all night to catch fish. I would go early in the morning to check it. Very often, instead of catching fish my net would catch dead soldiers. The bodies would become entangled in my net and I had to remove them, in order to save my fishnet, for it was too expensive to lose the net. I grew up with the smell of death and the ugliness of war.
Because of the war I did not receive a proper education. All of my elementary education, except for the final year, came from one teacher, my father, who was a trained junior elementary school teacher. He never completed a high school diploma. He did all of his study at a Buddhist temple where he finished six grades of primary school and one year of teacher training before becoming a rural elementary school teacher. When he could no longer teach me I had to move to town to seek further study. In 1970, I went to live with my grandmother in Luang Prabang, the then Royal City of Laos, situated in the northern part of the country.

In 1971 my family also moved to live in Luang Prabang. I passed the entrance exam and was accepted to study at the Lycée de Luang Prabang, the only French medium high school for the province. Not long after that, my education was interrupted again by another outbreak of fighting. Starting from 1973, our student leaders, incited by communist secret agents, made us spend most of our time demonstrating against our educational leaders. We were told they were bad and corrupt and that they must resign. Little did we know that it was the Communists who were behind all those activities. Then, on the second of December 1975, we welcomed a new government, without colonial or capitalist control, and heralded the birth of a new independent nation, the Laos People’s Democratic Republic. What a mistake we made! The new independence came at a very high cost indeed. It cost us our privacy, our freedom and ultimately our will to succeed and live. Many of our friends, including student leaders who had once helped the Communists gain power, were rounded up and taken against their will to re-educational camps to have their capitalist contaminated brains cleansed. Our educational system changed from French
medium to Lao medium. All foreign books and literature were burned and Christianity was banned. Churches were closed and then occupied by the police or army. In 1975, I was selected by the provincial educational system, against my will, to go and study to be a teacher for secondary education. I wanted to study medicine, but I had no choice but to go wherever the government sent me. Studying to become something I did not plan to become was a painful experience for me, especially when we had no freedom to express our desires. I endured three years of training at a teacher’s college and then became a secondary school teacher in 1979.

After I graduated I was posted to Vientiane, the capital city of Laos and taught at the Sithan Neua High School (North Sithan High School). I worked under the guidelines of the communist educational system for five years. On January 19, 1984, I could no longer live and enjoy my life in my country, so I escaped to Thailand to seek freedom and refuge. Under communist rule, I could not even choose my own career. It was chosen for me. The Party representative believed that I would enjoy teaching so they selected me to become a teacher. I now know that even behind the Communist Selection Committee God was at work to prepare me for His service at a later time. My teaching experience certainly was a divine preparation for my future work. I gained valuable experience from working with students and their parents throughout my five years of teaching.

In Foreign Lands

In the dark of the night on January 19, 1984 I arrived on the Thailand side of the Mekong River, not even knowing where to go or what to do. During the crossing I
almost perished in the Mekong River when my boat was intercepted by a Thai Royal Army Patrol boat. Fortunately, we were very close to the Thai shore when our boat was intercepted, so we pretended to be Thai fishermen by showing the Thai marines our fishnet, which my friend who was a professional smuggler, had prepared. Once on dry ground my friend told me to find my way to the refugee camp by myself. I crawled up the riverbank carefully, while it was still dark, hoping to find some villagers who might be kind enough to help me. I saw some villagers warming themselves around a fire in a banana plantation. After observing them for a while I decided to approach them. They were shocked when they saw me partly covered with mud and water. Nevertheless, they were kind to me. One family took me into their house and gave me a simple farm meal—tuna fish and sticky rice with green chili paste. It was the most delicious meal I had eaten in my life up to that time. At last I ate a meal in freedom! Freedom was what I wanted and now I was able to taste a little of it. The next morning, the family guided me to a police station in town where I could present myself to the authorities, get registered, and be placed with other escapees from Laos into a refugee camp. There were hundreds of refugees in that small police station. A month later, a United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) representative came and registered us as refugees under the UN protection. Later we were transferred to the Napho Refugee Camp, Nakhon Phanom, bordering the Thak Khek province of Laos. I stayed in this camp from February 1984 until January 1987 when I arrived in Australia and began my new life in Sydney. In October 1988, at the Cabramatta Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church, Sydney, Australia, I was married to my sweetheart whom I met while staying in the camp. My
wife was a Vietnamese born in Thailand who formerly resided in Nakhon Phanom, Thailand. On February 19, 1989 I became a naturalized citizen of Australia and at that point my refugee life ceased. But my life on the run resumed, this time in the service of God as His ambassador. I worked as a church pastor in Sydney, after spending four years studying theology at Avondale College. In 1998 our family moved to Thailand as we waited to get visas to work in Laos. We were refused entry to Laos. I was then offered a position as associate director for the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) in Myanmar. Our family worked and lived in Myanmar from 1998 to 2000 and then moved back to Australia where I returned to the pastoral ministry in Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia. January 2002 found our family returning to Asia, this time to work at Mission College, Thailand as chaplain and lecturer.

**Spiritual Journey**

As Buddhist

As a child I was always reminded that spirits had power and would punish any boy or girl who was not obedient to their parents. As I grew up I often heard my mother say to my younger sister, “If you do not stop crying a ghost will hear you and it will come and lick your tears.” It seemed to have worked for my mother, because my sister would try very hard to stop crying. However innocent the sayings might have been, they implanted in my head the idea that spirits were real and they could do things.

As a boy I used to observe my grandmother perform spirit ceremonies to find out about things beyond the human realm of knowledge. Her tools were simple. She
had a string, a small stick and a plate of sand with white powder. She would sprinkle the white powder on the sand. As she called on the spirit of the most recently deceased the stick would start moving. When she asked a question the stick would write a message on the sand. I knew it was the spirit who did it because my grandmother did not know how to read or write. I used to read and write for her each time she had a letter. So, spirits of the dead were real and it was very easy for me to believe in them.

From the time I was born spirits were very much a part of my daily life. I was told that not only the spirits of our dead ancestors but also the spirits who live in our body are involved in our well-being. The work of spirits was also a subject of research of many researchers.\footnote{Penny Van Esterik, “Interpreting a Cosmology: Guarding Spirits in Thai Buddhism,” \textit{Anthropos} 77, no. 1-2 (1982): 1-15.} The spirits that live in our body are known as \textit{khwan} (soul). There are thirty-two of them in one body. The \textit{khwan} are closely related to the person’s life.\footnote{Anders Poulsen, “Customs and Rites Connected With Pregnancy and Childbirth in a Northeastern Thai Village,” \textit{Asia Folklore Studies} 43, no. 1 (1984): 64.} The \textit{khwan} can influence our physical, mental, and even spiritual lives. For instance, when \textit{khwan} are upset we will surely get sick. One way to get better is to make sure the \textit{khwan} are happy. If the \textit{khwan} were to go outside our body and failed to return we would also get sick. The solution to this is to invite the \textit{khwan} back. There are certain ceremonies to deal with the \textit{khwan} to call them back to our body. A medium, usually an elderly woman or a spirit doctor, performs the ceremony.

2\textsuperscript{Anders Poulsen, “Customs and Rites Connected With Pregnancy and Childbirth in a Northeastern Thai Village,” \textit{Asia Folklore Studies} 43, no. 1 (1984): 64.
by offering gifts, ranging from as little as several eggs, flowers, and fruits, to gifts as big as a pig or a cow, much of it depending on how serious the condition was.

When tourists touch the head of a person without proper permission they upset the *khwan* and the person may get sick. Foreigners studying Thai-Lao culture or reading tourist books about the do's and do nots in Thailand or Laos will be warned “not to touch someone’s head” while in Thailand or Laos. The reason is that people believe the important *khwan* resides in the head of a person. Touching someone’s head, especially someone senior to the one who touches, upsets the *khwan* and causes it to leave. As a result, the one whose head was touched could fall sick.

Our homes were also full of spirits. There was a spirit for each room and each important item in the house. If an unauthorized person entered a certain forbidden room there would surely be a strong reaction from the spirits. As a result, someone in the family, usually the weaker one, got sick. If a proper ceremony of apology was not performed the person could die. I saw with my own eyes how my younger sister died when we angered a spirit of the land. She complained of a headache and had difficulty breathing. We called for a spirit doctor and he came and performed his ceremony, then said our house was built on a spirit’s land who was determined to cause us harm. Immediately, my sister breathed her last breath and died in front of all of us. We lived in fear after that moment and eventually moved away from that house.

I was involved with spirits and mediums myself during my youth. My friends and I would get together after midnight and call on the spirits of girls whom we wanted to talk to. We did it regularly and enjoyed our conversations with the spirits of our girlfriends. When we met the girls during the day we would ask them about the
secret things they did, that only they knew and that their spirits had told us. They would be very surprised at how we would know all those things. These experiences were so real that I believed other things that our culture taught me to believe.

We were products of our culture. Like it or not, our lives are influenced by it and we are shaped by it. We see the world through it. According to Reggie McNeil, "We breathe the culture through our minds and psyches, as we breathe the air through our lungs." As a Laotian who spent most of his childhood in Laos, I also learned to believe that once people died they would become spirits or ghosts. Laotians are afraid of ghosts. There are several types of ghosts depending on the nature, circumstances and time of death of a person. If a pregnant woman died while giving birth she would become a very angry ghost who does not like men whom she perceived to be the cause of her pregnancy and death. Therefore, one fact that cannot be ignored is that when a Lao Buddhist becomes a Christian that person will still store their view of the dead in their sub-conscious. The spirits of the dead will continue to be a challenge to Buddhist believers and I am no exception. I still feel uncomfortable approaching a spirit house or a Lao cemetery, especially at night. My subconscious forces me to be afraid of those things.

Not only were spirits a part of my early life but fate and destiny was very much woven into my life as a Lao Buddhist. We were told that what we are was determined by what we did in our last cycle of birth. We were indoctrinated with the concept of

reincarnation almost every day of our lives. There were people who claimed to have been born in certain families and their stories about the secrets of their former family were true. One could hardly doubt their authenticity since they were able to relate correctly everything about their past lives. To Buddhists reincarnation is fundamental to all other beliefs. The reason a person is poor is because they were predestined to be that way, resulting from their past life. A reason that someone dies in a certain way is believed to be connected to their actions in their past life. Thus, a person must try hard to store up good merits in order to improve one’s life in the next cycle of birth.

I used to believe that Buddhist monks had spiritual power to undo almost any bad spell of life and bestow blessings. Many people invite monks to preside over the dedication ceremony of their new home or to bless the family members. They also consult monks before making major decisions in life. Day and time have a distinct impact in the lives of Buddhists. Consultation with monks or fortunetellers for certain auspicious times such as a wedding, launching a business, traveling, building a house, and many other activities is a common occurrence.

Superstitions were also part of my early life as a Buddhist. I was told that doing certain things in life might cause certain effects in my future life. For instance, I was told that I should never say that a baby is cute. The belief was that if a spirit overheard someone say that the spirit would love the baby so much that it would take the baby and the baby would die. Instead, one must say the opposite, “Your baby is really ugly, please let me hold it.” The tones and the way it was said would indicate the positive meaning to the parents of the baby.
The belief that certain trees and flowers could bring or hinder good luck for the owner was also widespread. The Thais will not plant a *frangipani* (plumeria) in front of their houses. In the Thai language the flower means “sadness” or “misery” and it would bring sadness or a crisis to the house where it is located. A jasmine flower is also believed to attract female ghosts. Because the jasmine flower gives out a strong fragrance at night female ghosts are attracted to the flower, so it should not be planted near residences.

As Christian

After my baptism into a Christian church on March 27, 1984, at the Napho Refugee Camp in Nakhon Phanom, Thailand, my spiritual journey continued. A Buddhist needs time to become fully Christian. In my case, even after being baptized into a Christian church I was not converted until I experienced God a few months later. My conversion experience came when the church pastor, Houmphanh Kongsengphengphet, asked me to teach English full-time to my fellow refugees in the Napho Refugee Camp as part of the free services offered by the church at that time. “I have a problem,” I told him. “I have to work and earn a little money to support myself while living in the camp. You know how hard it is to live as a refugee. If you could hire me for an equivalent amount of what I am receiving from my work with the Public Health Center I would quit my job and work full-time for you.” He replied, “You are not going to work for me. You are working for God as a volunteer. I do not have money to hire you. But, I understand that you really need some money to survive here in this camp. Why do not you ask God to hire you? He can hire you if
He wishes to do so.” Prompted with the challenge and my desire to know whether the Christian God was really alive I prayed a simple prayer with the pastor. My prayer was, “Dear God, forgive me for my lack of faith. I do need to know that you are alive and able to deliver your promises. Let’s make an agreement. If you would provide me a salary equivalent to what I receive from working for the Public Health Center I will quit my job and work for you. I pray in Jesus’ name, Amen.” The pastor was a witness to my prayer. He was satisfied and so was I. I thought to myself that I had a clever way of refusing the pastor’s request. A couple of months later, I received a registered letter from my former pen pal, Evelyn Grech, in Canberra, Australia. In her letter, she said that she had received my letter written several months earlier when I first arrived in the Napho Refugee Camp. She had moved, but the postman happened to know her father and he gave the letter to her father who forwarded it to her. Also in the letter she enclosed a Sponsorship form and a bank draft of Aus $30.00 for me. She added that she would send the same amount to me around the end of each month for the duration of my stay in the camp. When I exchanged the check into Thai Baht I had 500 Baht, exactly the amount of my monthly salary I received for my work at the Public Health Center. I learned later that my letter was not handed to her father until after I prayed that prayer. There was no doubt in my mind who prompted the postman to remember Evelyn’s father. There was no doubt who inspired Evelyn to send money to me. I did not ask for her financial assistance when I wrote to her. A simple prayer was answered in a simple way. What could I do? I thought I could get away from working for the pastor, but I could not. I had to keep the agreement I had made, not
with the pastor, but with God. I entered God’s service then. Up to now, God has confirmed His call with me many times through His providence and guidance.

**Personality and Spiritual Gifts**

**Temperament**

I grew up in a very poor family. My mother never had formal employment. My father was a rural teacher whose income was merely enough to feed us. I was the firstborn of the family. I also have six other siblings. The stigma of being a rural boy made me very timid and caused me to shy away from social gatherings and parties. I was used to being told to shut up because my opinion was of no worth. Status makes a whole lot of difference when it comes to speaking up. Asian women are the most affected. Their voices are not readily heard or valued. As a result, most Asian women speak very softly even these days. I was also affected by this social stigma as a country boy. This comes into consideration when I did the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) test where there are questions concerning feelings about going to parties.¹ My past upbringing and experience influenced how I responded to these questions. It does not really mean that I do not like people, but I do not like parties. I am comfortable at other social gatherings, but not parties where high social formality is expected from me. Nevertheless, my temperament test results indicate that I am an Extrovert, Sensing, Feeling, and Judging (ESFJ). Based on Isabel Briggs Myers’ book

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Introduction to TYPE\textsuperscript{1} I am a people oriented person who likes to lead and organize, enjoy working with people to complete tasks, am time oriented, loyal to tradition, institution, and family, and not opposed to changes. The test also indicates that I am sociable, amicable, enthusiastic, energetic, and outgoing. I am also practical, sympathetic, helpful, cooperative, tactful, decisive, and consistent. As a person who is able to organize and mingle with strangers with ease I believe that I have the qualities needed to do the research project on how to better present the gospel to Buddhists in Thailand.

Spiritual Gifts

Even before I took the tests on spiritual gifts from the book *Equipped for Every Good Work* by Dan R. Dick and Barbara Miller\textsuperscript{2} I already had a passion for teaching and mission work. I had been a successful church pastor with more than twelve years of experience. In 1987, I successfully pioneered and planted a church for migrants and refugees from Indochina in Cabramatta, a suburb of Sydney, Australia, a church that is still vibrant and growing in 2005. The spiritual gift tests confirmed my strengths as apostleship and teaching, with secondary gifts in leadership and knowledge, along with an organizing cluster. The apostleship gift will help me to be a missionary to the Buddhists in Thailand. The teaching gift helps me in my current


\footnotesize\textsuperscript{2}Dan R. Dick and Barbara Miller, *Equipped for Every Good Work* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 2001), 38.
position as a lecturer at Mission College since there are more than 500 Thai Buddhist students who have helped to develop various Christian evangelistic approaches. The test also suggests that I am also a good organizer. Apart from my five years of teaching and more than twelve years of pastoral experience, I also have two years of cross-cultural religious, social and developmental experience in Myanmar. It is this cross-cultural experience that has given me the confidence to be involved in finding ways to present the gospel to Buddhists in Thailand in a hopefully more effective way.

Leadership/Interaction Styles

From as young as I can remember I always liked to live in peace with everybody. I treasure friendship and have plenty of friends, both close and casual. I feel very uncomfortable if I know I have offended someone. I care very much about how others feel about me. If it were possible I would prefer to offend no one. Dan Dick and Barbara Miller provide four leadership/interaction styles: directors, dreamers, pleasers, and thinker.¹ When I look at the characteristics of the Leadership/Interaction Styles I find myself very much identified with the pleaser and director. However, I do fall into some of the categories of a thinker and a few characteristics of the dreamer. Being a pleaser and director fits very well in the type of project that I am doing. It helps me to easily make new friends, meet people, work in a teamwork situation, and organize my work well. I am committed and loyal to the

¹Ibid., 58-59.
organization. I also have a healthy balance between task and people orientation.

When it comes to Task Type Preferences I scored highest for Fellowship, as expected, and second highest for Work type. Dick and Miller also suggest four Task Type preferences: Project, Work, Process, and Fellowship. With the two types of preference I have all I need to work with people as a missionary and do the hands-on work that is very much needed in missionary work. I scored third highest in the Project type, which means I can also function pretty well with project orientation. My work as associate director of ADRA in Myanmar for two years gave me experience in community assessment work, writing proposals, overseeing projects, evaluating, and reporting to donors. This valuable experience has provided me with skills which will be useful in helping me develop strategies to work among Buddhists.

Present Ministry

Current Ministry

I am currently the chaplain and a lecturer in religious studies for both the Thai and English programs at Mission College, an institution owned and operated by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Because of its nature as a mission school it opens its doors to non-Adventist students. As a result, from its Bangkok Nursing School and the Muak Lek campus, there are more than 500 Thai Buddhist students. As the head chaplain I am responsible for the spiritual outreach to these students on both campuses. I am also acting as a church pastor for over 200 Thai-speaking members of

\[1\text{Ibid., 89-90.}\]
the college church. This ministry allows me to have direct contact with the Thai Buddhist students, Thai Buddhist workers and, to some extent, Thai Buddhist people in the communities surrounding Mission College.

Apart from teaching theology, I am also teaching religion subjects to Thai Buddhist students, as well as international students. I also take students on mission trips once or twice a year where students learn how to work with people in a community setting. Occasionally, I am called upon to help the Thailand Mission in its efforts to evangelize different communities in Thailand, and am also involved in the work of the Lao Mission in Laos and Cambodia.

Vision

Since making my decision to accept Christ at Napho Refugee Camp in 1984, I have given my life to the Lord to serve Him in whatever ministry He sees fit. I first began working for God in pastoral ministry as an associate church pastor for a non-denominational church at the refugee camp and continued until 1986 when I immigrated to Australia. In Australia, I resumed my pastoral ministry by pioneering and caring for the Cabramatta Seventh-day Adventist Church in New South Wales from March 1987 until August 1998. During those twelve years of ministry I worked as a community supervisor, missionary, Bible teacher, and church pastor. I spent two year in Myanmar as a missionary and later returned to pastoral ministry in Darwin, Australia, in 2001. Then, since 2002 I have been working as chaplain and lecturer at Mission College.
My ultimate goal, however, is to preach the gospel in my native country, Laos. Before this opportunity arrives I believe that I need to prepare myself spiritually and intellectually. I am in the process of preparing myself in the area of mission and ministry so that I will be able to present the gospel in an appropriate, contextual format. This present project allows me to develop a strategy specifically oriented to Buddhists. As I work as chaplain at Mission College it gives me a rare opportunity to gain experience in how to evangelize Buddhist students and to minister to international students and faculty members. Teaching religious subjects in both the Thai and English programs at Mission College also gives me valuable experience in the academic arena, which will prepare me for a better service in the future. Apart from my full-time involvement at Mission College, I occasionally have opportunities to dialogue with church leaders from the Thailand Adventist Mission on appropriate mission strategies. These opportunities have greatly enriched my spiritual preparation and growth. The reason that I would like to become more involved in reaching out to Buddhist people in Thailand and Laos, is the fact that I am related to both people by race and language.

Generally speaking, Thailand has been evangelized by Western missionaries for centuries. The Adventist work in Thailand is relatively new. The first Adventist missionary, who set foot in Thailand, was a young Australian colporteur by the name of Robert Caldwell. He arrived in Thailand in 1906 and stayed for three weeks. Later, Phang Yin Hee, a young colporteur from Singapore, came to sell the Chinese *Signs of the Times* to the Chinese population of Bangkok. But it was not until 1930 that the
first Thai was baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church under the leadership of F. A. Pratt.

The first Adventist who set foot in Laos in 1939 was also a colporteur by the name of Nguyen Tan Vang who came from Vietnam. Dick and Jean Hall became the first Adventist missionaries to Luang Namtha Province, Laos, in 1957. The first Laotians were baptized into the Adventist church in 1958.

Relatively very little progress has been made since that time. Books about Christian missionary work in Thailand and Laos report that Thais are satisfied with their religion. This is one of the main reasons it is hard to win Buddhists into the Adventist Church.

Abel Pagan writes that “Bound with fanatic loyalty and belief in Buddha, the Laotians are certainly not easy to win to the fold.” One great burden I have is how can I effectively present the gospel to the Buddhist people of Laos and Thailand who have been resisting the gospel message for centuries?

Being a native Lao I have a passion to do mission outreach in my country of birth. Being educated in Laos I have some linguistic advantages. Five years of teaching in Laos puts me in a position where I still earn respect from many of my former students. Sharing the gospel message with them is therefore not a “mission

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2Ibid., 270.

3Ibid., 254.

4Ibid., 271.
impossible,” but a “mission possible.” Being a college lecturer in Thailand puts me in a position to share the gospel with both Thai and international students; the large ethnic Lao groups living in Thailand provide me with a vast mission field to work in. Being an Adventist Lao among the Lao in Thailand enhances relationship building and spiritual bonding. I am now learning how to communicate the gospel to Buddhist people in Thailand and Laos.

As mentioned earlier, the Myers-Briggs Personality Test shows that am an ESFJ (Extrovert, Sensing, Feeling and Judging). Being this type of personality gives me a good footing in the ministry that I am passionate in. The MBTI test describes my personality type as one who prefers to “organize people and situations and then work with others to complete tasks accurately and on time. Sociable and outgoing, ESFJs enjoy celebrations and traditions and bring a very personal caring to the workplace and home.”¹ These qualities I would like to use to share the good news in Laos and Thailand in a meaningful way and to lead many people to Christ. I would love to see the Church become a center of spiritual life for Lao people and see the Christian religion become alive and relevant in people’s lives.

Theological Understanding of Ministry

Theological understanding forms the basis for one’s approach to ministry. For

¹Myers-Briggs, 28.
centuries Christians were not allowed to read the Bible; however, the Reformation only started after ordinary people commenced reading it. Luther’s belief in *sola fide* (justification by faith alone) and *sola scriptura* (Scriptures only as the source of authority) brought reform to the Catholic Church and led to the birth of Protestantism.\(^1\) This understanding of salvation coming through faith in Christ alone triggered Luther to preach his “new” theology that would later bring him into conflict with his church. The idea that one’s theology shapes how one does ministry and determines how a person lives their Christian life and preaches the Christian message.

**Humans Conditions**

The Bible helps us to understand that the condition of humanity and of the world is because of sin (Rom 3:9; 1 John 5:19). It gives an accurate account of what took place in the beginning when the first humans broke their relationship with God, their Creator (Gen 3). By obeying Satan’s suggestion to eat the forbidden fruit humans lost their innocence and freedom and became slaves to sin and death. The Bible says, “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned” (Rom 5:12). Through Adam sin entered the world and death also came as a result. All who were born in the world were born into the rule of sin and are alienated from God (Col 1:21). They fall short of God’s glory and grace (Gal 5:4). There is nothing humans can do to restore this lost relationship (Acts 4:12; John 5:24-25; 2 Cor 5:18-19; 1 John 5:12).

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Humans Need Help

The devil will not give up without a fight, although he knows that he is fighting a losing battle. Nevertheless, he will not just let go of his people. The Bible indicates that there is a battle between God and Satan for the ownership of humanity. Referring to God’s battle with Satan, Jesus said, “This is war, and there is no neutral ground. If you're not on my side, you're the enemy; if you're not helping, you're making things worse” (Matt 12:30 MSG). The book of Revelation, particularly chapter 13, reveals how the global war will be fought out by God and Satan.

The issue is about who to worship. The devil is keen to keep people in the dark, but Jesus is the Light of the world (John 9:5). He came into the world to lighten the hearts and minds of people (John 8:12; 9:5). But, 2 Cor 4:4 states that “the god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.” This clearly means that without the help of the Holy Spirit and other human agents, ordinary humans will not be able to see the light of the gospel (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13; 1 Cor 12:4). Thus, it is imperative that believing children of God take part in this redemptive work of reconciliation as commissioned by God (Matt 28:19-20; 2 Cor 5:18-19).

Great Commission

Jesus commissioned all believers to preach the Word. The apostle Paul saw the importance of this commission when he said, “Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!” (1 Cor 9:16). He then charged Timothy to do the same when he said, “Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—
with great patience and careful instruction” (2 Tim 4:2). God is requesting every believer to “preach the Word.” Jesus’ great commission is for all, not just pastors, evangelists, and church leaders. Everyone was ordained to carry out this mission of reconciliation when they were baptized into Christ. The Church of God is the church that obeys the great commission.

Ultimately every person was also born with a duty. God gave Adam and Eve a duty to care for the world (Gen 1:27-30; 2:15). Once they failed He gave them a duty to remind their children of His plan for their salvation (Gen 3:21). He then sent His prophets and elected His priests to lead and guide people in the path of salvation. In the time of the end, God has given each of us a duty to tell others the good news of His offer of salvation and the soon coming of Jesus Christ (1 Cor 1:23; Gal 6:14). As the apostle Paul said, “So that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life” (Tit 3:7).

“Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole [duty] of man” (Eccl 12:13). As humans we are to worship God and obey His commands. Jesus Christ, our Savior, has commissioned us to go and preach the good news of salvation. It is our duty to share this good news with all people on earth. Matthew, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote, “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come” (Matt 24:14). Therefore, the second coming will eventuate when all people have heard the message of salvation through Jesus Christ (Matt 24:14). Every person is requested by the Lord to preach the gospel (Mark 16:15). The apostle Paul said, “Woe to me if I do
not preach the gospel!” (1 Cor 9:16). Thus, all the ministries of the church are about sharing the gospel of salvation and the soon return of Christ.

God’s Mission

**Through His Word**

With so many religious and holy books available in the world, it is an important step towards genuine faith in God to recognize the Bible as His Word. It is believed that every religion has at least, in one form or another, a holy book where its believers seek inspiration and guidance. The Bible claims to be God’s Word, because it says, “For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet 1:21).¹ Not only are parts of the Bible inspired by God, but all parts of the Bible are actually God’s Word. Another text of the Bible says that “all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16-17).

The fact that there is a Bible proves that there is a God who gave us the Bible; however, there remains a question as to why God gave the Bible to humans. The Bible says that one of the reasons God gave the Bible is that He wants humans to know Him. Under God’s inspiration the writer of Proverbs stated that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (Prov 9:10). In this sense, anyone who seeks God will gain wisdom and anyone who

¹All Scriptures quoted in this paper are from the New International Version (NIV) unless otherwise specified.
knows God will have understanding. However, God does not just want humans to be smart; He also wants them to know His plans for them. Amos 3:7 says, “Surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets.” Thus, God wants to reveal Himself as well as His plan to human beings. It is very clear what God wants the salvation of human beings. In John 5:39-40 Jesus said, “You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.” We can see that the Bible, being God’s Word, wants to guide humans back to Him to receive salvation. It tells people about their origin, what went wrong with them and the world, what God did to rectify the problem of sin, and how we can be reconciled to Him. The Bible, being God’s book, is the only authoritative book of faith and salvation (2 Tim 3:16).

Through His Son

My understanding of ministry is based on my understanding of God and His mission to the world. Mostly importantly, I understand that God came to seek the lost (Luke 19:10). It is humanity that was lost when sin entered the world. Since then people are born in sin and are under the influence and control of Satan. Satan blinds them and leads them astray from God’s knowledge (2 Cor 4:4). They no longer have a clear perception of God. God’s image in humans was also marred and blurred by things of the world as introduced by Satan (John 8:44). Humans have sinned against God (Rom 3:23). They are sinful and are in need of forgiveness and cleansing from their sin (Rom 6:23; 8:2). They are the ones who wronged God and betrayed Him,
and nothing of human initiative could restore this strained relationship. As lost sheep humans are helplessly wandering in the wilderness of sin and death. But, Jesus came to save and seek what was lost (Luke 19:10). God made it clear through His book, the Bible, that He started the reconciliation process by sending Jesus, His only begotten Son, to save the lost world and humanity (John 3:16). Thus, it is clear that God’s mission is to save the world and He does it through Jesus Christ, His Son, and through His children, believing Christians (John 1:12-13; 1 John 3:1; 1 John 5:11, 13, 20).

God reconciled humanity to Himself. The Scripture says in 2 Cor 5:18-19, “All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.” Humans sold themselves to Satan, to be under his control, when they broke away from God’s loving relationship (Gen 3). Compelled by His infinite love and mercy God sought out humans and paid the ransom for their freedom to be His again. On the cross Jesus paid for their freedom with his life (Eph 2:16; Col 1:20). So, they are bought at a price (1 Cor 6:20). It was on the cross that Jesus put an end to Satan’s monopoly by setting up God’s kingdom on earth. When Jesus cried out “It is finished” He indicated that God’s plan to set up His kingdom on earth was complete (John 19:30). Since then, humans could either choose to enter God’s kingdom or remain under Satan’s rule (1 John 5:19). They would become citizens of God’s country if they chose to accept Jesus Christ as their Savior (Eph 2:19). They would be adopted as His children with rights to inherit eternal life (John 1:12-13).
Originally Adam and Eve were God’s children (Gen 2). They were to represent God and rule the earth (Gen 1:27-30). However, they lost their place as God’s children when they yielded to Satan’s temptation and betrayed God (Gen 3:23-24). From then on they became estranged children and Satan took control of their lives. Jesus said that those who were not children of God were actually children of the devil (John 8:44). The devil continues to control people and lie to them about God. He enslaves them in all sorts of false worship, idolatry, animism, and worship of ancestors (Eph 5:5-7). The devil even impersonates the spirits of the dead to keep many in the dark and to prevent them from finding the light of the gospel of Christ. His agents are “sorry bunch—pseudo-apostles, lying preachers, crooked workers—posing as Christ's agents but sham to the core. And no wonder! Satan does it all the time, dressing up as a beautiful angel of light. So it shouldn't surprise us when his servants masquerade as servants of God” (2 Cor 11:13-15 MSG).

However, those who are willing to listen to God’s voice can surely hear the message of love and salvation. Those who believe in Jesus Christ and are born again by the Spirit can become God’s children (John 1:12-13 cf. John 3:1-15). As God’s children they inherit His kingdom and belong to Him. As John once wrote, “My dear children, you come from God and belong to God. You have already won a big victory over those false teachers, for the spirit in you is far stronger than anything in the world” (1 John 4:4 MSG).

Jesus also promised that He would come back to be with us, so that we would not be orphans. Before returning to heaven Jesus said to His disciples, “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me
anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live” (John 14:18-19). Then, He commissioned His disciples to tell the world the good news of God’s reconciliation, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt 28:19-20). Thus, there may be many ministries that God uses to reach people, but all ministries have the same goal: to reconcile the world—God is calling humanity back to Him. This puts the ministry of the Word in the highest priority. Considering those priorities the disciples once said, “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:2-4). According to this text, the apostles’ primary task was the ministry of prayer and preaching.

**Theological Understanding of the Church**

Mission is central to of the Adventist message. The three angels’ messages are compelling evidence of mission (Rev 14:6-13). Adventist mission is to call people to worship God and warn them of the danger of not accepting God’s last offer of salvation (Rev 18:4). Global Mission in the Seventh-day Adventist Church is an
example of how serious this church is about mission. The aim of the church is to carry
the good news of God's love and salvation to all corners of the earth.¹

People have different understandings of the church and its ministry. What a
person understands about the church and ministry influences how they worship and
what they do for God. James H. Rutz, the author of the book *The Open Church*,
suggests a return to the house churches of the first Century. He wrote that the church
of today is hampering the ministry of the church. So he introduced "open worship" in
a so-called "Open Church" style.² Is a house church better than the existing church
building? Should the church be built to look like a Buddhist temple? Should pews be
done away with? Should the seating arrangement be in a circle, rectangular or theater-
like?

The shape and size of the church is not the most important issue. The kind of
programs the church conducts may have a significant impact on church goers. Most
importantly we have to be sensitive to the believers' culture and local environment
when we do ministry. Since the church does not refer to the church building, but
rather the believers, it is important for us to focus our attention on people. My
approach to this issue is to allow the believers to decide the shape of the church
building they would like to build and what kind of worship programs they prefer by
giving them several options and samples. People must be comfortable and happy with

index.html.en (6 June 2005).

²James H. Rutz, *The Open Church: How to Bring Back the Exiting Life of the First
their church and programs. Below I have listed my understanding about the church and its ministry.

Body of Christ

Regardless of the physical shape of the church building, the church is the body of Christ. The Bible refers to God's church as Christ's body, comparing members with body parts that need to function together for the growth of the body (Eph 1:22-23; 4:12; 1 Cor 12:27). As different bodies have different looks it is only natural to understand that different church bodies would look differently.

The imagery of the church as the body of Christ also has other significant aspects apart from the physical outlook and ministry. Just as the body has a head to think, plan, make decisions, and coordinating the other body parts, so also the church should have a central body that organizes and facilitates its functions. Some churches have taken away the head and replaced it with "hands" and "feet." In this instance, the local churches are functioning independently yet they belong to the same body or denomination. Other churches have done away with the "hands" and "feet" in the decision-making processes. They use the so-called "top-down" style of leadership. The top level of the organization does all the thinking, planning, and relays it decisions to the local level of the organization to implement. The most preferred church model should be the one that uses all the parts, including the head and the toes. The ideal church organization would imitate how the body works. The head is neither the highest level of organization nor the feet and toes the lowest or unimportant part of the organization. It is Jesus Christ who is the rightful head of the church (Eph 5:23).
Hierarchical and bureaucratic systems of the church can hinder the functions of the church and are usually slow to respond to the rapid of the world. Therefore, a church system of organization should be of the kind that enhances the decision-making at the local level with a networking support at the higher level of organization. Facing the diversified and fast-changing society of the twenty-first century, the church will find it extremely difficult to govern from a centralized location. Eddie Gibbs and Ian Coffey suggest that the church should “move from a hierarchical mentality to a networking mindset.” Therefore, it is most important to allow local church members to decide what type of church building and ministry they would like to have. Yet, the local church is still a basic part of the denomination organizational and networking structure.

Temple of Holy Spirit

The church is not so much the building, but rather the individual members of the body of Christ. Members of the church belong to Christ as they were purchased by His blood (1 Cor 6:20; 7:23). Belonging to Christ they become temples of the indwelling Holy Spirit (1 Cor 3:16; Eph 2:19-22; 1 Pet 2:9). The implication of this is that Christians should live holy lives (2 Pet 3:11). This does not happen because church members are trying to please God by living holy lives, but rather the transforming power of the Holy Spirit enables them to live according to God’s will (Eph 4:30). The emphasis of the church should not be on the conformity of practices,

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1Eddie Gibbs and Ian Coffey, Church Next: Quantum Changes in Christian Ministry (Leicester, UK: InterVarsity, 2001), 70.
dressing codes, particular worship styles, specific order of worship services, times of worship, specific hymns and songs of praise, and worship and methods of preaching and sharing; but rather the church should be nurturing and maturing in holy living, witnessing, and sharing God’s Word with the community (1 Thess 5:11). This can only be effective when the individual members of the church become temples of the Holy Spirit.

God’s Kingdom on Earth

Recognizing that the kingdom of God is limitless, which includes the universe above and the earth below, God established His kingdom on earth. Daniel predicted that God would establish His kingdom on earth when he said: “In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever” (Dan 2:44-45).

This kingdom was to be set up on earth during the time of the kings in the Roman Empire when Jesus came to earth and began preaching, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near” (Matt 3:2-3). Jesus surely talked about His plan to set up God’s kingdom on earth as foretold by Daniel the prophet. This kingdom of God is God’s reign. In Matt 21:31-32, Jesus explained that the tax collectors and the prostitutes had entered the kingdom of God ahead of the Pharisees because they had repented and believed. This means that the kingdom of God was in existence during Jesus’ time. Jesus also gave the keys of the kingdom of God to His disciples (Matt 16:19). On one occasion, Jesus stated that the kingdom of God was within His
disciples (Luke 17:21). The book of Revelation concluded that finally “the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever” (Rev 11:15). All these indicate that the kingdom of God on earth is actually God’s reign in the person of Christ. Thus, after God has set up His kingdom on earth it gave a choice whether we would like to belong to the kingdom of Satan or the kingdom of God. The Bible also says that those who do not belong to God are in Satan’s control (1 John 5:19). Those who are wise can choose to enter the kingdom of God by joining His church (Matt 16:19). George Eldon Ladd says that “The church is the community of the Kingdom.”¹ Those who refuse to enter God’s kingdom, however, are automatically in the kingdom of Satan (1 John 5:19). Choosing to be in the kingdom of God and joining the church is like accepting God’s rule over our lives and refusing to be under the direct influence of the devil.

God’s True Church

The church is to be culturally inclusive. As the church is made up of people of all races and tongues it should consider being culturally inclusive. This means that there is no dominant culture in the church. No culture is superior or inferior, but all members are brothers and sisters in God’s universal family (1 Cor 12:13, 27; Col 1:27). Failing to understand the nature of the church in this way will certainly cause division and disruption in the church of God. It will sadden God and delight Satan. The disputes about ordination of female pastors, choices of music in worship, clapping

in church, and even the wearing of jewelry to church are very much cultural issues. Some cultures have different tastes in music. Other cultures have been wearing jewelry as part of their tradition. These issues are culturally and should be dealt with culturally, not theologically.

The church should also understand the context of its culture when it comes to nurturing and sharing the gospel message. Doing mission work in Asia may be different from doing it in Africa. A set of Bible lessons used effectively in North America may not be as effective in Southeast Asia. Each church ministry must be culturally adaptive and relevant.

The church building is to be a place of worship and meditation. Some people would like to make the church the “house” of God where only those who they think “holy” and “purified” are accepted. Some would make sure people who come to worship wear proper attire and behave in a solemn manner, according to their way of thinking. Some feel strongly that the church certainly cannot be used for social purposes even outside of the worship times. Some associate proper worship with quietness. For some the church is closed to the public, except for worship times.

The Bible, however, talks about another form of the church where members bring their food to share, where social activities take place alongside of worship, where all family members are welcome including women and children (Acts 2:42; Acts 6:1-7; 1 Cor 11:17-34). This type of church is the “open” church, the church of the early Christians where there were no professional singers, no professional pastors, but where everybody shared as the Holy Spirit moved. This kind of church is full of life and the Spirit.
The church should be a place where spiritually sick people find comfort and healing. It should be open for sinners to come and find forgiveness and salvation. It should never be operated as a club of the "saved" or "holies" to the exclusion of sinners. Instead it should be open as a refuge for the lost and a safe house for sinners.

Church’s Mission

There are many ministries, but there is only one goal—to bring people to salvation in Christ (1 Cor 12:4:11). All church ministries must be based on this goal. There are several prominent ministries in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Service

Ministries of service have been in existence as long as the Christian church. Very early in the history of the Christian church the apostles appointed certain church members to take care of the distribution of food to the needy members while they focused on the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:2-4). That appointment marked the beginning of the service ministry of the Christian church. In fact, service is an important mark of Christianity. The Lord Himself said that those who wanted to be great must be servants of all (Matt 20:26; Mark 10:43). The Lord Himself came not to be served but to serve (Matt 20:28; Mark 10:45). Thus, service ministry is ordained by the Lord for all Christians to share love and mercy as they have received them from God (Rom 12:2-16; Phil 2:1-11). The Adventist Church has both domestic and international service programs.
Preaching

The Church cannot survive without a preaching ministry. Preaching is the mandate of the church; however, the church must understand how and when to preach (2 Tim 4:2). It should not blindly stand at the corner of a street and preach, unless that practice is part of the culture. The message must be filled with hope and truth from God. A preaching ministry can come in many forms; i.e., sermons, Sabbath school, or story telling. Preaching can also be done inside or outside the church, at schools and universities, in the workplace, in farm homes, or any other place where people gather.

A preaching ministry can be done by every Christian. Every Christian is a minister of the Word. God expects all Christians to preach the good news of His salvation and the soon coming of Jesus.

Education

Education is a ministry of the church. For without education the church could not possibly produce quality workers for the organization. Without religious education the church probably would not be able to train its young people in the way of the Lord. Children are more receptive to the preaching of God’s love. In fact, God has commanded His people to train their young children in the way of the Lord. In Proverbs 22:6, Solomon, under God’s inspiration, instructed parents saying, “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.” Solomon, the wisest man on earth, saw the need for education for children when they were still young. Thus, Christian education is definitely important and necessary for the Christian church.
Education is also a preaching ministry. Wherever there are non-Christian students education also becomes a preaching ministry. In many parts of the world, Adventist education has yielded more than just academic excellence. Adventist education comprises of 6,700 schools, colleges and universities, with approximately 66,000 teachers and 1,257,000 students. With the Adventist philosophy of education and the principles of faith-and-learning integrated into the life of each institution, Adventist education’s impact and influence goes beyond students’ academic lives.¹ Many people were introduced to Christ through an Adventist education ministry. Many students, professors, and staff members of Adventist academies, colleges, and universities have come to know Christ through Adventist education, but whenever Adventist education does not produce converts and quality Christian workers it ceases to become a vital institution of the church.

Health

Health is an important part of the ministry of the Adventist church. Adventists believe in a holistic approach to human life. “The Bible reminds us that the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and we have been entrusted with the privilege of maintaining and improving our spiritual, mental, social and physical health. Health Ministries promotes good health and the prevention of ill health to help achieve this goal of wholeness.”²


A healthy person is someone who has wholeness in three areas: (1) physical, (2) mental, and (3) spiritual. This theology of health is behind the creation of the health ministry. Most Adventists practice a healthy lifestyle which includes eating vegetarian food, abstaining from harmful substances, exercising regularly, and keeping the Sabbath as a day of rest. Health is important for a person to remain happy and to work effectively for God. Thus, the Adventist medical services, health education, and other health-related ministries make up part of Adventist ministries.

Closing Remarks

I believe that God has established His kingdom on earth. He has provided forgiveness to humans, not counting their sins against them, but offering them reconciliation through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. He has also given us the work of reconciliation. Thus, all Christians are God’s ambassadors and peace makers. We are to call all people to come out from under Satan’s rule and join God’s family to have everlasting peace and happiness and eternal life. The Lord Jesus is coming back soon and the only way to obtain eternal life and happiness is through Him alone.

In line with this special duty it is my desire and passion to reach out to Buddhist people in Thailand and Laos. Being a Lao as well as a Christian I have a burden to share this good news with the people of my own country who now live in Laos and Thailand. “Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!” (1 Cor 9:16). This Bible verse reminds me of the need to do mission and I am determined to do exactly what the Lord has commanded in Matt 28:19-20: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy
Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

The main reason for me to work in Thailand was to obey my passion to work among my “native” people, the Lao and the Thai. My intention is to bring them the good news of God’s offer of Salvation. Although there have been Christian missionaries to Thailand for several centuries, the Adventist work only started relatively recently.

Being a former Buddhist myself, but now an Adventist minister, I am attempting to find ways to present the gospel to Buddhist people in Thailand in a contextually appropriate way. I want to develop appropriate ways in which the church will do ministry that will connect with the people, their culture and religion.
HISTORICAL, POLITICAL, SOCIAL, AND RELIGIOUS ANALYSIS

History

Thai people have been known by different names through the different stages of their history. The land that is called today Thailand is believed to have been inhabited prior to the "Bronze Age" (around 3000 B.C.), most likely around 4500 B.C.\(^1\) It is also believed to be the oldest rice-producing area in Asia. Excavations at Ban Chiang, Udon Thani province, revealed pre-historic inhabitants whose bronze tools were found to be a few hundreds years older than those from the Middle Eastern Bronze Age.\(^2\) However, the present-day Thai, first known as the Tai race, are believed to have migrated from Southern China to regions in Southeast Asia beginning from the twelfth century A.D.\(^3\) The name "Tai" denotes the "Tai" race. The name is used as a title for the whole race of peoples who speak the Tai-kadai language such as the Thai.

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(in Thailand), Lao (in Laos), Shan (in Myanmar), Lue (in southern China) and their sub-groups. The word Tai is used as referring to Tai people from different areas, such as *tai nuea* (northern Tai) or *tai tay* (southern Tai). It can also be used as referring to subgroups of the "Tai" race such as *tai lue* (Lue tribe), *tai dam* (Dam tribe), and *tai Phuan* (Phuan tribe). The usage of this "Tai" word is not to be confused with the word "Thai", as this refers to only the people of Thailand.

The Tai first built their kingdom in Sukhothai (Dawn of Happiness) in 1238. It became known as the Sukhothai Kingdom. Then, Sukhothai was succeeded by the Kingdom of Ayutthaya in 1350. The Ayutthaya Kingdom lasted until 1767 when its capital was ransacked and burned to the ground by the Burmese army. It was during the Ayutthaya era that Thailand first became known in the West. A Portuguese envoy gained acceptance at the Siam Court in 1511, during the reign of King Ramkhamhaeng.\(^1\) After the fall of Ayutthaya, the Tai built their new capital at Thon Buri, on the opposite side of the Chao Praya River from where Bangkok is located today. From 1800 onward Bangkok became the capital city of the new Tai kingdom known then as Siam. A new twist of Thai history, however, came on June 24, 1932, when a peaceful revolution broke out, ushering in a new era of a constitutional government and the overthrowing of the absolute monarchy which had prevailed in Thailand since the Sukhothai kingdom. This event ultimately changed of the

country's name from Siam to Thailand in 1949, and means the land of the free.¹ The term "Thais," then, means "free people."

Thai people are proud of their history and heritage. Since the birth of the country, Thailand has never been colonized by any Western colonial power. During the pre-Sukhothai era, however, it fell vassal to the Mons Kingdom between the third and seventh century and to the Cambodian Empire during the twelfth century.² As of 2003, Thailand has a population of 62 million, is composed of 75 percent ethnic Tai (including Lao), 11 percent Chinese, 3.5 percent Malay, and the rest are Mon, Khmer, Phuan, Karen and other tribal minorities.³ Buddhism is the state religion, although not officially declared, 95 percent of the population adhere to it. There are 4 percent Muslims and only 0.8 percent Christians in Thailand.⁴ Hinduism and Sikhism make up the remainder of the five religions that are officially recognized in Thailand. Other religions also exist but are yet to receive official recognition from the Thai government.

It is debatable as to how and when Buddhism was brought to Thailand. According to a legendary account, which originated in Sri Lanka, the Buddha visited

Thailand, then called *Suvannabhumi*, at least once and left his footprint on a mountain called *Khao Pra Baath* (Buddha Footprint Mountain) in Saraburi province, about 150 kilometers north of Bangkok.\(^1\) Thai legends also state that Buddha left his left footprint on the Adam’s Peak in Sri Lanka, and walked one step to Thailand and left his right footprint on the *Pra Baat* Mountain in Saraburi, Thailand.\(^2\) The footprint that appeared on the rock is so large that the person making the footprint would be unbelievably huge. There are several Buddha footprints of every shape and size in numerous locations in the Southeast Asia region. One is in Pang-Nga Province in southern Thailand, where a golden colored frog is guarding it. People venerate the frog as well as the footprint.\(^3\) In Laos, there are at least two Buddha footprints in Luangprabang Province alone.\(^4\)

Another account shows that Buddhism was introduced to *Suvannabhumi*

\(^{1}\)Ibid., 135.


\(^{3}\)"*Roy Pra Baath,*" *Thairat*, 16 September 2002. A giant Buddha footprint at a waterfall is visited by worshippers from all walks of life. At the footprint, which is filled with water, resides a golden frog which people believe to be a guardian angel guarding the Buddha’s footprint.

\(^{4}\)There are two Buddha footprints in *Luang Prabang*, Laos, one on top of *Phou Si* (Si Mountain) and another at *Wat Pra Baat* (Temple of Footprint). The author is from this city and has personally sighted both footprints.
(ancient Thailand) by *Sona Thera* and *Uttara Thera* around 240 B.C.E.¹ There is evidence that as early as 247 B.C.E., Buddhism had already spread as far as Myanmar to the east and Afghanistan, Macedonia, and Egypt to the west.² It is believed that *Nakhon Pathom* was the capital city of the Suvannabhumi Kingdom between 139 B.C. and 457 A.D.³ The name *Nakhon Pathom* in the Thai language means the “First City” or “City of the Beginning.”

Another theory suggests that Buddhism was introduced to Thailand by the Mons, whose empire had flourished in southern Burma (present-day Myanmar) since the third century, as they invaded and occupied the land several times between the third and seventh centuries.⁴ Later Theravada Buddhism was further strengthened by King Anawrahta of Burma who captured Thailand in 1050 A.D.⁵ King Anawrahta was an ardent Theravada adherent who spread his religion through his conquests in central and northern Thailand. This possibility has the support of more historical

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¹Kirti, 141; “The Origins of Thais,” in SunSITE Thailand at Assumption University, n.d. http://sunsite.au.ac.th/thailand/buddhism/index.html (25 June 2003). This paper uses A.D., B.C., and B.C.E. interchangeably. C.E. stands for “Common Era.” It is a relatively new term that is experiencing increased usage and is eventually expected to replace A.D. (Anno Domini) in Latin or “the year of the Lord” in English. C.E. and A.D. have the same and value (2005 CE = 2005 AD). B.C.E. stands for “Before the Common Era.” It is eventually expected to replace B.C., which means “Before Christ.” B.C. and B.C.E. are also identical in value.


⁴Ibid.

⁵Kirti, 141.
accounts. Evidence such as a sixth century Buddhist pagoda, *Pra Pathom Chedi* (First Pagoda), which stands 127 meters tall in Nakhon Pathom Province, and was built by the Mons. This seems to support the idea that the Mons were the first to introduce Theravada Buddhism to Thailand.¹ The Tais were already Buddhists when they migrated to present-day Thailand. The Burmese introduced Buddhism to them when they were still in Yunnan, a region of Southern China, in the seventh century.

It was popularly believed that the Tai migrants brought Buddhism with them when they emigrated from southwestern China in the twelfth century. The *Pra Pathom Chedi* account, however, suggests that Buddhism was practiced in the region earlier than the migration of the Tai people from China. There are also several accounts that put the migration of the Tai from southern China as early as the first century A.D. or even as early as 600 B.C.E.² However, most historical accounts agree on the twelfth century date. It is evident that Buddhism, in various forms, was practiced in the region before the migration of the Tai. It was known that during the height of the Indonesian Srivijai Kingdom in 700 A.D. Mahayana Buddhism was brought to the region.³ The Khmer Kingdom that embraced Hinduism at the


³Mahayana is another type of Buddhism. “Maha” means “big” or “great” and “yana” means “vehicle.” In this case, Mahayana means “Great Vehicle” or “Great Way.” Note there are still a small number of Thais adhere to this type of Buddhism in Thailand.
beginning of its history was believed to have also accepted Mahayana Buddhism from the Srivijai expansion. As early as 800 A.D. both faiths—Brahmanism and Mahayana Buddhism—were already established in the Khmer culture. The ruins of the Angkor Wat temple complex, built between 1000 and 1200 A.D., are evidence of the influence of the two religions.\(^1\) It appears that Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism were practiced side-by-side in Thailand until King Ramkhamhaeng the Great officially declared Theravada Buddhism to be the official State religion in 1277.\(^2\) Since that time Theravada Buddhism has become the type of Buddhism that dominates the landscape of Southeast Asia. It is Theravada Buddhism that most likely came to Thailand through the Mons whose kingdom covered Burma and central and northern Thailand between the third and seventh centuries.

**Political Situation**

The birth of Thai democracy caused the absolute monarchy, which prevailed in Thailand for centuries, to come to an end in 1932. Ironically, the one who gave birth to Thai democracy was the monarch himself. It all began when King Mongkut or Rama IV (1851-1868) opened the kingdom’s doors to the West.\(^3\) He was the first

\(^1\) Kirty, 141.

\(^2\) Ibid.

monarch to initiate religious and social reforms in Siam. He introduced the modernization of the Siamese educational system and abolished slavery. After his death, his son, Chulalongkorn or Rama V (1868-1910) continued to bring Siamese society into the modern world. King Chulalongkorn valued the importance of Western knowledge and technology. Western style education was introduced throughout the kingdom. Slowly Western education replaced monastic education. It was during this period that the position of the absolute monarchy began to be threatened by new political ideas. In 1886, King Chulalongkorn received a petition from a group of Western-educated princes and officials demanding that he bring an end to the absolute monarchy and replace it with a constitutional monarchy. Although the king agreed in principle that a constitutional monarchy would be a useful system for Thai society, at that time he did not see enough Western-educated officials to carry out a Western style government in Siam. During the next few decades after King Mongkut's first move, many of Siam's elite students received their education in Europe, including King Vajiravudh or Rama VI (1910-1925) who was educated at Eton College in England. The process of democratization, however, was slow and difficult.

Democratic rights in Thailand were not won without mass struggle and bloodshed. The struggle for democracy took a turn in 1932 when the 700-year old


absolute monarchy was replaced by a constitutional monarchy. However, even after its birth, Thai democracy was such only in name, as in reality successive military governments ruled the country. Often the changes of government were the results of military coups. Since 1932 the military has attempted seventeen coups and succeeded ten times. Thailand’s first big step toward democracy came when 400,000 protestors gathered at the Democracy Monument on the 14 October 1973, to protest against military rule and hundreds of students were gunned down by the military. Later, on 7 October 1976 during a peaceful demonstration at Thammasat University, unarmed students, peasants, and workers were shot at indiscriminately while some others were dragged out to be hung or burned alive by the military.

In 1991 General Sunthom Kongsompong led another military coup to overthrow the “corrupt” government then in power. Ironically, after his death in 1999, 

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4Eng, 172.

5Dovey, 274.

6Ji Giles Ungpakorn, “From Tragedy to Comedy: Political Reform in Thailand,” Journal of Contemporary Asia 32, no. 2 (2002): 193; Dovey, 276.
his collective wealth triggered a corruption enquiry. The military government installed by General Sunthorn Kongsompong after the coup in 1991 only lasted for a year. In May 1992, another coup was staged and as usual, in an attempt to cling to power, the military gunned down many demonstrators. Up to a hundred people are believed to have been killed in this incident. Apparently it was this bloodbath that seemed to convince many sections of Thai society that political reform was necessary. Many believe that Thai political reform, which led to a more consolidated democracy, began with the new “People’s Constitution” passed in October 1997. It was during this time that the current Prime Minister, Thaksin Shinawatra, set up his political party with a promise to improve the quality of Thai democracy. Ironically, the Prime Minister himself damaged the process of democracy when he was disrespectful to the agencies investigating his tax-evasion charges and when he challenged the Constitutional Court procedures. Thai democracy may have come of age, but it is far from mature.

In summary, since the birth of democracy in 1932 Thailand has gone through seventeen coups d’état or attempted coups, and sixteen revisions of its constitution.

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1Ungpakorn, 193.
2Dovey, 279.
5Ibid., 543.
Thai democracy has grown up in stages. First, during its early stage from 1932 to the fall of Phibun’s regime in 1957, it was democracy with a constitutional military rule. Second, from 1957 to the fall of Thanom Praphat’s regime in 1973, Thailand was under a military dictatorship without a constitution. Third, from 1973 to 1992 Thailand underwent several revolutions.\(^1\) Five important events in the history of Thai democracy are worth remembering: the birth of democracy in 1932, the first bloodbath in October 1973, the second blood-bath in October 1976, the third blood-bath in May 1992, and the introduction of the People’s Constitution in 1997. These events indicate that Thai democracy was really won with blood. Up to the present time, there is still no guarantee that there will not be any more blood-baths as Thai democracy matures.

Since 1997 Thailand has changed considerably. Along with the introduction of the new “People’s Constitution” in 1997, Thailand, like many countries in Asia, experienced the effects of a global recession.\(^2\) Overnight, the Thai baht currency tumbled in value sending many millionaires into bankruptcy. Just after the collapse of the Thai economy, the government of Mr. Chuan Leekpai came into power. After a number of failures to revive the economy Mr. Chuan Leepai’s position looked unstable especially when the former Police Colonel, Mr Thaksin Shinawatra. He formed his political party, called the Thai Rak Thai (Thais Love Thais) party, in 1998. With his own wealth from his telecom empire he promised to usher in a new era of

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politics in Thailand. Mr. Thaksin's new political party became popular and drew many politicians from other parties. Along with his personal popularity and his promises to aid small entrepreneurs and farmers, and to boost village funds, Mr Thaksin looked set to take power in the parliamentary elections of January 6, 2001.\footnote{Ukrit Pathmanand, “Globalization and Democratic Development in Thailand: The New Path of the Military, Private Sector, and Civil Society,” \textit{Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International & Strategic Affairs} 23, no. 1 (2001): 28.}

As predicted by many observers, he led his TRT party to an unprecedented landslide victory. No Thai political party had won so many votes in an election since 1975.\footnote{“Pleasing the Voters,” \textit{The Economist} 362, no. 8262 (2002): 7.}

When he came to power he delivered almost immediately on such election promises as a three-year debt moratorium for farmers, a million-baht credit scheme for every village in the country, and \textit{klongarn saamsip baht rakra took roke} (literally meaning “the 30-baht to treat all diseases scheme”). Furthermore, apart from reforming Thailand's political system, he also reformed the nation's educational system, economic policy, and social policy. Details of these will be discussed below.

\textbf{Social Condition}

\textbf{Education}

Education is the most, maybe even the only way to escape poverty.\footnote{Ben Carson, \textit{Think Big: Unleashing your Potential for Excellence} (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 8.} Although poverty is usually measured by monetary income, without education poor people are left in the world of ignorance and are vulnerable to exploitation. According to figures
reported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 2003, 5.5 percent of Thai people have no formal education.\(^1\) A study by a Thai sociologist, Medhi Krongkaew, published in 2002, showed that 16.3 percent of the heads of the ultra poor families in Thailand have no formal education and 81.3 percent only completed primary school.\(^2\) It is not known why there was a discrepancy between the UNDP and Krongkaew. There is no reason that Krongkaew could have exaggerated the figures as his research was commissioned and funded by the Thailand Research Fund (TRF).\(^3\)

The percentage for the household heads of the “ultra poor” who are without formal education, as Krongkaew termed it, was as high as 28.8 percent in the south, followed by 24.2 percent in the north, 21.3 percent in the central and 18 percent in the northeast. It is noticeable that very few household heads of the ultra poor have gone beyond primary education and none of them have higher education (table 1). This seems to indicate that there is a correlation between poverty and lack of education.

Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra wants Thailand to become the education center of Asia. His government has attempted to standardize and improve accessibility to Thai education by making the following changes to the system. Firstly, all schools must have a suitable environment for study. Secondly, all schools should have access to modern technology. All secondary schools must have access to

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\(^1\)“Thailand Human Development Report 2003,” 134; See also table 2, p. 64.


\(^3\)Ibid., 129.
the internet within two years and primary schools within four years. Thirdly, all school management must meet the highest standards to ensure quality graduates.

Fourthly, the quality of teachers must be improved and the curriculum modernized. The Office of National Education Standard and Quality Assessment (ONESQA) was set up and empowered to evaluate and assess quality in all schools at all levels.¹ This new education policy is in accordance with the new “People’s Constitution” outlining equal rights, and access to education for all Thai citizens.²

Table 1. Distribution of “Ultra Poor” Household Heads by Levels of Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>North</th>
<th>Northeast 1</th>
<th>Northeast 2</th>
<th>Center</th>
<th>South</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No education</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>28.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>75.1</td>
<td>88.3</td>
<td>78.6</td>
<td>75.4</td>
<td>67.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Secondary</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Secondary</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Along with other improvements to the educational system in Thailand, one of the most important changes is that traditional values are being promoted by the


education system and taught in classrooms. Students, especially in primary and secondary schools, are being taught the so-called *phoom punya chao ban*, meaning "traditional knowledge" along side Western-style education. Students are taught how to weave bamboo baskets, make handicrafts, and locally made utensils, subject to the availability of volunteer teachers. The idea behind this change to "grassroots" education is to make Thai education more relevant and applicable in local situations. This is to prevent students graduating with a degree but having a knowledge that becomes unusable in their environment. Students at Ban Wat Ma Kha said, "This is the first time that our school has this kind of teaching. We enjoy it so much and it is very practical."1

Apart from the change to "grassroots" education, one other visible change is Thailand’s move to embrace the English language by allowing English teaching in its schools. Many government schools are now equipped with English departments that teach English classes throughout the school. Furthermore, international schools at all levels are permitted by the government to operate in Thailand. The government readily grants licenses and accreditation to international schools that use English as the medium of teaching. Mission College, operated by the Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA), enjoys this special privilege as a result of the new education policy. It remains to be seen whether or not Thai education will be accessible to all Thai citizens. As

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corruption remains a major chronic problem it is doubtful whether fairness and equality in education will ever be fully exercised in Thailand.

Economic

Economy and Poverty

On the surface it may appear that Thailand is developing reasonably quickly. Without denying the fact that Thailand has experienced good economic growth in the past few decades there is also a growing gap between the rich and the poor.1 Today, 1.5 million people are living in slums in Bangkok alone.2 Of those living in slums most of them are from the northeastern region.3 That represents 10 percent of the unofficial population of Bangkok. Poverty has been a chronic problem in Thailand for a long time. Successive governments have not succeeded in tackling the problem.

Mr. Thaksin Shinawatra came to power at the time the Thai economy started to recover from the 1997 global recession.4 In 2002, the Thai Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth stood at 6.0 percent. Its Trade Balance stood at $4.7 billion, its Current...

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Account at $7.6 billion, and its Foreign Reserves at $36.4 billion.¹ The Lonely Planet World Guide puts Thailand’s GDP at $166 billion (2003 figure), which represents an annual growth of 3.5 percent. Its GDP per person stands at US$2,168, while inflation runs at merely 2 percent.² The above figures suggest that the Thai economy is strong and growing. But, figures and statistics do not always represent the reality of the domestic economy. At a glance, one can be satisfied with an income of $2,168 per person per year. However, the figures do not really represent the economic reality of Thailand. Many non-government economists argued that these growth rates hide the real condition of many poor and uneducated Thai people.³ The reality is that the top 20 percent of people possess 60 percent of the country’s wealth and the bottom 20 percent or twelve million Thai people own only 3.5 percent.⁴ The gap between the rich and the poor is getting wider. The farmers and rural people are the most neglected in the new economic growth. Most education as well as economic growth is concentrated in Bangkok and other big cities where multinational companies are present. As a result, the uneducated poor from rural areas migrate into the cities looking for jobs, creating overpopulation in big cities, and adding to the problem of slum living.

²"Thailand." In Lonely Planet World Guide.
⁴Tavivat Puntarigvivat, 349.
Poorest of the Poor

The Northeastern region is the poorest part of Thailand, with 67 percent of the country’s poor living there, representing 5,930,040 out of the total estimated 8,891,459 poor people in the country.¹ The region also had the lowest annual Gross Provincial Product (GPP) per capita of 25,367 baht (US$590) in 1999, compared with the national GNP per capita of 74,675 baht (US$1,736).² The region is the most populous area of Thailand. Provinces that are poorest are Nakhon Ratchasima, which constitutes 7.3 percent of the nation’s poor people, followed by Surin with 6.2 percent, Sisaket with 5.2 percent, and Roi Et with 5 percent. These four provinces hold a quarter of all the poor in the country.³ The northeastern region also has the poorest education and lowest healthcare standards (see tables 1, 2, and 3). This means that the northeastern region of Thailand is the poorest of the poor. In Thailand, being poor means the person has an income of less than 886 baht (<US$ 24.00) per month.⁴ Being poor in Thailand usually means someone who is either in debt, has no land, no savings, no formal education, and someone who lives from hand to mouth.


³Ian C. Porter, ed., 16. The national average poverty line was 886 baht (US$20.60) per month or US$0.70 per day.

average level of income of the northeastern poor is only 332 baht per month or 37 percent of the national poverty line. Besides, the majority of the northeastern poor (62 percent) do not own land.¹

Table 2. Poverty Table—Year 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kingdom</th>
<th>Bangkok</th>
<th>Central</th>
<th>Eastern</th>
<th>Western</th>
<th>N. Eastern</th>
<th>Northern</th>
<th>Southern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal Education</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>8,891,459</td>
<td>70,396</td>
<td>177,450</td>
<td>207,735</td>
<td>210,805</td>
<td>5,930,040</td>
<td>1,372,830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The Prime Minister’s response was to introduce a “grassroots” approach to the economy, showering each of 77,000 villages of Thailand with a one million-baht credit.² This scheme, however, increases the debt of the people and drives them deeper into poverty. It is like giving credit cards with increased monthly limits to people who have no money to pay for their purchases. Thus, the poor will actually get poorer by falling further into debt. Besides, 70 percent of the scheme was misused and 12 percent of the villages never had access to the fund.³ In an effort to solve the

¹Ibid., 135, 138.

²Case, 538.

³Preeyamat Phanayangoor, “NGO’s Disagree with Agency’s Assessment,” Bangkok Post, 06 July 2003.
problems of poverty, Thaksin Shinawatra’s government began registering the poor and their problems in January, 2004. As of February 26, 2004, about 8,104,660 poor had registered with the government. This figure is in agreement with Ian Porter’s earlier mentioned poverty report. According to a recent survey the main causes of poverty in Thailand are attributed to three factors: debts 5,020,651, land issues 4,009,789, and homelessness 1,862,199.¹

The Prime Minister’s so-called “One Village, One Product” scheme, which resulted in many previously unseen and unknown products now being exported all over the world, is now driving prices down because of over production and lack of proper domestic and export arrangements.² As a result the poor, who are mostly manual workers and who depend on income from the products they sell, receive less income for their products if they can sell them at all. The northeastern region with 82.5 percent hired farmers and laborers are the hardest hit with lower prices for their products (see table 2). The obvious result is that they slip into even greater poverty. In reality, Thaksin’s economic policy is a “victory for local capitalists.”³ It enhances their business, making them richer and more powerful. His economic policy hardly had any positive impact on the lives of ordinary Thais. A government sponsored


census of the poor conducted in January-March 2004 revealed little change to the poverty levels.¹

Table 3. Distribution Household of Members, by Occupation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Occupation</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>31.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trading</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Labor</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>38.3</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>36.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Servant</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Poverty and Its Impact on Society

Poverty is a major social problem in Thailand. Thailand has no effective social security system to take care of the unemployed, poor, and destitute. People’s social security depends on the ability and generosity of their own family members to help them. According to the figures in table 2, most of the poor are either unemployed or depend on unstable income from general labor. Poverty has had catastrophic effects on Thai society. For instance, four babies were found at various locations in one day,

one was dead and three survived.\textsuperscript{1} Not only have newborn babies been left to face the world by themselves, older infants have also been left to care for themselves. One example of this is that of Baby Pom in Sithammarat Province who was left by his grandmother in the care of a mother dog while she struggled to make a living by collecting tin cans. Such cases are common in newspaper reports.\textsuperscript{2} Commenting on this social issue, a newspaper columnist wrote, “Despite many attempts by social organizations to solve this social problem of baby abandonment by appealing to parental responsibility and love toward babies, many babies are still being abandoned continually.”\textsuperscript{3}

This unfortunate action shows a deeper social problem in Thailand. It is the lack of a social security system to support the poor that leaves them desperate and forces them to commit the unthinkable, inhumane crime of abandoning their own babies. Many of these babies end up in orphanages and no one knows what future they will have when millions of babies, are with proper family care still find it hard to survive the cruelty of the modern world. It is not only babies that are abandoned due to economic hardship, but also the growing aged and elderly population of Thailand is facing abandonment and isolation. According to the 1996 statistics there were 4.3

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item [\textsuperscript{1}] “Run Thot Kaeng Thing Dek” (Horrified Baby-throwing Fashion), Komchadluek, 1 July 2003.
\item [\textsuperscript{2}] “Sarod Dek Song Khuap Took Thing You Kup Ma” (Shocked Two-year Old Baby Left with Mother Dog), Komchadluek, 3 July 2003.
\item [\textsuperscript{3}] “Run Thot Kaeng Thing Dek” Translated from Thai to English by the author.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
million people who were 60 years of age and older.\textsuperscript{1} Buddhist teaching emphasizes repayment of the debt of gratitude to parents by caring for them or supporting them financially in their old age as a duty for each young Buddhist, and also as a good means of merit making.\textsuperscript{2} Unfortunately, poverty has driven many young people away from home in search for jobs, leaving behind their elderly parents to struggle for themselves. Tassana Choowattanapakorn indicates that “young people today experience conflict between the obligation to care for their parents and the hardships of life.”\textsuperscript{3} Poverty affects the most vulnerable and helpless people of Thai society—the very young and the very old. While the very old are left to helplessly struggle for life, the very young tend to form themselves into gangs and get involved in crime and other anti-social activities. Anti-social behaviors are such a national problem in Thailand that the government has tried to curb it by introducing a curfew for young people at 10:00 PM.\textsuperscript{4}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{2}Ibid., 97.
\item \textsuperscript{3}Ibid., 98.
\item \textsuperscript{4}“‘Cinderella’ Law Turns the Clock Back,” \textit{Bangkok Post}, 28 February 2004 and “Excessive Authority is no Help to Children,” \textit{Bangkok Post}, 18 March 2004.
\end{itemize}
Poverty and Prostitution

Prostitution is another byproduct of poverty. Many of the female poor from rural areas who have moved to Bangkok in search of jobs often end up in brothels. Thailand’s sex industry reputation is well-known throughout the world. Many male tourists come from all over the world to Thailand simply for sex. It is estimated that Thailand has more prostitutes than Buddhist monks. One estimate suggests that there are between 500,000 and a million prostitutes working in brothels across Thailand. And it has also been estimated that almost five million sex tourists from the United States, Europe, Australia, and Japan visit Thailand annually. \(^1\) Strangely enough, prostitution is forbidden in Buddhism, but very few of the Buddhist hierarchy have ever said or done anything about it. If the Thai government does something about this problem, it would be throwing away a national earning of $26.2 billion per year through the sex industry! \(^2\) The government mainly sees this problem as an opportune investment. It is believed that the Thai government is promoting the sex industry, not only for domestic consumption but also for export onto the international market. Because of government unwillingness to solve the problem, and because of widespread government corruption, it is unlikely that these unfortunate women will be liberated in the foreseeable future. An alarming prospect is that, while in previous times many young rural girls were lured into the sex industry against their will,


\(^2\) Ibid., 11.
nowadays many choose prostitution as a preferred job option. For uneducated rural girls a prostitution job pays much more than a factory job in Bangkok.

Prostitution in Thailand is only expected to get worse. It is so bad now that even some Buddhist monks and teachers, who are supposed to uplift morality, also join the trade. Prostitutes now bring their services to temples and schools,¹ and teachers turn their schools into prostitution recruiting offices, using their own students as sex workers.² A study of sexual perpetrators revealed that nearly 42 percent of those who had committed sexually indecent acts were teachers, followed by bus/taxi drivers 17.8 percent and politicians 17.7 percent.³ Unfortunately, it is not known how many of these perpetrators have ever been penalized for their behavior. This means that most of the victims continue to suffer in silence. Many of them were too embarrassed to even report the crime to the police. Often those who reported their cases received little justice compared with the ordeal and embarrassment they had to go through during the time of investigation.

Corruption

Corruption in Thai society has never been fully eradicated. Corruption is everywhere and the word has been heard so often by people that they are now deaf to

¹"Peen Kuti Haa Luangpee" (Climbing into Buddhist Residence to Provide Sex), Komchadluek, 27 June 2003.

²"N. S. Sao Chae Kaeng Kru Huen" (Students Reveal Teachers’ Sex Gangs), Thairath, 27 June 2003.

³"N. S. Chae Kru Hua Ngoo Tem Rong Raen" (Students Reveal Schools Full of Teachers Who Committed Indecent Sexual Acts), Komchadluek, 30 June 2003.
it. It is widespread and practiced by all sections of society. A recent study by the University of the Chamber of Commerce of Thailand found that around 80 percent of business operators believe that it is necessary to bribe bureaucrats to get things done.\(^1\) The study also showed that politicians and judges are among the top ten corrupt groups, listed along with customs officers, road and traffic authorities, land officers, and police.\(^2\) Nobody expects corruption in Thailand to diminish in the near future.

Blaming the Chuan Leekpai government for being the most corrupt government that he had ever seen, Thaksin Shinawatra led his party to victory early in 2001 on “promises to breathe fresh life into a democracy that has grown tired of the corruption, violence, and vote-buying” that have long been part of Thai politics.\(^3\) Ironically, Mr. Thaksin himself was accused of corruption, by evading tax and diverting his wealth to several family members and associates. His acquittal by the Constitutional Court on 3 August 2001 was only won by the narrow margin of eight to seven judges.\(^4\)

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\(^1\) Funston, 103.

\(^2\) “Hate Barn Karn Muang” (Political and Current Affairs), shown on TV3, 29-30 May 2003.


Money

Thai society is very much money oriented. Money and Thai politics are like the left hand and right hand of a person. Electoral signs visible on electricity posts, shop windows, road side trees, and many other places state that “Vote-buying is a Crime.” Politicians who have no money to buy votes are very hard to find. In the 2001 election hundreds of vote-buying complaints were investigated by electoral officials.¹ Corrupt Thai politicians still find it “easier to peddle power and influence in the poorer areas outside the capital.”² Receiving 100 or 500 baht from a politician in return for a vote does make a difference to a poor family, especially when their day-to-day life is barely influenced by the government of the day. Politicians are mostly made up of chao pho (godfathers), businessmen, and gangsters, who use money to propel themselves into politics and power.³ In a nutshell, little has changed about vote-buying practices and those who have been elected are mainly the rich and powerful, not necessary the wise and knowledgeable ones.

Drugs

The drug problem in Thailand is not just a major problem but rather has become a social crisis. Hundreds of millions of Methamphetamine tablets produced in


Myanmar are transported illegally into Thailand annually. More and more Thai young people have become addicted to the drug. If left unchecked this drug problem could destroy Thailand’s social fabric beyond repair. For this reason Prime Minister Thaksin’s government declared war on drugs and drug-dealers. The first day of the three month ultimatum to rid Thailand of yaa baa “crazy drug” (belonging to the family of amphetamines) resulted in 264 arrests and four deaths and 800,000 pills seized by police.\(^1\) Before Thaksin declared war on drugs and drug dealers it was estimated that around 700-800 million pills poured into Thailand from neighboring countries in the north each year.\(^2\) Four weeks into Thaksin’s war on drugs, police had made 13,232 arrests, seized nearly 10 million pills and accepted the surrender of 36,277 suspected drug dealers. There had also been 1,138 drug-related deaths, an average of 41 deaths a day.\(^3\) It is not only criminals and drug dealers but also many innocent people, converted drug users, and their families who have been killed. Some went to report themselves to police and came out of the police station only to be gunned down by unknown assailants. It is apparent to many ordinary people that influential people ordered the killing of those drug users and small dealers, to prevent themselves from being dragged into the scene. Although the killing of drug dealers may appear to be a success for Mr. Thaksin, many doubt that this action will solve the

\(^{1\text{"Suek Yaa Baa Wun Raek" (First Day of War Against Crazy Drugs), Komchadluek, 03 February 2003.}}\)

\(^{2\text{"A Surfeit of Pills in Thailand,” The Economist 359, no. 8219 (2001): 42.}}\)

\(^{3\text{Robert Horn, “The Killing Season,” Time Atlantic 161, no. 10 (November 2003): 43.}}\)
drug problem in Thailand. However, it certainly lessens the availability of the pills. Inaction would be much more dangerous and many more lives would have been lost and Thai society would be in greater danger. But will the drug problem go away? Will it make Thais live a better and safer life? It only costs 2 baht to produce a tablet of Methamphetamine and the street price in Thailand is 100 baht per tablet.\(^1\) Although 97 percent of drugs destined for Thailand were confiscated, the drug producers can still make a 50 percent profit, or a profit of one baht per tablet. In some cases costs are more than 100 baht per tablet, depending on the risk involved, difficulty and availability of the drugs.

**Crimes**

Crime and violence are very much a part of Thai society. The front pages of newspapers are never without horrible scenes of murder and rape, and other graphic pictures. No one would believe that Thailand is safer today than a year ago. There are frequent media reports of killing sprees, such as the killings of Burmese migrant workers, but there have been few arrests for this and similar crimes. These crimes against the helpless migrant workers are often committed by law enforcement authorities and police.\(^2\) Most professional assassins and hit-men are readily available and because of their links with influential people they never seem to get arrested.


Ithipol Mued (Dark Influences)

Fresh from success in his war against drugs, Prime Minister Thaksin has now turned his attention to tackling the so-called Ithipol mued or “dark influences.” His war against the “dark influences” started on 20 May 2003. So far, about 2,300 lives have been taken in the drug war, but the ringleaders still remain at large. In reality, many believe that those who have been killed were killed by police in order to cover illegal connections. The war against “dark influences” aimed to rid Thailand of all mafia-type figures by 2 December 2003. Many doubt the success of this war. Some prominent Thais feel that Thaksin’s crackdown will only focus on “influential persons” who are opposing him politically. Democrat party spokesperson, Ong-art Klampaiboon, accused the government of waging its war on dark influence, “as a front for justifying witch hunts against political rivals.” This war has already created some embarrassments among some high-ranking police officials who happened to be on the wrong side of the government. Some 2,700 names of dark influential people from across the country, including some Buddhist monks, have been officially listed.

Apart from the mafia, Thailand is also facing terrorist activities in the Islamic southern part of the country. The recent surge in the killing of police and the

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plundering of government aid agencies in the south has raised the question about the
government’s ability to crack down on the terrorists.¹ Thaksin said that there must be
tangible results or else someone will be held responsible.² The attacks in early 2003
have startled Thaksin and led him to question the ability of his intelligence agencies.
People believe that these terrorists entered Thailand from Malaysia, but no one really
knows where they came from. The terrorist problem in the south has been with
Thailand for many years. Will there ever be peace in the south? Nobody can tell.

Health

New Universal Healthcare Program

The government of Thaksin Shinnawatra made history when it introduced universal
healthcare coverage to the Thai people in April 2001.³ The 30-baht healthcare scheme
made Thailand one of the first middle or low income countries to apply this healthcare
coverage to its population. The system aims to provide quality healthcare to all its
citizens with a single fee of 30 baht (about US $0.70) per hospital visit. This covers
most care, except for more advanced treatment such as kidney dialysis and
antiretroviral drugs. Not long after this scheme was introduced, many doctors as well

¹“Aka Souk Rot Ngor Long Tai,” (AK-47 Rifles Hidden in Car Headed to South),
Komchadluek, 05 July 2003; Muhamad Ayub Patham, “Arms Trio Linked to Separatists,”
Bangkok Post, 06 July 2003.

²“Three Months Deadline for War on Police Assassins to Succeed,” Bangkok Post, 05
July 2003.

as patients started to complain about the unfeasibility of the scheme. Doctors pointed out that treating certain diseases would need more than thirty baht per visit and all the treatments that the patients would need would send their hospitals into bankruptcy. Under the government plan the healthcare provider would receive an annual amount of 1,200 baht (US$30) for each patient registered. Poor patients started to complain that doctors were reluctant to treat them because they could only pay thirty baht, but preferred to treat those who were wealthy and affluent and could pay much more. In the end the scheme created a lot of controversy because people had to have gold cards provided by the government to have access to this scheme. To obtain these gold card people had to present their national Identification Card (ID) and a house certificate, effectively excluding the poorest of the poor, such as the two million illegal immigrants and the many people from the hill tribes who have lived in Thailand for generations, but have never gained recognition from the government. This healthcare scheme does nothing to ease their pain and suffering. It was found that only 46 million out of the 63 million Thais were actually able to benefit from this 30-baht healthcare scheme. The scheme also put many public hospitals at risk of bankruptcy, and many doctors have threatened to leave the public healthcare system and join private hospitals. Poor people were often treated poorly, while rich people received better treatment from hospital staff. One newspaper quoted Abhisit Vejjajiva, Democrat Party Deputy Leader, as saying, “If the prime minister does nothing to solve

\[1\] Ibid., 208.
these problems, people will no longer use the 30-baht scheme."\(^1\) Some drug users and HIV/AIDS people have protested against the 30-baht scheme for its “inconsistency.”\(^2\) Furthermore, the 30-baht healthcare scheme is already under-budgeted and some 100 million baht in overspending is unaccounted for.\(^3\)

A report revealed that in the year 2000 the hospitals in Thailand treated 92 million patients and 5 million were hospitalized. On average out of every 100,000 patients 8,399 were hospitalized. In the same year, there were 365,741 deaths in the country, with 21 percent of the deaths coming from chronic diseases. Cancer was listed as the number one killer with 39,480 deaths. Currently, there are 6.8 million Thais who are living with the four major killing diseases of cancer, heart disease, hypertension, and diabetes.\(^4\) In the year 2001 there were 15.3 million alcohol drinkers in Thailand, a 1.6 million increase from five years earlier.\(^5\) The worrying trend is that 22 percent of drinkers are between 15 and 22 years of age and 5 percent are under 10 years of age. Smoking is another health problem in Thailand. More and more young people are taking up smoking. The Thai Public Health Minister, Mrs. Sudarat

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\(^5\) Ibid.; “Kot Lek Kum Joe Tam Koa 18 Harm Kruep” (Iron Law Forbidding Under 18s from Drinking), *Komchadluek*, Friday 11 July 2003;
Keyuraphan, has gone on television trying to rally her people to stop smoking, and has provided a Stop Smoking Hotline telephone number to all Thais who would like to give up smoking.\(^1\) Obviously, the government has shown considerable concern about the health of its people. Nevertheless, as tobacco and alcohol companies are contributing billions of baht to the economy of Thailand, it is hard to see the government making any serious attack on drinking and smoking. Although there have been some changes to the Health Care system in Thailand, the changes have had little impact on the lives of ordinary Thais. Northeastern Thais still have the poorest medical care with double the population per physician to that of other regions (table 3).

Table 4. Health Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Kingdom</th>
<th>Bangkok</th>
<th>Central</th>
<th>Eastern</th>
<th>Western</th>
<th>N. Eastern</th>
<th>Northern</th>
<th>Southern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>62,308,887</td>
<td>9,528,891</td>
<td>2,984,711</td>
<td>4,241,974</td>
<td>3,623,638</td>
<td>21,493,681</td>
<td>12,124,425</td>
<td>8,311,567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIDS per 100,000 Persons per Physician</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3,433</td>
<td>4,083</td>
<td>4,249</td>
<td>3,084</td>
<td>4,373</td>
<td>8,311</td>
<td>4,501</td>
<td>5,194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons per Hosp Bed</td>
<td>454</td>
<td>475</td>
<td>431</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>432</td>
<td>766</td>
<td>493</td>
<td>494</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\(^1\)“Hate Baan Karn Muang” (Political and Current Affairs), shown in Thai TV 3, 29 May 2003.
Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS)

The AIDS problem in Thailand is a national crisis. Globally there are 36 million people affected with this deadly virus called AIDS and 22 million of them have already died. In Thailand, according to government sources, 984,000 people have been affected with AIDS and 289,000 people have died.\(^1\) It is estimated that there are about 20,000 new HIV/AIDS infections each year.\(^2\) Of course, there are many more who have never been tested for AIDS. The real figure could be a lot higher. Although, only one in sixty Thais are affected with this deadly disease most of them are dying in the prime of their lives.\(^3\) This means one million people will no longer be effective members of society, but will eventually become patients and drain the national health budget. There are already signs that either the government does not care or just does not have the means to care for these unfortunate people. Although some government funds have been allocated to the care of AIDS patients much of the actual care is left with community-minded Buddhist monks to create places of refuge for them within their religious communities.\(^4\) One such place is located in Lopburi at a Buddhist temple compound. This AIDS hospice is known to the locals as Wat Tham

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\(^3\) Aphaluck Bhatiasevi, "Campaign on Condom Use to Get a Push," *Bangkok Post*, 4 July 2003. Charal Trinvuthiphon, director-general of the Diseases Control Department, acknowledged that new HIV infections each year occur among young people.

Krabok or Wat Pra Baath Nam Phu (Krabok Cave Temple or Buddha Footprint Fountain Temple). This temple has been serving hundreds of AIDS patients without government funding, but with funding from foreign aid agencies. Care-givers are volunteers from the temple and the community. Around 500 patients die at this hospice each year.

The AIDS problem is one of the many serious social issues in Thailand.\(^1\) Compared with the recent outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in which around 10 percent of those affected died, AIDS is far more damaging—AIDS kills all its victims. Three million people have died from AIDS worldwide in the year 2000 alone.\(^2\)

Often the primary cause of prostitution, drug use, and AIDS is poverty. Poverty drives people to desperation for money. Most men look to drug trafficking as a quick way to earn big sums of money. Women look to prostitution as a way out of poverty. Some say that their own bodies are the only commodity they have to sell. To tackle these social problems is to tackle poverty. All other means such as condom wearing, safe sex education, provision of clean needles for injection, and destruction of drugs are only treating symptoms or doing patch-up work. The real cause is poverty. Therefore, if Thailand gets serious about tackling poverty it will go far in dealing with its social crisis.

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\(^1\)“Nasty Business,” 14. The other serious social issues are yaa baa (crazy drug or methamphetamine), youth crimes, and prostitution.

Religious Factors

Buddhist Influence in Thai Society

Thailand is predominantly Buddhist. The religious landscape of Thailand is composed of 95 percent Buddhists, 4 percent Muslims, 0.5 percent Christians with half of them Catholics, and 0.2 percent other religious faiths. Thai Buddhism is governed by Mahaathera-samaakhom (the Supreme Sangha Council) and the Department of Religious Affairs, as now called the Ministry of Religions.\(^1\) There are many kinds of Buddhist beliefs in Thailand. It is impossible to describe them all. However, apart from the two major denominations, Theravada and Mahayana, there are two distinct brands of Buddhism: intellectual and folk Buddhism. Intellectual Buddhism is made up mainly of Buddhist monks who have been educated in Buddhist doctrines and lay people who have been educated in Buddhist universities. There are not many intellectual Buddhists in Thailand. The vast majority of Buddhist people in Thailand are “folk” Buddhists. Folk Buddhism is made up of those who profess to be Buddhists and practice Buddhist rituals but may not understand much of Buddhist teachings. Many of them practice witchcraft and other kinds of superstition. It is very hard to find a pure form of Theravada Buddhism in Thailand. It is understandable if we look at the origins of Buddhism in Thailand. Although King Ramkhamhaeng the Great might have officially instituted Theravada Buddhism as the State religion in 1277, other kinds of Buddhism and other faiths were still been practiced side-by-side

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with the official religion. Thus, it may be fair to say that folk Buddhism covers many varieties of faiths and practices.\(^1\) For in this paper, those who adhere to this form of Buddhism are identified as nominal Buddhists.

It is important to note that the core teachings of Buddhism which prevails in Thailand and shapes its moral, cultural, and social life is the teaching of *karma* (causal sin). In this teaching, a person’s wealth or poverty is evidence of merits or demerits earned in past lives.\(^2\) For what was done in the past life must be reaped in this life and what is done in this life will be reaped in a future life. A person may be reborn as a god, as a member of a higher or lower caste, rich or poor, or as an animal, according to his every thought, word, and act. Each individual carries with him his past and at the same time is creating his future. This belief has deep implications for the social structure of Thailand. It means that regardless of whether one is rich or poor one must accept it, leaving all the rich and powerful to enjoy their exploitation of the poor, and the poor to accept their fate and continue to serve the rich without questioning or challenging their authority. Success and failure alike are both results of *gam gao* (old


There is nothing one can do to change one’s fate in this life. One can only wish that merits earned in this life will ensure a better existence in the next cycle of life. This belief is alive and well among both intellectual and nominal Buddhists.

It is estimated that there are more than a quarter of a million monks residing in 27,000 temples across Thailand. Almost every village has a temple. It is undeniable that Buddhism is a part of Thai life, from birth till death. Almost every aspect of Thai life is permeated by Buddhist traditions. There are rituals for everything in life. Buddhist monks are seen not only as spiritual leaders, but also as counselors and community leaders. Buddhist temples are centers of village religious and social festivals where people gather to celebrate. Thus Buddhism and the Thai people are closely interwoven and inseparable. Most of the monks in Thailand are superstitious monks, meaning they practice traditional superstitions. Some practice witchcraft and black magic. Incidences of monks cutting each other to test their black magic powers are common front-page news. Unfortunately these practices have often resulted in

1Ibid., 147.

2"Pra Gay Pleaw Klueng Pra Payom" (Lonesome Gay Monk Touted Pra Payom), Komchadleuk, 4 July 2003; “Buddhism in Thailand,” In SunSITE Thailand at Assumption University.

injury and death.\textsuperscript{1} Other activities, such as monks leading out in exorcism, are also common. A famous ghost busters’ ceremony in Khon Kaen Province in early June 2003 was briefly mistaken by police as a protest against the APEC trade ministers’ meeting. This exorcism ceremony was joined by almost 2,000 people marching along with a number of Buddhist monks, led by chief Abbot Pra Kru Udom Panyakorn, a veteran exorcist from Udon Thani Ban Potwanaram temple. In the end, Pra Kru Udom declared that 39 pee paub (a type of ghost that possesses and sometimes kills the victims) were caught.\textsuperscript{2} Approximately 10 percent of Thais still believe in exorcism, and almost all of them are superstitious in one way or another. Witchcraft such as turning an unborn fetus into a “golden baby,” that possesses magical power, can be a prosperous business making over 100,000 baht per baby.\textsuperscript{3} Superstitions in various forms are widespread in Thailand among Buddhists. Any strange object or being could be seen as having some supernatural power. A pig born with two heads, a coconut with branches, a tree with two-colored branches and even a burnt-out car from an accident could become objects of worship and prayer. At the same time, fear of supernatural beings rules in the hearts of many people.

\textsuperscript{1}“Pra Mao Kuek Long Khong” (Drunken Monk Put his Abbot’s Claim of Tough Skin to a Blade), \textit{Komchadluek}, 08 April 2003.


\textsuperscript{3}“Ob Sark Kumman Thong for Export” (Golden Fetus for Export), \textit{Komchadluek}, 14 February 2003. “Golden Fetus” is made of a fetus baked until dried and embalmed with wax with Buddhist monks ceremonially turning it into a living spirit omen. It is believed that owning a “golden baby” will give the owner supernatural power and riches.
Supernatural phenomena like the *Naga* fireballs that occur annually during the month of October, as mentioned earlier, at Nongkhai Province promotes superstition on a national scale. It is believed that the *Naga*, who was once Buddha’s illegal disciple, shoots these fireballs. It is also believed that he does this as a worship gesture to the Buddha who had come to reside with his believers during Lent and who would be returning to heaven at the conclusion of Lent. The *Naga* kingdom is called *Muang Badan* (Under Water World). According to folklore, *Muang Badan* has its headquarters in the deepest point of the Mekong River and it happens to be located in the Bueng Khan district, Nongkhai Province.\(^1\) Hundreds of thousands of Thai and Western “worshippers” come to Nongkhai to watch this phenomenon every year.

The impact of superstition in everyday Thai life is real and hard to explain scientifically. For instance, a man had a stomach ache and was admitted to a hospital. When he was X-rayed the hospital staff was shocked to find four 2-inch nails and two pieces of metal in his stomach.\(^2\) He had not swallowed the nails, so how could they be buried in his stomach?

Witchcraft, superstition, supernatural objects, ghosts, and exorcism are real in Thailand. It is their belief in, and practice of, these things that cause Buddhist people in Thailand to be called folk Buddhists. It has nothing to do with Theravada Buddhism but it is people’s early forms and practices of religion.

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\(^2\)“Taa Poo Luek Lup” (Mysterious Nails), *Thairath*, 28 July 2002.
Buddhist Revival

From the late twentieth century and into the early twenty-first century Thai Buddhism has undergone major changes in role and practice. Like other religions, Buddhism has experienced the effects of the culture of consumerism, individualism, and many other “isms” of the postmodern world. It is also struggling to remain relevant in Thai society. The Supreme Sangha Council is regarded by many as having lost its relevance and significance.\(^1\) It has also been found that interest in Buddhist teaching among Buddhist monks is at an all time low. Less than 8 percent of monks and novices seriously seek liberation through the teaching of Buddha. Most monks, however, become ordained because of a personal crisis, traditional obligations such as a rite of passage, or pressures from family and relatives.\(^2\) At the same time, the decline of morality and the temptations of modern living have also crept into the hearts and minds of Buddhist monks and caused many of them to fall. The old saying of the Bible, the “love of money” seems to be the root of all evil facing Buddhism in Thailand as well. There have been reports of Buddhist monks who made millions of baht by cheating and deceiving worshippers. It is quite common to see newspapers report illegal activities carried out by Buddhist monks. Motivated by greed, some monks pretended to use witchcraft to cure people for money.\(^3\) Other Buddhist monks

\(^1\)Taylor, 179.

\(^2\)Ibid., 181.

\(^3\)"Tun Thon Khun Sai 'Khong' Souk Tian" (Monk Uses Witchcraft to Make Money), Komchadluex, 1 May 2003.
have used the radio as a tool to make money by wrongfully soliciting donations instead of teaching Buddhist ethics.\textsuperscript{1} Some Buddhist monks are involved in drugs trafficking, prostitution, money laundering, extortion, and other crimes.\textsuperscript{2} In June 2003, one Buddhist monk was murdered and the police investigation revealed that he was involved with illegal money worth over 100 million baht.\textsuperscript{3} The decline in morality also plagues Buddhism as a religion. Many Buddhist monks have been caught committing immoral and indecent sexual acts. Joshua Kurlantzick quoted one rural Thai woman saying, “Monks having sex with followers is common. But, everybody just turns a blind eye.”\textsuperscript{4} Police in Udon Thani arrested two senior monks for repeatedly raping a ten-year old girl during the past two years.\textsuperscript{5} In separate incidences, “one monk was accused of raping an eleven-year old girl, another of committing necrophilia in crematoriums.”\textsuperscript{6} Sexual immorality is probably the biggest contributor to the decline of Buddhism in Thailand. Pra Thammakiti Methi, Under Secretary to the \textit{Thammayut} Buddhist Order said, “The problem of gay monks is a vital issue because there are too many of them, almost in every temple throughout the

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{1}“Religious Radio: Calls to Alms ‘Are Wrongful’,” \textit{The Nation}, 28 January 2003.
  \item \textsuperscript{3}“\textit{Chae Pra Lun Gai Ying Chao Wat Koo}” (Exposing Monk Shot Abbot Temple Koo), \textit{Thairath}, 23 June 2003.
  \item \textsuperscript{4}Kurlantzick, 62.
  \item \textsuperscript{5}“\textit{Maan Sat Sa Na}” (Enemy of Religion), \textit{Thairath}, 24 July 2001.
  \item \textsuperscript{6}Kurlantzick, 62.
\end{itemize}
country, especially in Bangkok". Admitting the damage to Buddhism, he continued, saying, "In the past sexual problems between monks and female worshippers already caused extensive damage to Buddhism, now we have this same sex gay problem, I am afraid they will gather together and have sex not only among gay monks but with temple boys as well."²

Some Buddhist temples, which were perceived as safe havens for lay people of all ages, are no longer safe. All these immoral activities committed by religious leaders contribute to the decline in popularity of Buddhism as the State religion that once was the most integral part of Thai society. Thus, plagued by scandals and monks’ misbehaviors, Buddhism in Thailand is losing its popularity and relevancy.

In order to survive or thrive in post-modern Thailand several Buddhist movements have attempted to revive their religion in various fashions. In the north, the Khruba Bunchum (Abbot Bunchum) revival made a widespread impact on the lives of ordinary northern Thais.³ Other Buddhist monks have used the economic hardships and the confusion of the modern world to call the Thai people back to their

¹"Kumkem Tut Faeng Buad Pob Rabaat Tua Wat"(Strict Control over Guys Sneaked into Monkshood in all Temples), Thairath, 3 July 2003. Translated from Thai to English by the author. Note Pra is an official title given to high ranking Buddhist monks, sometimes simply called Kruba by village people.

²Ibid.

traditional values, telling them to get back to basics.¹ Led by a popular monk, Abbot Luang Ta Maha Bua, an eastern region monk, the campaign “Help the Country” drew donations worth US$1.2 billion to help pay off Thailand’s national debt.² The people claim that the poor economy and poverty are a result of not following the teachings of Buddha, and of their attachment to material values. Thus, the reason for going back to old traditional values is because it is the best way to improve Buddhist living standards.³ Sensing this need, several Buddhist revival movements have been established and have become more involved in community development.

Several Buddhist movements aim to go beyond liberating individual suffering, and have adopted a social liberation focus.⁴ Sulak Sivaraksa, a renowned Buddhist socialist, suggested that self-reliance is a hallmark of Buddhist communities.⁵ The Santi Asoke (Peaceful Asoke) movement, which was founded in the 1970s by the controversial monk Photirak, is drawing many followers from all walks of life today. With its anti-capitalist and utopian idealism, it has attracted influential politicians, including the former Bangkok Mayor and founder of the Palang Dhamma (Power of


²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Puntarigvivat.

Religious Teaching) Party, Major General Chamlong Srimuang. The *Dhammakaai* (Pali: *Dhammakaya*) movement, which was also established in the 1970s, attracted many followers with its aim “to get to the spiritual heart of the state and diffuse its power structures.” The *Buddhadasa* movement, which was formed in 1932, is now one of the most prominent religious movements. Its *Suan Mokkh* (Mokkh Gargen) monastic center, which is located in the Chaiya District of Suraj Thani Province, has become a living symbol of *Buddhadasa* teaching. It is appealing to those who like simplicity and traditional Buddhist meditation. Another movement, the Buddhist Ecology Movement, was established in an attempt to combat deforestation in Thailand. This movement made headlines when it conducted the ordination of a tree in Nan Province in 1991.

One should never underestimate the influence of religion in Thai politics. In 2002, rival Buddhist movements, the Mahanikai and the Thammayuth, fought each other to amend a monastic reform in their favor. They staged mass rallies in April 2002 to pressure the Thaksin administration to give in to their demands, and their actions. This became an embarrassment to Buddhism as a religion, since its teaching focuses on non-involvement in public affairs. In recent years Buddhist movements

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1 Ambuel, 148-149; Taylor, 175.

2 Taylor, 173.


have, to some degree, influenced political and social changes in Thailand. Because of its central teaching of detachment, Buddhism traditionally kept out of politics. Buddhist monks were supposed to stay away from civil activities and devote themselves to studying \textit{dhamma} (religious teaching).

Now, monks have become involved in political and social affairs in order to survive in the twenty-first century. These new Buddhist movements reflect "a growing disenchantment with conventional civic religion and its legitimation of social and political power structures."\textsuperscript{1}

\textbf{Adventism in Thailand}

There are very few Adventists who were former Buddhists in Thailand. The statistics show that 500 years after the arrival of the Portuguese envoy and Christianity in 1544, very few Thais have embraced Christianity. Today, less than 0.5 percent or around 325,000 people have identified themselves as Christians.\textsuperscript{2}

The Adventist Church has had very little success in converting Buddhist people. Most of the Adventists in Thailand are rural and tribal people. Despite an average of 633 baptisms per year (see table 5), the Thailand Adventist Church still has a negative growth rate of -0.3 percent for the 1993-2003 periods. The first Adventist missionary, Robert Caldwell, arrived in 1906. By 2003 the Thailand Adventist Church

\textsuperscript{1}Jim Taylor, 173.

Mission had 13,569 members, forty-one organized churches, sixty-eight companies, twenty-four ordained ministers and thirty-nine licensed ministers.¹


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Baptism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>609</td>
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<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>637</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>728</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2002</td>
<td>699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>1123</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Buddhist people have always been difficult to reach with the gospel. It took twenty-four years from the arrival of the first Adventist missionary for the first baptism of a Thai into the SDA church. The same experience was true with other Christian missions. It took twenty-one years for Pentecostal missionaries to baptize their first Thai convert. Why is it so hard to introduce Buddhists to Christianity? What could have been done differently which could have produced better results? It would be good to analyze some responses from former Buddhists who have become Adventists.

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The Adventist church in Thailand, like churches elsewhere, still does not know how to respond to postmodern people. Its educational institutions have not changed their teaching approach to prepare its workers for a Buddhist postmodern society. Community involvement and visibility are seen as key factors for church growth.

It is believed that most Buddhists in Southeast Asian countries such as Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Myanmar, are nominal Buddhists. "Nominal" means that they are Buddhists by birth but do not understand much of the Buddhist teaching. They are identified as Buddhists, but they may believe in spirits or practice superstition. They could be animistic or outright atheistic in their thinking. In 2003 a study was conducted on 259 people, 155 Christians and 104 Buddhists, concerning Christianity and Buddhism. The questionnaires were administered to students at Mission College and the Thai Ekamai Seventh-day Adventist church in Bangkok during October, 2003. The following five questions were asked: (1) How did you first learn about Christianity? (2) What was the most influential factor in your decision to accept Jesus? (3) What is the most important obstacle stopping you from accepting Jesus? (4) What do you think Christians should do in evangelism? (5) Why do you think Thai Buddhists do not accept Jesus?

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3See appendix 1: The Questionnaire Form and the Survey Results, p. 183.
This study reveals that the majority of Buddhists (55 percent) learned to know about Christianity through Christian family members and friends. Since the study was conducted at church institutions, 36.8 percent indicated that they learned about Christianity from Christian institutions. It is important to understand that institutions cannot share the message, but rather it is the people in the institutions. It has been shown that 54.8 percent of Buddhists indicated that they had learned about Christianity from their Christian family members and friends. The majority, 48.4 percent, of Buddhists who have become Christians indicated that their personal experience with God was the main factor for their decision to accept Christ as their Savior. This means that the traditional doctrinal approach to Bible studies might not go well among Buddhists. A great number of respondents, 33.5 percent, indicated that they do not understand Christianity and suggested that the Christian message should be simplified and made relevant within the Buddhist context. Many Buddhists, 51.9 percent, suggested that Christians should pay more attention to Buddhist physical needs and social justice, and not just try to give them Bible studies. This factor needs a closer study as to how Adventists could formulate their approach in preaching the gospel in Thailand where many people are still in poverty. It has been argued that the kingdom of heaven is not about food and drink, a person with an empty stomach, however, cannot possibly concentrate on the gospel message well. A large number of Buddhist respondents, 58.7 percent, also said that they did not see the need to change their religion, with only a few attributing this resistance to family pressures. This means that Christianity, in the eyes of Buddhists, is not necessarily a better religion. This could be due to the way Christians have presented the message and to the fact
that their lifestyle did not impress Buddhists. Some also see the Adventist lifestyle as being too strict and too difficult to live by.

The author became a Christian largely through the influence of one of his relatives. But it was not until he experienced God personally that he was truly converted. Experience has shown that there are many factors which help a Buddhist convert to remain in the Christian faith. First, it is his daily experience with God. Second, it is his family of faith and their care and support. Third, it is his conviction that the religion of God is the only true way to salvation.

Closing Remarks

A close look at Thailand’s political, social, and religious background has revealed several conditions. First, Thailand has come of age in terms of democracy. As well as its positive elements, democracy also has its own weaknesses. Often those with power and those who are more vocal tend to get more attention in a democracy. The voices of the ordinary people tend not to be heard.

Second, the Thai economy has created a gap between the rich and the poor. Mass migration to big cities in search of jobs has resulted in slums. Many poor families in rural areas are neglected both by their family members and their government. Poverty in Thailand has driven millions of rural men into cheap labor and women into prostitution. The Adventist Church in Thailand has neglected to develop ministries aimed at alleviating poverty, especially in the northeastern region. ADRA is now working mainly in the mountainous areas of the north, but could
contribute greatly by concentrating its activities in the northeast where most of the poor are located.

Third, Thai healthcare needs a serious overhaul and immediate improvement. Under the 30-baht scheme poor people are being neglected and receive inadequate treatment. Many more poor and destitute people were not even included in the plan. The AIDS epidemic in Thailand also needs immediate attention. Unfortunate AIDS patients are left to die a natural but miserable death. With its emphasis on health and morality, the Adventist Church should feel compelled to make a difference in the prevention and treatment of AIDS. Following the Lord Jesus’ example, its healthcare institutions should also implement more community projects making healthcare available to the poor.

Fourth, education in Thailand is not equally accessible to all despite the government promises to make this happen. Many poor families are not able to send their children to school. Poor children continue to be uneducated and this keeps them firmly in poverty.

Fifth, chronic social diseases such as crime, corruption, drug abuse, and dark influences are still widespread despite attempts by the government to curtail them.

Sixth, in the religious context, Thailand is experiencing a moral decline. Buddhism has experienced a decline in popularity and has lost its significance in many people’s lives. Meanwhile people are free to believe and practice all kinds of religious and traditional beliefs. Polarization of religion is the best way to describe Thailand’s religious situation. This condition, however, prepares people, especially the young and open-minded, to embrace other faiths or religions with relatively little objection
from society, and it also encourages people to be more open. The SDA Church in Thailand could impact society with its attention to morality, along with the eternal message of salvation.

Seventh, in the past Buddhism has been able to adapt itself to various local traditions. Eventually, many Buddhist movements have become involved in community development while others have undertaken a theological re-examination and tried to adjust and adapt to the new cultural environment of modern living.

Finally, the Adventist Church has not been very successful in its approach to Buddhist people in the past. Most of its members are rural people from animistic backgrounds. We must thank God for all the people He brought into His kingdom, but according to the above survey, Buddhists will respond to the preaching of the gospel especially through family and friends who introduced them to the church. Their conversions are due to a personal experience with the Person of Jesus Christ, rather than through doctrinal studies. The survey also found that the Christian message presented was often not relevant in the Buddhist context. These findings and the conditions mentioned above should propel us to develop new strategies in order for the church to be more successful in its delivery of the message of the gospel to Buddhists in Thailand. A new strategy will be developed in the rest of the dissertation to better present the gospel to Buddhist people in Thailand.
CHAPTER IV

PRESENTING THE GOSPEL IN THAILAND

Overview

Christian missionaries have tried to reach Buddhists in Thailand with the gospel for nearly half a millennium since Antonio de Paiva, a Portuguese priest, arrived in Ayutthaya (or Ayudhya) in 1544. Many approaches of presenting the gospel to Buddhists have been explored and experimented with.

Traditional Approaches to Buddhist Evangelism

Colonial Approach

The earliest approaches were simple colonial approaches that focused on converting first the kings and chiefs, thinking that by doing so the whole nation would follow. This approach was successful in some countries, but received strong reactions from the Thais which led to a revolt against Christians in 1688 and successive persecutions of Christians by the then kings of Ayutthaya and later Siam.¹

Confrontational Approach

A confrontation approach was also used widely among early missionaries.

¹Chumsriphan, n.d.
This approach views other religions as inferior and it also drew negative reactions from the Buddhists. In Thailand, this approach is still being used to some extent. Signs with Christian themes are nailed on trees and electricity poles throughout Thailand. Literature, such as brochures, leaflets, and cards is handed out at shopping malls and placed on racks in public areas. Direct TV advertisements have also been seen and often drew protests from Buddhists for fear of losing the Buddhist audience for their Buddhist TV programs.

**Dialogue Approach**

The dialogue approach has also been used in recent years. This approach attempts to create mutual understanding between Buddhists and Christians to foster a better relationship between the two religions.\(^1\) This approach leads to the Christian message being accepted by Buddhists and minimizes misunderstanding. This approach was adopted by an Adventist missionary, Brian De Alwis in the 1980s.\(^2\) Dialogues between Christians and Buddhists are still being organized. In July 2004, Prayap University, Chiang Mai, Thailand, hosted such a dialogue.

**One-Size-Fits-All Approach**

This is not really an approach developed by anyone, but it has been employed by some Adventist and non-Adventist Christians. This approach is the opposite to the

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contextual approach. In presenting the gospel it takes no consideration of the people's context. It simply transfers materials and methods which have been practiced in the West and uses them in presenting the gospel to any people and any culture without considering the context. In this way, those who become converted not only become Christians but also became Western as well. When B. Makhathini of the University of Swaziland reflected on the package that brought Christianity to his culture, he said:

    Before the bread of life (the Christian faith) came to our part of Africa, it stayed in Europe for over a thousand years. There the Europeans added a plastic bag (their own customs) to the bread. And when they came to Southern Africa, they fed us the bag along with the bread. Now, the plastic bag is making us sick! The plastic is theirs. We know that God planned for us to receive the bread just as he planned for them to receive it. We can remove the plastic, and enjoy the bread.¹

The above method was used extensively by Adventists in Thailand and yielded reasonable success. However, this approach causes Buddhists to see Christianity as a Western religion. Since Thai people prefer preserving their cultural and national identity this approach does not appeal to most Thais.

Contemporary Approaches to Buddhist Evangelism

Contextual Approach

Seventh-day Adventists have tried several approaches in reaching people of other faiths. One such approach was adopted by Clifton Maberly, formerly the director of the Adventist Buddhist Study Center, based in Bangkok, Thailand, in the

¹Bruce Bradshaw, Bridging the Gap: Evangelism, Development and Shalom (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1993), 54.
1990s. His approach to Buddhist evangelism was through contextualization.\(^1\) He tried to contextualize both the message and the method, by keeping Buddhist elements of rituals, ceremonies, and even Buddhist structures for church buildings. He built churches that looked like Buddhist temples, used Buddhist art in depicting Christian stories, preached in a manner of Buddhist monks, and developed wedding rituals similar to that of Buddhists.\(^2\) Many of his approaches were appreciated by members of Buddhist background, although they were not welcomed by Adventist church leaders in Thailand or in Myanmar. Maberly himself acknowledged that the administration did not understand his approach and declined to support his evangelistic proposal.\(^3\)

Another more recent Adventist approach has been developed by the new director of the Buddhist Study Center, Scott Griswold. Griswold’s approach is also a contextualized one. Although he does not spell it out in his *Manual for Buddhist Ministry*, he has alluded to many elements of contextualization of the message and rituals.\(^4\) The manual mentions four steps for witnessing to Buddhists: (1) listen to

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\(^3\)Ibid., 269.

know beliefs and needs, (2) affirm similarities in values and struggles, (3) share
differences through testimonies, and (4) invite them to experience. He suggested that
these steps should be employed when a Christian is actually engaging in witnessing to
a Buddhist.

It is found that nowadays most Christian approaches to Buddhist evangelism
are largely based on contextualization. A report on “Christian Witness to Buddhists,”
produced by Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, strongly emphasized the
need for improving the credibility of the messenger, contextualizing the message,
having family-focused evangelism, and being involved in social concerns.

Relational Approach

A relational approach was developed by Rudi Maier, while working in Sri
Lanka in the 1980s. He started his mission approach by building relationships with
people first before entering into a dialogue with them. For him, community
development was an important means to demonstrate a forgotten side of mission, in
that it demonstrated the human side of the gospel. Such an approach not only healed
people physically but helped them to be open for spiritual healing. It also tore down

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1Ibid., 8-15.


the wall of prejudice and produced goodwill toward the message bearer. Recalling his experience in Sri Lanka, Maier recounted that he had spent most of his time around people, not around the pulpit in a church. Relationships brought success to his ministry to Buddhist people in Sri Lanka. He also stressed that “establishing relationships is near the essence of Christian mission and ministry.” Supporting the relational approach, Ellen White wrote that “many can be reached only through acts of disinterested kindness. Their physical wants must be first relieved. As they see evidence of our unselfish love, it will be easier for them to believe in the love of Christ.” This makes the relational approach more applicable to Buddhist people.

Relational-Contextual Approach

Based on my experience as a former Buddhist who had a definite experience in accepting not only Christianity but later also Adventism, I would like to use my background not only as an Asian, but also an Australian, to develop a strategy to reach Buddhists through dialogue with them to help them make a commitment to Jesus.

This approach takes into account both the relational approach developed by Maier and the most common contextual approaches. The relational approach focuses on how the messenger builds relationships with people, and the contextual approach

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3 Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 6 (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1948), 84.
focuses on making the message and method relevant to people. The relational-contextual approach combines the two into one. This means that it takes seriously the role of the messenger, the message, and the method. For this reason, a step-by-step guideline will be suggested for all three in the stages suggested below.

Strategy Development

It is assumed that for Buddhists to become Christian they will have to go through several stages on their journey to the Christian faith (see fig 1). The stages are: (1) the Attention Stage, (2) the Attraction Stage, (3) the Attachment Stage, and (4) the Acceptance Stage.

Figure 2. Buddhist Spiritual Journey Chart
These stages are not physical stages, and may not apply to every Buddhist, but they are like a guide to let the missionary understand how Buddhists make a journey towards accepting the Christian faith. These stages will be presented in an onion-like model. Like an onion we need to peel off each layer in order to get to the core. The purpose of the following strategy and the stages described in the paper should not be treated like medical prescriptions which the minister or missionary will apply in all situations, but rather as a guide to help improve any strategy taking the local cultural environment into consideration.

No strategy is universally effective and no work of evangelism can be done without the Holy Spirit. It is much more important for the minister and missionary to help Buddhists to take the matter of prayer very seriously and make it a priority. Most Buddhists are very superstitious. As a result, evil powers operate very visibly in almost every part of the Buddhist world. Remember that “our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Eph 6:12). Therefore, as the apostle Paul suggested we should “pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests” (Eph 6:18). There is no doubt that there are underlining problems with demonic forces in Thailand. One prominent Buddhist researcher stated in one of his research papers, “It is my conviction that all the efforts described in this paper will be in vain if the spiritual battle to be fought is...
not seriously taken on in prayer.”<sup>1</sup> These words of Williams need to be emphasized continuously, especially at the outset of engaging in Buddhist evangelism. For without prayer, no evangelistic strategy will be effective.

Table 6. Buddhist Spiritual Journey Stages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Messenger</td>
<td>Establish friendship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Learn language and culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attention</td>
<td>Message</td>
<td>Personal testimony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Method</td>
<td>Community and social programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Messenger</td>
<td>Maintain friendship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Get to know influential people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attraction</td>
<td>Message</td>
<td>Correspondence Bible lessons preferred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Method</td>
<td>Church organized social programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Messenger</td>
<td>Improve friendship with head of family and community leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Message</td>
<td>Create new contextualized Bible lessons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Method</td>
<td>Group Bible Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Simple worship programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Church fellowship and light spiritual programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attachment</td>
<td>Messenger</td>
<td>Spiritual Mentor to new converts; find new friends in the church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Message</td>
<td>Continue Bible studies in Christian lifestyle and church doctrines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Method</td>
<td>Involve new converts in church programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Conduct culturally appropriate spiritual programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Develop Christian functional rituals and ceremonies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It also has to be recognized that the spiritual journey of Buddhists does not stop when they have accepted Jesus. It has to be pointed out that in this paper no attempt has been made to present the nurturing steps that will bring newly converts to maturity in faith. Those steps need further research. The present plan is to find an

appropriate way of presenting the gospel to Buddhist people in Thailand. For that reason the proposed strategy will be limited to the above four steps.

In the last chapter, research has shown that many Buddhists have accepted Jesus Christ and become Christians through their relatives or close friends and through their personal experience with God’s power or revelation. I witnessed this phenomenon during one of my trips to Laos, when I visited a group of Adventists in Vientiane. Everybody in that group of more than forty worshippers was related to each other and to one person in Holland, USA. They told me that the person from Holland came and shared the gospel with them. As a result the person’s mother, brothers, sisters, aunts, cousins, nieces and nephews accepted Jesus and started worshipping in their village with the help of an Adventist pastor in Laos. Many of my students and Mission College workers who have become Adventists indicated very strongly that their family and friends were the main factors in helping them to know Jesus Christ. One can conclude with certainty that relationship is the key to Buddhist evangelism. This means that very often Buddhists accept the messenger before accepting the message and their experience of God’s power is the turning point for them to decide to embrace Christianity. Any strategy to reach Buddhists should take this factor into account, as well as the environmental factors and circumstances of the location where evangelism is to take place.

Based on the relational-contextual approach, suggestions concerning the role of the messenger, the message, and the method will be made for each stage. For the

1 Please note that method and programs are used interchangeably.
sake of this paper the strategy will be presented as a general approach for the country of Thailand in principle but with application to Buddhist students at Mission College.

Attention Stage

The Attention Stage is the stage where the Buddhists have no understanding of Christianity. Most Buddhists have had little or no contact with Christianity. Christianity is seen by them as a Western religion and often perceived to be inferior to Buddhism. They are content with Buddhism and see it as part of their own national identity. Since they identify Buddhism as part of their society, they have no interest in Christianity and do not desire to become Christians.

Messenger

At the Attention Stage, the messenger enters a new or even hostile territory. The very first thing that needs to be done, is to settle down, identify with the people, become accepted in the community, earn personal respect, and establish friendships with as many influential people in the community as possible.

Special attention should be given to choosing the messenger. Many things can go wrong if the messenger is the wrong type for the people. It is commonly known that people with similar likes and interests usually get along well with each other. According to this principle, the messenger must not only be a person who commits to love the people that they are trying to reach but if possible they should be of the same race as the people. This has implications for the sending organization such as the Thailand Adventist Mission when it considers sending pastors to different churches. It would, for example, not be appropriate to send a rural minister to pastor an
educational institution church like the Mission College Church. It is also not a good idea to send a tribal pastor to another tribal people that are culturally different, especially if the tribes have a history of past conflicts. Prejudice and animosity between the groups of people will hinder and limit effective ministry. Sometimes people just do not match and cannot be matched. No matter how nice the ministers are they will surely have a difficult time trying to identify with the community that they try to minister to. For without the community’s permission they can do nothing, and even their lives will be in danger if they try to do evangelism without the community’s approval.

In order for messengers to earn their place in a community they should interact with the community, first, by visiting the people of authority and community leaders. They should go and present themselves to the district governor, town mayor, village chief, and other community leaders. They also need to get to know the leaders at the official level and then try to get to know them at a social level. Thais have a saying that you do not know a person until you have eaten with them. It is a tradition in Thailand that people do business over a meal. Often contracts are signed, deals are struck, and marriages are proposed and accepted during a meal. While eating together facilitates a business deal, playing together earns friendship.¹ When Jesus was on earth He liked to eat with people who often were sinners. Through eating with them He was able to share the gospel message with them and brought changes to their lives.

The case of Zacchaeus (Luke 19) and Simon the leper (Matt 26) are just two examples. As a college chaplain, I often attended breakfast meetings with local dignitaries where community projects and business are discussed over a meal.

The messenger should also look for opportunities to mingle with the people they try to befriend. Community leaders and influential people often play golf, tennis, or badminton. It will be good for the Christian messenger to also join these kinds of clubs to mingle with influential people. It is amazing how many things can be achieved while playing with people. Apart from eating and playing, the messenger should try to attend other community functions, such as funerals, cultural and social festivals. By doing this the messenger will be able to identify with ordinary people as well as with influential people.

The messenger must be friendly and able to make friends. It is not ideal to have a messenger who is a foreigner. It takes longer before foreign messengers can be accepted by Buddhists. A foreign messenger will need to mingle with Buddhists, play with them, learn their language and culture and show interest in them. Only when the messenger can speak the language will they be in a position to share their faith. A problem with the foreign messenger is that too often they have too much concern about privacy. Their privacy becomes a barrier to establishing a close relationship with Buddhists. As a relationship develops by spending time with each other, sharing meals with each other, and playing together, too much privacy can become a real problem for a meaningful relationship to develop with Buddhists who are more community orientated.
As friendships take time to establish it is imperative that TAM keep its pastors in the field as long as possible. Short-term messengers do not do well with Buddhist evangelism. The tradition of moving pastors every two or three years actually goes against this principle. Imagine children having to change their father every three years. What kind of children will they become? They will become children with relationship problems, who have a hard time maintaining relationships. Stability and long-term commitment by the messenger is vital for establishing a sustainable relationship in Buddhist evangelism.

The messenger must earn respect and trust. Buddhists normally give due respect to people of older age, higher education, and with official titles. For example, teachers are highly respected by their students. Age also helps to earn such respect. However, the messenger still needs to earn the personal and voluntary respect of these people. This often depends on personality. Education, teaching and leadership skills, down-to-earth personality, humility, and being helpful helps put the messenger in the best possible position to influence Buddhists. Being accepted, respected, and identifying with Buddhists is the most important key to evangelizing them.

Message

At the Attention Stage the messenger should not yet actively seek to share the message. If asked by the Buddhists, messengers may talk about their religion, their faith, and experience with God. As the messenger mingles and establishes friendship with Buddhists, opportunities to witness may arise when they are asked about their faith. Since religion is often a very controversial topic to discuss, it is recommended
that messengers wait until their friendship with Buddhists is deep and stable before they try to seriously share their faith. A person can be lost as the result of an argument over religion.

The messenger should not try to give Bible studies in the initial stages, but should talk about the common beliefs shared by Buddhists and Christians. If the messenger is from the West it is essential that they learn to understand Buddhism well, for it is unwise to share with the Buddhists without understanding their religion. As there are many different religious words and terminologies used both in Buddhism and Christianity it is mandatory that the Christian messenger learn to understand Buddhist language religious vocabularies and concepts before attempting to share their Christian faith.

Though I grew up as a nominal Buddhist I had a good understanding of basic Buddhist concepts. When I was young I was ordained as a Buddhist monk and learned the Buddhist scriptures. I understand Buddhist ceremonies and festivals. Many Buddhists are not against the Christian religion. However, their attitude toward Christians is that as long as they are not trying to convert them, they can be friends. Buddhists believe that all religions teach people good principles. They respect other religions as long as their own religion is respected by believers of other faiths. However, they will react very strongly if their religion is being belittled or threatened. Unless asked, I would not try to share my Christian faith with any of my new Buddhist students without earning their respect first. Many students who come to Mission College are already on guard. A credible insider has informed me that at the Nursing Campus in Bangkok some Buddhist students conducted a secret ceremony vowing not
to be converted to Christianity while studying at Mission College. Some of them later broke that vow when they found Jesus as their personal Savior. Thus, the message to be shared at the Attention Stage should be light and simple, such as, God is real, heaven is real, humans were created in the image of God, sin is responsible for all the bad things that are happening in the world, and there is a way out through Jesus Christ.

The messengers may offer to pray for their Buddhist friends by asking God to fulfill their needs. Buddhists do not believe in God but they pray to unknown divine beings, deceased famous monks, or guardian spirits. Praying is not strange to Buddhists, so the Christian messenger should make an effort to pray for Buddhists.

Many Buddhists are under the influence of evil spirits. Almost all Buddhists live in fear of harassment from evil spirits. There is a lot of evidence of evil spirit possessions and harassments throughout Thailand. At Mission College some students have been disturbed by evil spirits, while others are harassed by evil powers through their sacred objects, charms, or amulets. Such occasions provide great opportunities for the Christian messenger to pray for deliverance for people who are in these situations. Once God's power is experienced, Buddhists will be open to learn more about the Christian God.

The Christian messenger should seek opportunity to pray for the sick. Praying for the sick and the needy brings healing and relief to Buddhists and removes spiritual barriers from their hearts. I pray for the sick and for the needs of my students in and out of class. I have never found any sick Buddhist who refused to be prayed for by a Christian friend. As the college chaplain I try to be in tune with the needs of my students and visit them in the hospital or in the dormitory when they are sick. There is
always something to pray for if the messengers are in tune with the needs of their Buddhist friends. By praying for them a message is being sent that there is a God who can help and heal.

As opportunities open, the messenger may share beliefs about forgiveness, peace, and lasting happiness in God. There is no forgiveness in Buddhism. The Buddhist teaching about salvation is that each person is his or her own savior. What that means is that everyone is under the law of *karma*. *Karma* determines the fate of every being. In the end, one gets what one deserves. When Buddhists make mistakes in life they have no way of correcting what they have already committed. Their only hope is to do more good deeds and earn more merits to override the previous mistakes. Since there is neither referee nor God to guarantee their merits, it leaves the Buddhists without real hope of a better future or a better life. The fact that there is a God who forgives is attractive to the Buddhists who seek true happiness and salvation.

**Method**

Christian methods that are appropriate for this stage are the ones that will get the attention of the people. Programs that deal with community services are very much appreciated and have been able to open doors to the sharing of the gospel message in many areas.\(^1\) Often people ask where the funds for the projects are from. Answers can be given about why funds are given by Christians to help the poor. This can lead to opportunities to let people know that Christians are people who love to

share and who care for the poor and the deprived in society.

Attraction Stage

The Attraction Stage is the stage of the Buddhist spiritual journey when they are attracted to Christianity. They have seen some good things in Christianity. The Christian messenger has earned their friendship and respect. The Christian lifestyle and beliefs are becoming attractive. Buddhists begin to compare life as Buddhists and as Christians and want to know more about Christianity. At this stage they are not yet ready to make a decision and join the Christian church. They do not know much about Christianity, apart from some aspects of its lifestyle and practices. Below are some suggestions for what the Christian messenger should do and what message is appropriate to share with Buddhists during this stage of their journey.

Messenger

At the Attraction Stage messengers have already caught the attention of Buddhists so it is important for the messenger to continue to be friendly, loving, caring, helping and becoming more involved in the community. The friendship must be genuine, not having any hidden agenda, because establishing a friendship in order to merely convert a person is unethical. If the messenger were to establish a friendship with Buddhists for the purpose of only converting them they are manipulating that friendship. Rather than using a relationship merely as bait or a lure, work among Buddhists needs to be led by the Holy Spirit who only can touch a person’s heart. In this way, if Buddhists decide not to follow the faith of the messenger they will not give up that relationship. Some Christians who establish
relationships with Buddhists for the purpose of converting them have abandoned the relationship when the Buddhists did not respond positively to their approach or after the Buddhists accepted their faith. The reason for the latter is because some Christians feel that a relationship is no longer needed once a decision is made, so they move on to establish new relationships. When that happens people will feel that they have been taken advantage of. Relationships that are not genuine will not produce lasting converts.

In addition to maintaining friendship with individual Buddhists, there is a compelling need to establish and maintain relationships with their parents, community leaders, and people of authority. These relationships will enhance the message that the messenger is giving. For without permission from the community leaders the messenger cannot do evangelism in their community. Thais have a saying that it is not so much what you know but who you know that matters. This principle works in all areas of professional life and business. Because Thais are very conscious of face saving they would not want to let their friends down if they were asked a favor. They would often bend over backwards to accommodate their friends’ request for a favor. For that reason, it is important to establish relationships with influential people and maintain such relationships.

Message

At the Attraction Stage Buddhists begin to be interested in the message. They have lowered their guard and removed the barriers of prejudice and resistance. They are still very much Buddhist and unfamiliar with the Christian message. They are also
careful not to openly move towards the Christian faith. They are in transition and unsure about whether the move will be better for their future or not. They also fear being ostracized by their family and community. Therefore, the message to be presented at this stage should be indirect or in correspondence form.

Health and Bible correspondence courses can be offered to people who are interested. These courses can be posted by mail directly to the Buddhists’ homes where interested people can study at their own pace. These correspondence courses should be made available online as it is much easier for some people to study through the internet. A number of people who have completed these correspondence courses earlier in life have often later accepted the Christian faith.

Correspondence course lessons that are currently being used need to be rewritten. For example, at the moment, correspondence courses in Thailand are exact translations of North American Bible lessons written in the 1950s. They are not relevant to the Buddhist context, are outdated, the language used is inappropriate, and they are culturally offensive. It is amazing that they still lead Buddhists to Jesus. Credit must go to the work of the Holy Spirit for all the good results. However, it will be much easier for Buddhists to understand if the correspondence lessons were written in the context and language of Buddhism. A set of new Bible study courses for Buddhists are at the moment being developed by the Buddhist Study Center.

If there is a need to give personal Bible studies to the Buddhists at this stage, group rather than one-on-one Bible study would be more appropriate. Personal Bible studies with individual Buddhists should not be ruled out; however, the Buddhist’s fear of being ostracized should be of some concern. That is why group Bible study is
preferred to individual study. In group Bible studies there is a sense of peer movement, and participants do not feel that they are the only ones who are breaking away from their national religion. There is a sense of togetherness that also gives a sense of security so they do not feel isolated or forsaken by their peers. Group study also gives a sense of assurance that they are not alone in having found the Christian faith attractive. Although Christians may preach about the narrow road that leads to heaven, human minds are still influenced by group thinking. People believe that if something is really good many people will see it together.

As Buddhists are group orientated, big Bible classes for them are most appropriate. Ninety percent of new Buddhist students indicated that they like Sabbath School lesson studies. Fifty-eight percent of them indicated that they like it very much according to a survey that was conducted the third week after the students arrived at Mission College in June 2004. Many students had only been able to attend two Sabbath School lesson studies. The disadvantage of a larger class study is that it is hard to have inter-personal interaction, but at this stage, inter-personal interaction is not important. What is needed is a spirit of togetherness. Experience has shown that at this early stage, group study is much more effective for Buddhists than one-on-one study.

Method

During the Attraction Stage social programs, community service, health care service, welfare, emergency and crisis responses, and needs-based programs like those
offered at the Attention Stage need to continue. However, at this stage no secret needs
to be made about a connection with the church or the Christian religion.

Church social programs need to focus on building personal relationships.
Church potlucks and picnic programs are very appropriate at this stage. Church
members are encouraged to invite their Buddhist friends to join such programs. At
Mission College, there are church potlucks every week and occasionally there are also
church picnics. Students are invited to join these occasions. These occasions further
strengthen the friendship between students and faculty and staff.

Outside Mission College the situation is somewhat different. Messengers need
to look for opportunities to present appropriate spiritual programs such as Christian
concerts, Christmas, Easter and other special programs for the community. Buddhist
people like festivals. They have many festivals for different seasons. It is appropriate
to invite them to church festivals if the programs are modified to suit a Buddhist
audience and the language used is familiar to Buddhists. What is suggested here is not
to change the message, but changing the medium and methods is necessary. As
chocolate can be wrapped in many different types of paper in many colors, so too the
gospel message should also be wrapped in a way that is attractive to Buddhists.

Attachment Stage

The Attraction Stage is the stage in the Buddhist spiritual journey when people
begin to be attached to Christianity through their Christian relatives or friends or a
Christian messenger. At this stage, the Christian relatives, friends, or messenger take
a special role in coaching and guiding them through the experience of God’s Word
and Christian programs. At this point, Buddhists are usually seriously thinking about joining the Christian faith and are interested to know the fundamental beliefs and practices of Christianity. The Christian messenger now becomes the Bible teacher and spiritual guide. Bible studies play an important role in convincing Buddhists of their need for forgiveness and salvation in Christ Jesus. How the Christian messenger presents the Bible truth is crucial to their understanding. Below some suggestions regarding Bible lessons for the Thai Buddhists.

**Messenger**

At the Attachment Stage it is very important for the messenger to maintain friendship with community leaders and people in authority. Buddhists do not make decisions to change religion without permission from those in authority, usually their parents, or in their absence, they must receive permission from the community leaders. A good relationship between the messenger, the community leaders, and people in authority has often facilitated the decision-making process. Without this relationship it is difficult to even have a personal Bible study with a Buddhist. I know of a student who really wanted to become a Christian, but her parents would not give her permission since her mother was the town mayor and as figure head of the community, was committed to Buddhism. She feared reprisal and loss of face if her daughter forsook her religion and embraced Christianity. The mayor passed away last year, but her daughter still could not become a Christian since her father assumed the leadership of the community in place of his wife.
After the messenger has settled in the community, has won the respect of the people and community leaders, and has fully identified with the people in the community, they will become known by many in the community. Their personal relationships with key people in the community will be essential. It should also be known by now that they are a Christian messenger. They should be seen as religious persons whose faith is different, who have good moral practices, and whose Christian religion is worth getting to know. They should have permission, at least verbally, from the community leaders to have a place to worship and teach the Christian faith. It needs to be stated that written permission from a government official authorizing a Christian messenger to operate in any community is usually not required. In most cases, verbal permission is enough for the messenger to operate. As long as they maintain the relationship with the people in power they can do mission work in that community.

Thais live in a close-knit society. Anything that happens to one person affects almost everybody in that community. In an effort to share the Christian faith with an individual the messenger must make sure they receive the approval of that individual’s family. It is important that when the messenger establishes a relationship with a Buddhist they must try to include the whole family, especially the head of the family, either the mother or the father or both. At this point it needs to be noted that a close public relationship between two people of the opposite sex is not appropriate in Buddhist culture. Even a husband and wife do not normally show affection in public. Touching any part of the body of a person of the opposite sex is inappropriate. Nowadays, even touching the body of a person of the same sex can cause suspicions
of homosexuality. The messenger should take special care when sharing the gospel with a person of the opposite sex, especially if the messenger is a single male who is studying with a single female Buddhist. It is best to keep appropriate personal space and safer to interact in group Bible study instead of one-on-one Bible study.

Message

At this stage the Bible becomes very important for the Buddhist. However, our traditional approach to Bible studies is too difficult for most Buddhists to understand (see the research in previous chapter). There is a need to write Bible lessons that are simple and relevant to Buddhists. Although, there are similarities between Christianity and Buddhism in morality, the two religions differ greatly in their theological foundation.1 There are some important points of contrast that need special attention when teaching Buddhists the message of salvation.

First, Buddhists and Christians have sharp contrasting beliefs about life. Fundamentally, Buddhists are trying to achieve eternal death or the cessation of the cycles of life.2 This is in sharp contrast to the Christian belief of eternal life. The difference is that the two religions see life differently.3 One must not criticize but


should sympathize with Buddha who had that view of life. He was born in northern India as a crown prince who was well protected from the reality of life by the walls of his father’s palace. When he was able to sneak out to the outside world he saw life so disgusting that he could not tolerate it, so he entered into a life of emptiness and self-sacrifice in order to find the way out of a life of suffering. Since life is not worth living the best solution is to end life.¹ This is simple enough and many mercy killings in Buddhist countries are based on this premise. In contrast, Christians believe that God created life and He said it was very good. So, eternal life with eternal happiness is the focus.

There are plans to write new Bible lessons for Buddhists as part of this mission strategy. However, the completion will be beyond the immediate time frame of this dissertation. Meanwhile, courses such as Christian Beliefs and Comparative Religion will help Buddhist students to understand the common and contrasting beliefs between the two religions. A person who comes from both religious backgrounds will have no problem in conveying the Christian message in a non-offensive but attractive way to Buddhists. Work is continuing on updating the Christian Beliefs textbook so that it will be relevant and suitable for Buddhists.

Second, Buddhists do not believe in God. But they believe that one is responsible for one’s fate and salvation. The Christian idea that God is responsible for our salvation through the cross of Christ is strange to a Buddhist. A Bible study on

this issue is important however, because Buddhists need to know God personally. It is very important that the messenger will try to encourage Buddhist people to pray and experience God’s power as they learn to know Him intellectually. When teaching about God it is good to ask them if they have ever seen ghosts or spirits. Some might have seen them, but the majority will admit that they have never seen one. It is important to teach them that God is the Supreme Being. By looking at the existence of evil spirits Buddhists can be challenged to see the existence of God and the Holy Spirit. Buddhists are also familiar with angels. For the Thai Buddhists, Krung Thep (another Thai name for the city of Bangkok) means the city of angels. It would be unthinkable to suggest that angels exist but God does not. Most Buddhists also believe in heaven. Logic should be used to show that if there is a heaven there is a king of heaven who Christians call God. Since most Buddhists also pray to the most supreme, sacred being in heaven, they should gently be asked who they think that being is. Point out to them, like Paul did in Athens with the Greeks’ altar to the unknown god, that the supreme sacred being that they are praying to is actually God.

Third, the concepts of forgiveness and salvation seem illogical to most Buddhists. Influenced by the law of karma Buddhists believe that what goes around comes around. They believe that whatever one sows one reaps sooner than later. Every deed and every action is converted into either good or bad karma which determines the fate of every person in the future. Buddha taught that one is one’s own savior. By earning merit Buddhists hope to balance out their bad karma. But, such a belief creates uncertainty since so far, no one has ever achieved nirvana (which means the cessation of the cycles of birth) except Buddha. Although some might have
claimed to have achieved *nirvana* after Buddha, no one can verify their claims.

Ironically, the act of making such a claim is an indication of a desire to be known which in itself is interpreted as not having fully attained the *nirvana* state. Thus, it is impossible for any Buddhist to achieve self-salvation. The result is that there is great uncertainty about the future. Buddhists in general tend to concentrate on the present, making sure they have material success and have a happy life. The Christian concept of salvation through God’s forgiveness of our sins needs to be explained from a practical perspective. On special occasions, His Majesty the king, Bhumipol Adulyadet, often gives amnesty to prisoners in Thai prisons all around the country. Thousands of prisoners on such occasions are released. During such ceremonies prisoners thank the king for his grace and mercy and they vow to live a better life and not to commit any further crimes. This illustration is very appropriate to share with Thai Buddhists that there is a God, who like His Majesty the king of Thailand, forgives the sins of people here on the earth. The same commitment that the prisoners made of acknowledging their sins and accepting the gift of forgiveness from the king can set people free and help them to live a free life under God’s rule again.

There are many more topics that need a special review and need to be rewritten to help Buddhists understand Christian doctrines, however, this dissertation strategy is not about a theological approach to Buddhist evangelism. The above example should merely serve as an illustration how the messenger will need to learn to understand Buddhist religious concepts and how they can understand Christian religious concepts. Only then can they effectively share their Christian faith.
Most of the existing Adventists Bible lessons are far too apologetic and need to become more present-truth oriented. The Bible lessons available in Thailand have been designed to reach those who already have some knowledge of Christianity. Buddhists on the other hand, who know nothing about Christianity, need to first learn very basic truths about God. They need to know whether the Christian teachings really make sense in real life or whether it is better for them to follow Buddhist teachings. Bible lessons about Jesus Christ, His divinity, and His mission, are very appropriate to introduce Christianity. As Buddhists learn to know Jesus better they can learn how to communicate with Him. As they experience His power and revelation they will want to accept Him as their personal Savior. Research has revealed that often Buddhists who have been baptized for several years suddenly have a true conversion experience. It is very important that Bible lessons be written in a way that introduce Buddhists to Jesus Christ, not just to Christian beliefs. In fact, Jesus Himself said this to the Jewish religious people, “You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life” (John 5:39-40). Effective Bible lessons must introduce people to Jesus Christ as a personal Savior.

The messenger should try to encourage the Buddhist to have such a personal relationship with God, by teaching them how to pray simple prayers. It is not necessary to teach Buddhists about controversial Christian practices such as music, jewelry, dress codes, vegetarianism, ceremonies and festivals at this stage. These are not essential for salvation. They are behavioral and cultural issues, not theological
issues. Concentrate on introducing the Buddhist to Jesus first. Once a personal relationship with Jesus is established those issues can later be appropriately addressed. It is important that the Christian messenger understands this priority: Jesus first, the rest later. Often, Buddhists say that it is too hard to become a Christian because of the many restrictions placed on their lives. Nobody needs to obey the laws to become a Christian, but once a person becomes a Christian, with the help of Jesus, they will enjoy obeying God’s laws. This happens because of becoming a new creature and having our nature changed. In such a way God’s laws no longer are restrictions but keys to happiness. This concept is important in Buddhist evangelism.

Method

When Buddhists have reached the Attachment Stage, the messenger can now invite them to experience church worship programs. However, special coaching and guidance is needed as the Buddhist will not understand the various forms of Christian worship. It is important to realize that going to any new place or attending an unknown worship program can create considerable anxiety and confusion. Buddhist worship is very simple. People usually go to the temple, sit down on the floor reverently and listen to the teaching or chanting from the presiding monks. At the end, they \textit{wai} (a form of greeting), which is an elaborate form of bowing down three times to the monks or the Buddha. That is the end of worship. A Christian worship program is far more elaborate and complex. Worshippers sit down, stand up, kneel down, sing, and listen to preaching. Before the worship service ends some people come with bags or plates to receive money from the worshippers. All of this is embarrassing to
Buddhists if they cannot understand the procedures. They feel uncomfortable and may not want to come back again. A great deal of care must be taken when bringing Buddhists to church for the first time. It would be good to design church worship programs in appropriate Thai ways. If this is not possible, be sure that Thai Buddhists are made aware of what they can expect in a Christian service ahead of time to help them feel at ease and be made comfortable. Another option is to bring Buddhists to a house worship service first. Once they are familiar with the Christian worship style then they can be invited to attend a church worship program.

Church fellowship or social programs are more appropriate for the Buddhists to be introduced to at this stage. The church should plan to have many fellowship and social programs for those who are interested in Christianity. Church members should bring their friends to join such activities. Most Christian churches spend much of their energy in organizing programs for their own members only. When that happens the church is focusing on itself rather than on its mission. At Mission College we have potlucks, picnics, musical concerts, faculty house worships, and parties in which our students are encouraged to join. All these programs are designed to improve relationships with the students and to let them know that Christians are not long-faced people who mourn for Jesus to come back, but are people who live their lives to the fullest. These programs are like the gospel in action. Action speaks louder than words.

The Buddhists at this stage of the spiritual journey often join the church community in outreach programs. Usually these church community programs also have some spiritual elements. However, since they are community outreach programs
not everything about them necessarily needs to deal with Christian worship. Programs like Branch Sabbath School, Vacation Bible School, English classes for the community, and Community Christmas or Easter programs are appropriate. Buddhists who are already interested in Christianity and may have started receiving Bible studies are encouraged to participate or observe these programs because they serve as a bridge to a fuller spiritual program.

Non-traditional prayer meetings are also appropriate for Buddhists who are at the Attachment Stage. Traditional prayer meetings often start with traditional hymn singing, heavy Bible studies, and prayers in groups of two or three people and may not be appropriate for the Buddhist to attend. Buddhists who are not yet well-acquainted with Christian forms often feel uncomfortable with such programs as they do not know what to do. It would be worse if the Buddhist would be asked to say a prayer, as they are not used to giving verbal prayers in public. They pray in their hearts sometime during meditation. Asking Buddhists to say a prayer will embarrass them and deter them from joining such a prayer program again. At Mission College, we have organized overnight prayer vigils for special festivals such as the Festival of Faith, traditionally called the Week of Prayer. We have done it once a year for the past two years and it was amazing how often Buddhist students joined in the program. These prayer meetings are not traditional Adventist meetings. We start with moments of meditation and allowed people to pray alone and quietly. We must learn to be creative when conducting prayer meetings for Buddhists.

During the attachment stage Buddhists are making a decision whether or not to leave their religion and join the Christian religion. This is a very important decision
for any person. A Buddhist will weigh the losses and gains, disadvantages and advantages, risks and opportunities before a decision is made. Often, the church organization helps inspire a Buddhist to come to such a decision since the security and strength of the church organization can assist in assuring Buddhists that their future with the Christian church is secure and well cared for. Buddhists are looking for a stable organization that caters for all aspects of life, such as health, education, and death. It would be helpful to take a Buddhist to visit various church organizations such as schools, colleges, health centers, hospitals, and printing houses. It also a good idea to show Buddhists videos, DVDs, magazines, and photos about the church institutions and activities. Nobody would want to be part of something that is small and dying. Similarly, Buddhists will be impressed and encouraged if they know that they are going to become part of a global family of faith of thirteen million members in over two hundred nations. It feels like being part of a United Nations of Christians. Thus, messengers should not forget to share with their Buddhist contacts concerning the international dimensions of their church’s organizational structure.

Acceptance Stage

The Acceptance Stage is when the Buddhists have decided to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. They have completed the Bible studies and are convinced of the truth of the gospel. They are born again through baptism and are joining the family of faith. At this stage they will likely be cut off from their Buddhist links and associations. It is a crucial stage for the new believers as they begin their new journey of faith. The following section will suggest what roles the Christian
messenger should play in taking care of the new Christian converts and what biblical message is appropriate for them.

**Messenger**

At this Acceptance Stage of the Buddhist spiritual journey the messenger becomes a spiritual mentor to the new converts. The task of the messenger does not end at baptism, but rather enters a new phase, the task of discipleship. Like a new born baby the new Christian will need special spiritual care from the messenger who is now like a new parent. The tragedy is that, in most cases, the messengers assume that their task is completed when a Buddhist enters the baptismal tank. They believe that Buddhists are now Christians and should start converting others and are expected to behave like mature Christians. However, without proper spiritual care the retention rate of new converts will not be very good.

The new converts need personal friends who will help them to stay in the church. Undoubtedly, the messenger is usually their first friend, but unless they make other friends in the church within the first few months they most likely will not remain in the church. The conversion of Buddhist to the Christian religion means the loss of their former family and associates and quite often they are cut off from their existing support system in society. Unless there is an alternate family and new friends in the Christian church the converts will find it difficult to remain in their new faith. Their former friends often forsake them, branding them as traitors who have betrayed their family and national religion. The new Christians are not welcomed by their former associates in social gatherings and festivals. As Thai parties and festivals are replete
with alcoholic beverages their former friends and associates cannot understand why
suddenly their friends refuse to drink with them. It will take time for these former
friends to come to terms with the new principles and practices of these new Christians.
Meanwhile these new converts need new Christian friends and associates to fill the
vacuum that was created when they became Christians. Only someone who has gone
through this stage can understand how important it is to have as many new Christian
friends as soon as possible.

Message

At this Acceptance Stage of the Buddhist spiritual journey it is crucial that they
continue to receive Bible studies with the focus on discipleship and growing in Christ.
Bible studies on the various aspects of the Christian life and practices are most
appropriate. They need to understand why Christians live their lives differently from
the Buddhists, when and why they should join certain Buddhist ceremonies and
festivals, and why they do not eat certain foods.

Buddhists are easily attracted to some elements of a Christian lifestyle. They
particularly admire Christians who abstain from drinking alcohol and from using drugs
or other intoxicating substances. However, many Buddhist converts have problems
understanding why Adventist Christians do not eat pork or certain sea food. In
Thailand, pork and particularly seafood is considered a delicacy and a prestigious
food. They think that Adventist Christians follow food laws that are unreasonably
strict. This is because other Christians do not have such restrictions. It will take time
for the new converts to fully understand and appreciate this new lifestyle. What is
important here is that mature Adventists do not criticize the new Christians for failing to adhere to the food laws. In dealing with the food issue, the Apostle Paul advised the early Christians in Rome by saying, “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom 14:17-18). It is important to gently guide new converts to know the truth of healthy living and give them time to mature.

Another point that causes considerable strain on the new convert is Buddhist ceremonies and festivals. Most often, the convert has been told that once they become a Christian they are no longer allowed to attend or participate in any Buddhist ceremony or festival. Those who have tried to develop methods on how to evangelize Buddhists are well aware that converts often struggle with how to relate to former ceremonies and festival issues. The Buddhist’s life is full of rituals and ceremonies.1 It is not always clear how to determine what ceremony or festival the Buddhist converts should or should not participate in. On one hand, the Bible records that the Lord Jesus attended and even took part in a Jewish wedding ceremony where presumably alcoholic drinks were served as well (John 2:1-10). The Apostle Paul also complied with the Jewish purification ritual by shaving his head. He even took his fellow Greek believers to join a non-Christian ceremony (Acts 21:23-26). On the other hand, many Christian ceremonies and festivals, such as Christmas, Easter,

1Paul H. DeNeui, “Contextualizing with Thai Folk Buddhists,” in Sharing Jesus in the Buddhist World, edited by David Lin and Steve Spaulding (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2003), 135. The author is also a former Buddhist, thus he can verify the ties between the Buddhists and rituals or ceremonies.
Valentine's Day, baptism, weddings, and funerals have their origins in paganism. Why is it appropriate to condemn or forbid Buddhist ceremonies and festivals while Western secular ones are celebrated? This issue needs special attention by the Church as a whole. Leaving church members without guidelines will only create confusion, dissatisfaction, and misunderstanding especially among church members in the Buddhist world. Adventist churches in Buddhist countries need to deal with these issues and must have clear guidelines for church members.

Training in witnessing and evangelism also becomes a priority during this stage. It is commonly understood that the longer Buddhists have been Christians the fewer connections they will have with their Buddhist society. The longer they are believers, the less they think like unbelievers.¹ As they have more Christian friends, live or work in a Christian context they hardly have any connections outside the Christian circle. Therefore, their greatest effectiveness in witnessing is when they are still fresh in their Christian faith. They still are on fire and excited about their newfound faith, and they still have connections outside the church. A problem is that far too often we do not equip new converts with the necessary tools or knowledge to do witnessing. Often, our training consists only in merely encouraging them to witness. It is vital to train new Buddhist converts how to witness and to equip them as early as possible.

¹Rick Warren, The Purpose Driven Church (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 189.
Method

The new Christian converts need to be given opportunities to be involved in church worship programs. Far too often, the church will involve only trained members to take part in worship services, such as people who have been ordained as pastors, elders, deacons, and deaconesses, thereby ignoring newly converted members who without regular participation feel that they are not part of the church programs. They feel left out and unwanted. Often this feeling leads to dissatisfaction and inactivity.

Other programs such as church fellowships, social programs, church community outreach programs, prayer meetings, and training programs are also important for the new converts to participate in. The church should make every effort to include them in these programs according to their choices or abilities.

The church should also design follow-up programs to nurture its new converts. In the case of Mission College, there are follow-up programs at the Bangkok Nursing Campus which is a satellite campus of the college. At the present time, the Bangkok Nursing Campus does not have many faculty, staff, and students who are Christians. It is very important that a follow-up program be planned for those first year nursing students who have accepted Jesus Christ when they were at the Mission College Muaklek campus.

The Christian church needs to create Christian rituals, ceremonies, and festivals to replace the ones the new converts used to attend. Buddhists have rituals for every aspect and occasion of life, from birth to death and even after death. When
they are converted to Christianity they often feel an emptiness because of the lack of rituals and ceremonies. The church should try to replace those rituals and ceremonies with Christian ones. As only a few Christian ceremonies are practiced by the church at present, the church will need to create more for its Buddhist converts.

Closing Remarks

Since the emphasis in Buddhist evangelism is placed heavily on the messengers and how they should perform, there needs to be a new emphasis on how to combine that with community oriented outreach. It is vital that future ministers and missionaries be properly trained in community service and development work. There is a need to incorporate community development and social science subjects into the theology curriculum of our seminaries, colleges, and universities. Furthermore, ministers and missionaries to Buddhists need a greater knowledge and understanding of Buddhist doctrines and beliefs. The Buddhist center in Thailand should fulfill such a role in training church leaders of all departments, from children to adults, and missionaries in the area of Buddhist evangelism. There is also a real need for Bible lessons that are relevant and simple for Buddhists. Finally, with the help of the Holy Spirit there should be greater research on how to find better ways to reach out to Buddhists. The world is changing at a very fast pace and there is no reason why Buddhist people cannot also change. For this reason, no method or approach is timeless. And it is conceivable that any strategy must be modified and adjusted to suit each unique situation at a particular time.
CHAPTER V

BUDDHIST EVANGELISM: A CASE STUDY OF MISSION COLLEGE, THAILAND

Overview

In the last chapter, step-by-step suggestions on the role of the messenger, message, and method in Buddhist evangelism within each of the four stages of the Buddhist spiritual journey were made. In this chapter, a mission strategy for Buddhist evangelism at Mission College will be presented as a case study.

Mission College has two campuses. The main campus is situated in an exotic valley of the Muaklek district, in Saraburi province. The other campus, the Nursing Campus, is situated in Bangkok at the Mission Hospital (Bangkok Adventist Hospital) where more than 200 nursing students reside. The first year nursing students start their study at the main campus in Muaklek and then move to Bangkok after their first year. As of 2005, Mission College has recorded 843 students. 395 are international students and are mostly members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The college also offers a Thai program in Business, English, and Nursing studies with 449 Thai
students. Of these 449 Thai students 300 are nursing students. Almost all of the nursing students are Buddhists. Each year approximately ninety nursing students and forty business, education, and English as Second Language (ESL) students, begin their study at the Muaklek campus. The majority of these students are Buddhists. The goal is to develop a strategy to share the gospel message with these students. Experience has shown it normally takes several years for a Buddhist to make a decision to adopt Christianity. Since the nursing students will only be at the Muaklek campus for one year a strategy must be developed to reach these students with the gospel while they are there.

The project strategy is presented as a simple logframe (table 7). The logframe is an abbreviation of Logical Framework Approach (LFA) which is a methodology for planning, managing, and evaluating programs and projects. The logframe serves as a roadmap for a project, by providing a summary of all elements of a project such as the overall objective, the project purposes, the outputs or results, the activities, the verifiable indicators, the sources of verification, and the assumptions and inputs. Inputs will be explained separately in another section of the strategy. This terminology will be briefly explained in table 8. The terms and references are adapted from the Bond Network for International Development and the Project Cycle

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Management Training Courses Handbook. Some minor terms that are not included in this table will be explained individually as they appear.

Understanding the terminology used in the logframe is important. It will be easier to read the logframe from the bottom up, starting from the activities row. Each section of activities is tagged with a number which is correlated with the outputs. The numbers listed with the activities produce corresponding outputs. If the verifiable indicators, sources of verification, and assumptions are correct it is expected that the desired outputs will be produced and the project purpose and goal achieved.

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Table 7. Logical Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall Objective</th>
<th>Intervention Logic</th>
<th>Verifiable Indicators</th>
<th>Sources of Verification</th>
<th>Assumptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|                   | More Thai Buddhists accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and have a deeper relationship with Him | • Increased no. of Thai Buddhists baptized and remains faithful | • Records of baptisms at TAM.  
• Records of people leaving the church | There are Buddhist students at MC.  
• College leaders support the project |
| Project Purpose   | Thai Buddhist students’ conversion rate improved | • Increased no. of Buddhist students baptized annually | • Church records of baptism.  
• Chaplain’s annual report | Christians are willing to make friends with Buddhists and they accept Jesus |
| Results           | 1. Christian Relationships with Buddhist students improved | • Increase in Christian and Buddhist social interactions by 10 percent annually | • Student and faculty relationships survey  
• Record of social events conducted | Students study and better understand the message of salvation |
|                   | 2. Relevant Bible study lessons and rituals for Buddhists produced | • Seven new Bible lessons produced annually  
• Increase in students’ spiritual satisfaction | • Bible lessons relevancy survey  
• Student spiritual satisfaction survey | Enough funds available for programs  
• Buddhist students regularly attend spiritual programs |
|                   | 3. Culturally Sensitive Spiritual Programs (CSSP) conducted | • CSSP conducted regularly.  
• Increased student satisfaction with the programs | • Record of spiritual programs  
• Student satisfaction survey records | |
| Activities        | 1.1 Socialize with Buddhist students | Means:  
• Christian faculty and students  
• Spiritual materials and equipment | Costs:  
• Chaplain’s activities budget | College and private donors continue to support financially  
Christian faculty and students continue to commit to the project |
|                   | 1.2 Train Adventist students in friendship evangelism | (see activity and resource schedules) | | |
|                   | 1.3 Help and support Buddhist students | | | |
|                   | 2.1 Rewrite Bible lessons for Buddhists | | | |
|                   | 2.2 Create meaningful rituals and festivals. | | | |
|                   | 3.1 Conduct culturally sensitive spiritual programs | | | |
|                   | 3.2 Consult Buddhist converts on appropriateness of redesigned spiritual programs | | | |
Table 8. Terms and References

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TERM</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall Objective or Goal</td>
<td>The ultimate result to which the project is contributing. It is the wider impact of the project. In this case, the overall goal is the impact the project has in the context of the SDA church in Thailand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project purpose or specific objective</td>
<td>The immediate impact of the outcome of the project or the change that occurs if the project outputs are achieved. For this particular project it is the increased rate of baptisms at Mission College.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outputs or results</td>
<td>The specifically intended results of the project activities or the finished products of activities carried out at the end of the implementation period of the project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>The actual tasks required to producing the desired outputs or the specific tasks to be undertaken during the project’s life cycle in order to produce intended outputs or results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verifiable indicators</td>
<td>Also referred to as measurable indicators or objectively verifiable indicators (OVI) are quantitative and qualitative ways of measuring progress and whether project outputs; purpose and goal have been achieved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources of verification</td>
<td>Also called means of verification (MOV) is the information or data required to assess progress against indicators and their sources. They are the means by which the indicators or milestones will be recorded and made available to project management or those who evaluate project performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumptions</td>
<td>External factors or conditions which could affect the progress or success of the project, but over which the project manager has no direct control.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inputs</td>
<td>The materials, equipment, financial and human resources that are needed to carry out the activities of the project.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Description of Strategy

Overall Goal

The overall goal for the proposed project is to lead more Thai Buddhists to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and to have a deeper relationship with Him. As indicated in the previous chapter most of the Adventist baptisms are from animist and tribal religious backgrounds. By increasing the number of Buddhist
converts at Mission College the project will directly contribute to the growth of the Thai church. Since the Mission College project is a pilot project, the principles of the strategy could be used in other areas of Thailand and produce more growth in the church at large.

For the above goal to be achieved in Thailand it is expected that there will be a tangible increase in baptisms of those who come from Buddhist backgrounds. These new members will also find meaningful programs and rituals in the Adventist church in order to enhance their relationship with God. One can verify whether the goal has been achieved by looking at the baptismal records of the Thailand Adventist Mission. This project also assumes that those newly baptized members will remain faithful to God. This assumption needs to be verified by follow-up statistics. The impact of the project on the overall goal will only begin to be felt one year after the implementation of the project. However, for the goal to be fully achieved other similar projects, using the same principles, must be implemented throughout Thailand which will take several years to achieve.

Project Purpose

The purpose of the project is to lead more Buddhist students at Mission College to accept Jesus Christ as their Savior. It is expected that the baptismal rate among Buddhist converts will be increased by 10 percent annually, taking into consideration increased Buddhist student intakes. The project also takes into consideration the three facet approach to Buddhist evangelism as described earlier which aims to improve the messenger, the message, and the method.
One verifiable indicator for the project is that the baptismal rate of Buddhist converts at Mission College increases by 10 percent by May 2005. The Mission College academic year begins in September and ends in May each year with June and July being the summer school term. This proposed pilot project is scheduled to last for three years beginning in September 2004 and ending in August 2007. In order to verify this increase the Mission College church records and the Chaplain’s annual report will be consulted. For the purpose of the project to be achieved it is assumed that there will be at least the same number or more Buddhist students coming to study at Mission College and that the college will give due support to the project.

To achieve the above purpose the project will produce three major outputs. First, this project aims to improve the relationships between the Adventist students and staff and the Buddhist students at Mission College. Opportunities will be provided for Christian students and faculty to introduce their Buddhist friends to Jesus Christ.

Second, in the past Buddhist students have complained that the Christian message was too difficult for them to understand. As part of this project it is expected that a more relevant Bible lesson series for Buddhist students will be produced. As Buddhists learn religion from stories, rituals and festivals, the Christian ritual, cultural and festival issues will also be addressed to make them meaningful to Buddhists. Once the new Bible lessons are produced it is expected that Buddhist students will perform better in the “Fundamental Christian Teaching” course offered to all incoming Thai students at the college. This newly designed Bible course will also help them to enjoy their studies, find satisfaction in studying the Bible, help them will truly
understand the Christian message, and be inspired to accept Jesus as their personal Savior.

Third, the project also aims to produce culturally sensitive spiritual programs for the Buddhist context. The Thais are proud of their cultural and religious values, so they should not have to cease being Thai culturally once they have become Christian. Therefore, in order to attract more Thai students and enable them to become Christian and still be Thai, culturally sensitive spiritual programs must be produced and conducted for them. It is expected that the development of culturally sensitive spiritual programs, including community outreach programs, will improve the rate of attendance and satisfaction of Buddhist students. As an ultimate result, these programs will help them to realize that the Christian God is the God of people of every culture. It is also assumed that Buddhist students will enthusiastically attend and participate in these new programs.

**Implementation of Strategy**

The logframe (table 7), terms and references (table 8), the activity schedules (tables 9 and 10), which represent activities during the subsequent years, and a resource schedule (table 11), have been developed for further clarity, monitoring, and evaluation purposes.

**Messenger**

Referring to the Activity Schedule (see tables 9 and 10) the first group of activities aims to improve the relationships between the messenger and Buddhist students. In this case, the messengers are Christian faculty and students. It is planned
that faculty families will host regular social programs for students. It is expected that through these social programs friendships will be developed and bonding will take place between faculty and students. Mission College already provides favorable conditions for this activity in the sense that faculty and staff live on campus with the students. However, due to academic time constraints faculty and staff will only be able to host social programs during weekends. Friday night social programs will probably be preferable as students and faculty are free after vespers when no specific school activities are scheduled. Consultation with faculty and staff will be made first and a group of volunteers will be formed for this special evangelistic venture within the first quarter of the project. At least five faculty and staff families will be recruited to participate in this program. A special training session will be conducted for these hosts in developing friendships with students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>1st Qtr</th>
<th>2nd Qtr</th>
<th>3rd Qtr</th>
<th>4th Qtr</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Result:** 1. Relationships between SDA faculty & students and Buddhist students improved

**Activities:**

1. **Socialize with Buddhist students**
   - 1.1.1 Organize Faculty house social events
   - 1.1.2 Casually socialize with Buddhist students
   - 1.1.3 Play sports with Buddhist students

2. **Train Adventists with friendship ministry**
   - 2.1 Create Friendship Ministry team
   - 2.2 Train Friendship Ministry team

3. **Help Buddhist students with their studies**
   - 3.1.1 Organize a tutoring program
   - 3.1.2 Organize a counseling program

**Result:** 2. Relevant Bible study lessons and rituals for Buddhists produced

**Activities:**

2.1 **Rewrite Bible lessons in Buddhist context**
   - 2.1.1 Study SDA & Christian Bible lessons
   - 2.1.2 Compare them with Buddhist concepts
   - 2.1.3 Write new lessons for Buddhists

2.2 **Create meaningful rituals and festivals**
   - 2.2.1 Study SDA & Christian traditions and rituals
   - 2.2.2 Study Buddhist & Thai rituals
   - 2.2.3 Redesign Thai SDA rituals and festivals

**Result:** 3. Culturally sensitive spiritual programs conducted

**Activities:**

3.1 **Conduct culturally sensitive spiritual programs**
   - 3.1.1 Study Buddhists’ attitudes to programs
   - 3.1.2 Appoint Campus Ministry team members
   - 3.1.3 Procure materials for meaningful programs
   - 3.1.4 Conduct culturally sensitive spiritual programs
   - 3.1.5 Conduct community outreach programs

3.2 **Consult new Thai Christians on alternative rituals and ceremonies**
   - 3.2.1 Select consultation committee
   - 3.2.2 Approve alternative rituals and ceremonies

**Milestones:**

- 1 = Faculty House Social Program organized
- 2 = Friendship Ministry team created
- 3 = Friendship Ministry team trained
- 4 = Tutoring Program organized
- 5 = Counseling Program organized
- 6 = Initial study & comparison of Christian & Buddhist concepts completed
- 7 = Initial study of Christian & Buddhist rituals completed
- 8 = Study completed and Campus Ministry team appointed
- 9 = Materials for programs procured
- 10 = Consultation Committee appointed
Table 10. Activity Schedule (Subsequent Years)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>1st Qtr</th>
<th>2nd Qtr</th>
<th>3rd Qtr</th>
<th>4th Qtr</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Result: 1. Relationships between SDA faculty &amp; students and Buddhist students improved.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities: 1.1 Socialize with Buddhist students</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3.3 Casually socialize with Buddhist students</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3.4 Play sports with Buddhist students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Train Adventists with friendship ministry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.1 Create Friendship Ministry team</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1.2.2 Train Friendship Ministry team</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1.3 Help Buddhist students with their studies</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3.1 Organize a tutoring program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3.2 Organize a counseling program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Result: 2. Relevant Bible Study lessons and rituals for Buddhists produced</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities: 2.1 Rewrite Bible lessons in Buddhist context</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.1 Continue studying Christian Bible lessons</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.2 Compare them with Buddhist concepts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2.1.3 Continue writing new lessons for Buddhists</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Result: 3. Culturally Sensitive Spiritual programs conducted</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities: 3.1 Conduct cultural sensitive spiritual programs</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.1 Conduct culturally sensitive spiritual programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.2.3 Conduct community outreach programs</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milestones: 1 = Friendship Ministry team created</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 = Friendship Ministry team trained</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3 = Tutoring program organized</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 = Counseling program organized</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is the intention of this project to improve relationships, not to manipulate relationships for evangelism. Faculty and staff are not expected to rush into converting Buddhist students, but rather they are to continue fostering deeper relationships with them. Using the four stage approach these hosts will need to stay with the steps which will be introduced in the special training session. As it takes a full season for fruit to ripen so it also takes time for relationships to mature. When
opportunities occur these faculty and staff social hosts will be able to introduce their student friends to Jesus.

Faculty and staff hosting of only formal social programs will not be adequate to develop relationships with many Buddhist students. Not all Buddhist students enjoy participating in formal social programs. Even if everybody wanted to participate, we would not have enough faculty homes. For this reason it is also planned to encourage faculty and staff to intentionally socialize with Buddhist students outside the classroom setting. Faculty and staff can socialize with students in various ways such as eating lunch together in the cafeteria or simply visiting them in their dormitories, or when students sit around tables in front of their dormitories in the evenings. Another activity in this project is for the messenger to play sports with the Buddhist students. Playing sports is a casual and enjoyable activity. Often friendship and bonding can be developed among those playing together. These activities are only a first steps towards attracting Buddhist students to spiritual matters. It is not expected that any faculty or staff should deliberately try to push Christianity on the Buddhist students. In fact, if friendship is developed with the hidden agenda of making them Christian it is not ethical. Friendship should be used to love and care for others.

The project also aims to recruit and train Christian students for friendship evangelism. It recognizes that there are certain barriers between faculty and students that will limit their friendship. In Thai culture age and gender can be significant barriers in forming appropriate relationships. To overcome these barriers a group of Christian students will be invited and trained in friendship evangelism. It is hoped that what the faculty and staff cannot achieve, Christian students will be able to
accomplish. As students develop a friendship with their fellow students they will eventually be able to share their spiritual values.

Apart from socializing with the Buddhist students it is planned that faculty and staff will also take a special interest in helping their students with their studies which will also earn special appreciation and respect from them. There is a saying in Thai that for someone to pen nee boon khoon (owe a favor to someone) there is boon khoon (favor) to pay back. Since boon khoon cannot be measured it is hard to know when you have paid back enough. In this case, if the Buddhist students feel that they owe boon khoon to their Christian friends then their relationships have gone to a deeper level. It is hoped that they will also see Christ in these acts of kindness and unselfish support. The project also aims to support Buddhist students with a counseling and advice service. Apart from study problems students often have relationship problems with their boyfriends or girlfriends. It is appropriate to offer such counseling support to them as needed. There are also opportunities to share study techniques to help them perform better in their studies. With all these socializing aspects, playing sports, tutoring, and counseling Buddhist students, it is believed that special relationships and bonding between faculty and students will be improved. It is believed that these activities will provide opportunities for Christian faculty and staff to witness and share Jesus with the Buddhist students.

**Message**

It is now known why the Christian message was too difficult for Buddhists to understand. It was because the Buddhist worldview and religious concepts were not
taken into account when the Christian message was presented to them. As a result, Christians used terminology and spoke of religious concepts unfamiliar to Buddhists.

One of the aims of this project is to improve the Christian message by rewriting the Bible lessons for a Buddhist context. Rewriting the Bible lessons will require skill and the understanding of both the Christian and Buddhist religious concepts and will take time. It is planned to have the textbook for the Christian Beliefs course rewritten. At the moment, the Thai Christian Beliefs textbook is just a translated copy from an English language one. It is expected that the textbook will be complete in three years. The topics will be designed to address key religious issues in Buddhism and to bring Buddhists into a relationship with God as well introducing key beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The lessons will also be arranged in the order of Buddhist interests and from the known to the unknown.

The topic about God will be discussed first. This topic is necessary since the whole Christian belief is centered on God. If there is no God, there is no need to study about God.

This project also aims to create meaningful Christian rituals and festivals. Since Buddhism is a religion rich in rituals many Buddhists have felt that their lives lack meaning after becoming a Christian. It is believed that improving Christian rituals and festivals will enhance the Buddhist Christian’s spiritual life and improve their relationship with God. Rituals are important. For instance, Isaac followed the ritual of blessing his firstborn son. Once he realized that he was cheated and had blessed his younger son, Jacob, instead of his firstborn he then believed that he had no more blessing to give to Esau (Gen 27:1-40). That is how seriously he regarded that
particular ritual. The Buddhists have rituals for every aspect of life while Christians basically have only two rituals, namely baptism and the Lord’s Supper. There are many precedents in the Bible for rituals and ceremonies. This project aims to develop as many meaningful Christian rituals as possible for important aspects of life for which Thai Buddhists expect to have rituals. Towards the end of the project in 2007 it is aimed that some alternative rituals and festivals for Thai Buddhist Christians at Mission College will be introduced.

Method

Many aspects of Christian worship are very different from those practiced by Buddhists. The tradition of taking shoes off in a holy place is indeed biblical, but Christians often wear shoes to church and many even dress inappropriately. Buddhists think that Christians who do such things are disrespectful to God. Worship by standing up and sitting down so many times also puzzles many Buddhists since they have a prescribed sitting position as appropriate for worship. So the way Christians sit in worship is perceived by Buddhists as not showing respect to God.

The method of delivering a sacred message is also foreign to Thai Buddhists. Thai Buddhists learn religion through stories gently told by the monks. Christian “monks” often preach and shout like politicians campaigning for an election when they deliver their sacred message. Taking into account the Buddhist way of worship and the Thai culture this project aims to develop and conduct culturally sensitive spiritual programs at Mission College for Buddhist students.
Buddhists are community oriented. Therefore community service projects are attractive to Buddhist students. Being involved in community outreach projects is an act of worship most desired by the Lord. The Bible says, “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship” (Romans 12:1). This project will encourage Buddhist students to participate in community outreach projects. By being involved in the community outreach projects it is expected that many more Buddhist students will be spiritually in tune with God and be drawn closer to Him.

**Inputs**

In order to implement this project, two types of inputs, human and financial are needed. Details of these inputs are described in the resource schedule (table 11).

**Human Resources**

First, a project director will be appointed to oversee all aspects of the project and will be responsible for the project and all its activities. The project director will monitor the progress of the project, make reports, and also lead out in the evaluation process. Second, the College Church pastor will be asked to serve as a volunteer project associate director to provide support for the project director, spiritual guidance for students and to help supervise the project activities. Third, a campus ministry team will be elected to provide support in all activities and assume the leading role in conducting spiritual programs. The campus ministry team is a key to the success of the project as it will be involved in implementing the activities outlined in the project.
Financial Resources

As an army marches on its stomach so the project needs funds to operate. Without financial resources the project can achieve very little. Funds are expected to come from several sources. The main sponsor of this project will be Mission College. Since chaplaincy is a department of Mission College, the college is obliged to provide funds for spiritual activities. However, due to its other pressing needs the college is not expected to provide for all the spiritual activities as outlined in this project. Some activities will need to be funded by private donors.
Table 11. Resource Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Financial</th>
<th>Personnel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cost in USD</td>
<td>Who Pays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Result: 1. Relationships between SDA faculty &amp; students and Buddhist students improved.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Socialize with Buddhist students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.1 Organize faculty house social events</td>
<td>500.00</td>
<td>College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.1.1 Fund for faculty host family.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.2 Casually socialize with Buddhist students</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.3 Play sports with Buddhist students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.3.1 Fund for sport equipment.</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>Personal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Train Adventists in friendship ministry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.1 Create Friendship ministry team</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.2 Train Friendship ministry team</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Help Buddhist students with their studies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3.1 Organize tutoring programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.3.2 Organize counseling programs</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Result: 2. Produce relevant Bible study lessons and rituals for Buddhists</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Rewrite Bible lessons in a Buddhist context</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.1 Study SDA &amp; Christian Bible lessons</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.1.2 Compare them with Buddhist concepts</td>
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<td>2.1.3 Start writing lessons for Buddhists</td>
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<td>2.1.3.1 Print Bible lessons as textbook</td>
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<td>College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Create meaningful rituals and festivals</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.2.1 Study SDA &amp; Christian traditions and rituals</td>
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<td>2.2.2 Study Buddhist &amp; Thai rituals</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.3 Redesign Thai SDA rituals and festivals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Result: 3. Conduct culturally sensitive spiritual programs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Develop culturally sensitive spiritual programs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.1 Appoint Campus Ministry team members</td>
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<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.1.2 Procure materials for meaningful programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.1.2.1 Musical instruments</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.1.2.2 Computer</td>
<td>1,000.00</td>
<td>College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.2.3 DVD &amp; MP3 Player &amp; TV</td>
<td>300.00</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.3 Conduct cultural sensitive spiritual programs</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.4 Conduct nine community outreach programs</td>
<td>7,400.00</td>
<td>College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.4.1 Anghin Branch Sabbath School</td>
<td>700.00</td>
<td>Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.4.2 Botana Branch Sabbath School</td>
<td>500.00</td>
<td>And</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.4.3 Klangdong Branch Sabbath School</td>
<td>700.00</td>
<td>Private</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.1.4.4 Muaklek Hospital Visitation Branch</td>
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<td>donors</td>
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<td>3.1.4.5 Muaklek Primary School Branch</td>
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<td>3.1.4.6 Muaklek High School Branch</td>
<td>500.00</td>
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<td>3.1.4.7 M. Makeua Branch Sabbath School</td>
<td>400.00</td>
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Table 11. Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Financial</th>
<th>Personnel</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cost in USD</td>
<td>Who Pays?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PD</td>
<td>CP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.4.8 AIDS Hospice Branch</td>
<td>1,800.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.4.9 Bangkok Nursing Campus Branch</td>
<td>1,880.00</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Consult new Thai Christians on appropriateness of the redesigned spiritual programs</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.00 N/A L S S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.1 Select consultation committee</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.00 N/A L S S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.2 Approve new spiritual programs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Budget for the project</strong></td>
<td><strong>10,420.00</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key:
PD = Project Director
CP = Church Pastor
MT = Ministry Team
L = Leading Role
S = Support Role

The two major costs of the project are community outreach costs and spiritual program instrument costs. Apart from these two major costs, there is little expense in any of the other activities. Community outreach costs are basically transportation costs. Each project site is away from Mission College and distances range from two to one hundred sixty kilometers. There are not enough vehicles available to transport the students who will carry out these community outreach projects. Private vehicles from outside the college will have to assist. However, when vehicles are not available some projects will have to be cancelled. If this happens often, it will limit the effectiveness of the project. Ideally, for the community outreach projects to be functioning effectively, at least two extra utility vehicles are needed. These vehicles are needed to supplement the three college vehicles which are currently available for this work. It is assumed that these vehicles will continue to be available for the project use. However,
the college will have other commitments and the shortage of vehicles will be inevitable. When this occurs, the community outreach programs will be affected.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring Plan

Project monitoring is very important for the success of the project as it helps identify and solve implementation problems before the whole project becomes derailed. The monitoring plan is the day-to-day evaluation and assessment of the project implementation and helps keep the project on track. Monitoring is a management tool designed to keep the project focused on its purpose.

In this respect, it is planned to first analyze the project objectives, then review implement procedures, and make changes as necessary. As situations may change, the implementation plan will need to adapt to the changing environment. Indicators will also be reviewed during the monitoring process. All the activities will be monitored by the project director and staff. The project director assumes the leading role in the monitoring process since he will check the activity schedule and match it with the progress of the implementation process. The project director will also document the activities. Since most of the activities happen on site at Mission College they will be quite simple to monitor.

The church pastor will assist the project director to monitor the activities on a weekly basis. All programs at Mission College function as scheduled on a regular basis, except for social activities that offered on an occasional basis, since the monitors are also participating in the activities, the monitoring of these activities
occurs automatically and consistently done. However, community outreach projects are implemented at different sites. In this case, leaders of each community outreach project will report to the project director monthly about their progress.

Progress reports will be given to Mission College and private donors quarterly. Extra reports in the form of articles will also be published regularly in *Newsbyte*, the College newsletter. To meet the requirements of the Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) program, project progress reports will also be sent to the supervising professor on a monthly basis, usually at the end of each month. The progressive reports are designed to keep the professors aware of the ongoing progress or weaknesses of the project.

**Evaluation Plan**

A project without an evaluation plan is like planting a fruit tree without expecting fruit. "To evaluate something means literally to look at, and judge, its quality or value."¹ No one can determine the success of a project unless it is evaluated. Thus, the purpose of evaluation is to determine the achievements of a project against planned expectations and to reflect on and learn from its shortfalls to better design future projects. There are two approaches to evaluation: Formative Evaluation and Summative Evaluation. Formative Evaluation aims to improve the project by focusing on project activities, outputs, and short-term outcomes and making corrections when needed. Formative Evaluation is an ongoing process of information collection and analysis, assessing and making necessary decisions to improve and

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strengthen the implementation of the project. This approach to evaluation is for monitoring purposes. Summative Evaluation, however, focuses on the immediate project outcomes and impacts to determine the success of the planned implementation.\footnote{Ibid, 10-11.} Summative Evaluation is to determine the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, economic, and financial viability and sustainability of the project and its outcomes. Both approaches to evaluation will be applied to the Mission College Buddhist Evangelism Project. An initial implement and evaluation report will be written as part of the D.Min. paper by May 2005. However, the full evaluation report will be done by a team of external evaluators at the end of the project in August 2007.

**Context Evaluation**

In context evaluation the values of the project will be evaluated by looking at its environment, organizational structure, resources, and leadership support. Staff commitment to the project will also be assessed.

As described in the project and implementation plans, the success of the project will depend on several environmental factors. First, it depends on the endorsement and financial support of the College Administrators. Without their support the project will be severely limited and will not achieve its goal. Second, the project depends on the participation of faculty, staff, and students. Since the campus ministry teams have already been created I assume that they will continue to function and participate. Third, success depends on there being sufficient financial resources
for the project to be fully implemented. Finally, the success of the project depends on there being no major changes in the academic environment of the College or in the community which would affect the project such as the cessation of the Thai program. These context factors will be assessed and evaluated to match the assumptions and expectations of the project plan.

**Implementation Evaluation**

In this evaluation, activities outlined in the project activity and resource schedules will be evaluated. There are three areas of activities that are planned for implementation. First, activities that are related to improving the relationships between the messengers and the Buddhist students will be evaluated according to the measurable indicators. The evaluation will ask if all activities planned have been carried out effectively. Have there been any adjustments to the proposed activities? Have they produced the desired results? In the second relationship area, the action plan of social events at faculty homes will be checked to see if they have taken place. The project director will also observe whether socialization between Buddhist students and faculty and staff outside the classroom setting has taken place. Are the messengers playing sports with Buddhist students, and has the friendship seminar been carried out? Finally, there is an action plan to help Buddhist students with their studies by giving tutoring and counseling to them. All activities will be checked to see whether they have taken place.

The second area of the implementation evaluation focuses on the message aspect. The project aims to produce Bible lessons for Buddhists. First, there will be
an evaluation of current Adventist and Christian Bible lessons in light of the knowledge learned about Buddhist concepts. Then new lessons will be written. The project director will be checked to see if he has carried out according to the plan and time allocated in the activity schedule.

The third area of implementation evaluation will focus on the programs. The aim of the project is to develop culturally sensitive spiritual programs. The process will include recruiting team members, studying Buddhist attitudes to spiritual programs, as well as preparing and procuring materials and instruments to produce these culturally sensitive spiritual programs. All these activities will be checked and verified to ensure that they have taken place.

Outcome Evaluation

The ultimate outcome of this project is to see more Buddhist students at Mission College accepting Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. In order to realize that ultimate outcome the following three areas of outputs or results must be met and assumptions shown to be correct.

First, it is expected that relationships between Christian and Buddhist students will be improved. So in this area of evaluation, records of social events will be checked. Incidences of interactions between messengers and students will be observed. Friendship between messengers and students will be observed. A survey of student attitudes toward messengers will be conducted to determine the relationship atmosphere. Finally, after the relationships have been developed it is assumed that Buddhist students will be introduced to Christianity by their Christian friends. If this
has taken place Buddhist students will show more interest in spiritual matters. This can be observed, and a survey will be administered to find out Buddhist students’ interest in spiritual programs.

Second, another of the expected outcomes of the project is the production of Bible lessons for Buddhists. It is also expected that the Bible lessons will have been taught and Buddhist students will better understand the message of salvation. The new Bible lessons for Buddhists will be checked for their applicability and relevancy. The methods used to evaluate this area of implementation will be comparing the grades of the students in the Christian Beliefs class with student grades from previous years when the old Bible study approach was used. Are the new lessons are simpler and easier to understand than the old ones? If they are easier to understand than the old ones, the Buddhist students should perform better in class and therefore their grades should be better than those of the former students who had studied in the same class in past years. A survey of student attitudes toward the new lessons will also be conducted to determine their relevancy and content. If the lessons are relevant, the Buddhist students should express their satisfaction and approval of the lessons.

Third, it is expected that culturally sensitive spiritual programs will be produced and conducted. If there are culturally sensitive spiritual programs conducted, Buddhist students will have attended, and been satisfied with the programs. Thus, the outcome evaluation will look at the impact of the new culturally sensitive spiritual programs. A survey of Buddhist student satisfaction with the programs will be administered. If this survey reflects a positive picture it is then assumed that the
Buddhist students will enjoy attending and participating in the spiritual programs and be blessed by them.

Closing Remarks

It is expected that the final product of this project will be an increasing number of Buddhist people in Thailand who have accepted Jesus as their personal Savior and have experienced a deeper relationship with Him. In order to achieve this ultimate goal the messenger, the message, and the method, designed according to the relational approach, must produce the desired outcome as expected in this project. This means that the baptismal rate of Buddhist students at Mission College must be improved.

The overall emphasis of this strategy places the importance on the messengers and how they perform. Since relationships are a key to Buddhist evangelism the performance of the messenger is vital to the effectiveness of the project. However, apart from the messenger, the message and method are also equally important. This project has taken the three aspects of evangelism into account. All three aspects are to be implemented in the Buddhist context. Thus, if all goes according to plan and assumptions are accurate the desired objective should be realized. However, there are some aspects that are beyond the scope of this project. I would like to suggest the following actions for future action planning.

First, I would like to suggest that there is a need to have a community-oriented messenger. It is vital that future ministers and missionaries are properly trained in community service and development. Therefore I would strongly recommend that
community development and social science subjects be incorporated into the Adventist Theology curriculum of our seminaries, colleges, and universities.

Second, ministers and missionaries to Buddhists must be well equipped with knowledge and understanding of the stages of a Buddhist's spiritual journey and how to apply the suggested strategy. Once proven to be effective the strategy will be shared with the Buddhist Center and the Thailand Adventist Mission for implementation in other areas. The Buddhist Center in Thailand should take a special role in training existing ministers and missionaries in the area of Buddhist evangelism.

Third, there is a real need for Bible lessons to be specifically designed to be relevant for Buddhists. The Bible lessons for Buddhist students developed for this project will be designed as a textbook rather than for use as a personal set of Bible study lessons. And since the Christian Beliefs class is for only one semester, the lessons in the textbook will not cover all the Seventh-day Adventist fundamental beliefs. Therefore, there is still a need to develop personal Bible study lessons and Bible correspondence lessons for Buddhists in Thailand. Again, the Buddhist Center could take a prominent role in developing additional Bible lessons as specified above, and make them available for use in all the languages of the Buddhist world for ministers and missionaries to Buddhists.

Fourth, with the help of the Holy Spirit we need to continue to research and strive to find better ways to reach out to Buddhists. The world is changing at a very fast pace and there is no reason why Buddhists should not change. For this reason no method or approach will be timeless. Thus it is my hope that any strategy developed will be modified and adjusted to suit each unique situation at any particular time.
CHAPTER VI

MONITORING, REPORTING, AND EVALUATION

Overview

This paper was written from the point of view that relationships are vital to presenting the gospel to Buddhist people in Thailand. Based on this thesis it was found that there are four stages in presenting the gospel message to Buddhists. The first is the "Attention Stage" where efforts are made to direct the attention of Buddhists toward the messenger and the message. Then, the "Attraction Stage" is when Buddhists begin to be attracted to the messenger and the message. Third, the "Attachment Stage," is when Buddhists become attached to the messenger and the message and want to know more about the Christian faith. Finally, the "Acceptance Stage," is when Buddhists decide to accept the message as presented by the messenger and become baptized and join the Christian family. The thesis of this dissertation is that the role of the messenger, message, and method is different at each stage.

To find out if the relational approach to presenting the gospel message to Buddhist people in Thailand works, a case study was developed and tested at Mission College. The project strategy started in September 2004. It was expected that if the new approach was successful, it would increase the number of Buddhist students accepting Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. It was believed that these new
members would learn to grow in faith in a more culturally acceptable environment through the implementation of the project.

The implementation of the project has been monitored and data has been collected. The evaluation of the project will measure the effectiveness of the strategy as stated in the proposal. In Christian ministry, evaluation is not often done. In the case of this project, a mid-term evaluation is scheduled in March 2006, and a final evaluation of the project will be done in August 2007. An external evaluation team will be invited to evaluate the project. Participants for such evaluation should be external persons, who are familiar with the work in Thailand, but who are not directly involved in the implementation of the project. Such a team will provide assessment with greater objectivity.

Since the project is only a few months into implementation, only a progress report of the activities can be given. An initial self-assessment will also be provided. The lesson learned from this internal assessment, will help the project director to make necessary adjustments. All material collected will be made available to the evaluation team.

Implementation Report

The strategy developed in this paper was to be tested for three years on different groups of new students who came to study at the college. The project aims to produce three results by the end of the three year period: (1) improved relationships between Adventist faculty and students and Buddhist students, (2) relevant Bible study lessons and rituals for Buddhists produced, and (3) culturally sensitive spiritual
programs introduced. It was assumed that these objectives will increase the number of Buddhist students becoming Christians at Mission College. These programs and resources, after being field tested at Mission College, later be made available to Thai Adventist Christians to help them enjoy more meaningful culturally-tailored programs.

After ten months of implementation, a number of activities have been implemented according to schedule, but some were delayed. A few other activities have not yet been implemented or have been modified. This chapter will focus on reporting progress in three areas of the program objectives. First, it will report activities related to building up relationships between the messengers and the Buddhist students at Mission College. Second, it will look at how Buddhist students accepted the message. Finally, it will look at how Buddhist students view culturally sensitive spiritual programs conducted for them at Mission College.

**Messenger’s Activities**

The project proposed several activities designed to improve relationships between Buddhist students and Mission College faculty and staff and Adventist students.

**Socialize with Buddhist Students**

A social program called “Meet the Faculty,” which was integrated into the orientation program for new students, was carried out on Saturday night, 6 June 2004, for the summer student intake and on 5 September 2004 for the regular school year intake. Approximately 120 new and existing students were formed into twelve groups and invited to visit twelve faculty homes. Each home hosted two groups for 30-45
minutes. Each group of students arrived with two or three senior guides who were members of the Student Council (SC). Programs varied from house to house depending on the creativity of the faculty hosts. Most families started by introducing their family. Students also took turns to introduce themselves and say where they come from. Then, faculty would serve snacks and play some games with students. Students were also encouraged to continue visiting the homes of their hosts after the formal event.

This year, the “Meet the Faculty” program will be conducted on June 11, 2005. It is expected that at least 200 students will participate in the program. Based on the success of last year, additional faculty homes will need to be recruited.

As of now, seven regular social groups sponsored by faculty members are functioning and are fostering deeper relationships with students.¹ Each Friday and Saturday night these social meetings take place. As the program continues more faculty members will be recruited. Extra curricular interactions between faculty and students have also increased dramatically. Sporting activities between faculty and students are also now organized at least once a year. Numerous cultural and social programs are organized monthly. Cultural programs where students from different nationalities are invited to present some of their cultural activities, such as dancing, singing, and play are conducted once a quarter.

¹ Faculty members and their families who are hosting social groups are: Wayne Hamra, Rita Lampadan, Abel Pangan, Sovath Sim, Zse Chew Ted, George Kimani, and Khamsay Phetchareun. This represents 30 percent of all faculty families.
Sports such as soccer, basketball, and volleyball have become a regular daily event. Mr Tirat Somphan was in charge of those activities and supervised the games. Faculty sponsored sport clubs were also organized. A basketball team was organized in December 2004 and sponsored by Jesse Role, director of Mission College Media Center, and some teachers from Adventist International Mission School (AIMS). This team practiced regularly and occasionally had competitions with community teams from Muaklek and Pakchong districts. A volleyball team was also organized in March 2005, and sponsored by faculty members, Mr Sovath Sim, Computer Network administrator, and Khamsay Phetchareun, lecturer at the faculty of religious studies. This volleyball team has since been practicing on Saturday and Sunday nights. It has yet to compete with other teams from the community. A soccer team was also organized and sponsored by Tirat Samphan and Grieng-grai Waleesila, government liaison officer. The team has been practicing and will compete with a team from Saraburi in September 2005. Besides all these formal teams, faculty and staff play tennis and badminton with students on a daily basis. There are two tennis and four badminton available at Mission College. Often long queues are seen at the badminton courts as more students and staff enjoy the game. A plan is in place to renovate the old basketball court and increase the badminton courts to eight.

Other social programs such as community work, social games, and outings have also been implemented. Community work was organized to introduce new

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1A competition with a Pakchong High School team was held at Pakchong High School on 20 January 2005 and with a Muaklek District team at Mission College on 30 April 2005.
students to the community. On Sunday, 6 September 2004, the same group of 120 students who visited faculty homes the night before got involved in cleaning the Muaklek community. This event was attended by the Muaklek mayor and district officials who gave their water trucks and cleaning equipment and supervised our students, faculty, and staff from Mission College. This event attracted considerable community attention. Another Community cleaning project is scheduled for Sunday, 12 June 2005. This time there will be at least 200 students involved.

Social nights and games were also organized. Movie nights were organized by the deans on the last Saturday night of each month. Usually, humorous and thought-provoking films were shown. An average of eighty students attended the movie program. This is because students mostly prefer playing sports on Saturday night. Sabbath afternoon hiking was conducted once a quarter. Led by Zse Chew Ted, faculty of Science, a group of students, usually around fifteen to twenty went to nearby caves and mountains to enjoy walking in nature. The reason for the small number of students is because of the lack of availability of vehicles to transport them to the site.

**Train Adventists in Friendship Ministry**

The training did not start according to schedule. The first session did not start until March 2005. First, a Student Administration Strategic Planning Session was conducted on 18-20 March 2005, at the Royal Hill Golf Resort, Nakon Nayoke, when the project implementation plan was discussed and included in the Student Administration Department strategic plan. On 25-27 March 2005, at the Theptida
Resort, a Campus Ministries training program organized by the college chaplain and the project strategy was discussed with the new Campus Ministries teams. According to the strategy, three ministry focus teams were created. The first team is responsible for presenting Jesus through culturally sensitive spiritual programs. The second team is responsible for promoting friendships with Buddhist students and organizing group Bible studies, worships, and prayer activities. The third team is responsible for sharing Jesus with Buddhists through witnessing and community involvement.

Training for Friendship Evangelism was also conducted for all three ministry focus teams. These three Campus Ministries teams, regardless of their primary focus, have assisted faculty in making friends with Buddhist students through various social and extra curricula programs. They assisted in the “Meet the Faculty” social programs, community cleaning project and socio-cultural events. Their primary responsibilities, however, are spiritual events such as festivals of faith, Bible study and prayer groups, and community outreach programs.

Prior to the seminars, the former Campus Ministries teams were already at work. On 4-10 October 2004 they were responsible in conducting the first Festival of Faith of the school year, formerly called Week of Prayer. They organized music and prayer programs for the event. A team of participants were selected from students of various backgrounds. The Festival of Faith was presented in a new way. Contemporary English songs were mostly used and sermons delivered by Jeba Moses from Cincinnati, USA, followed. At the conclusion of the first Festival of Faith, thirteen students were baptized. A study was conducted to survey student satisfaction with the program. Details of which will be discussed in the evaluation section.
During the second Festival of Faith, conducted on 7-13 February 2005, efforts were made by the same ministry team to implement culturally sensitive music. Thai songs were introduced equally with English and a drum set was added to the music. At the end of that Festival of Faith six students were baptized. Thirty-five students also expressed their desire to study the Bible and prepare for future baptism. Eight English speaking students are receiving Bible studies with the church pastor, Abel Pangan, in his Sabbath morning baptismal class. Five Thai students are studying with Thai pastor Wirachai Annekkunnawut. Two Thai students were later baptized on 23 April 2005 by Khamsay Phetchareun and three Thai students were baptized on 28 May 2005 by Annekkhunnawut. A survey was conducted after each of the Festival of Faith events in order to find out how effective they were for the students.

Help Buddhist Students with their Studies

A tutoring program was conducted by several lecturers. Some nursing students in particular needed more help with their science subjects. Extra evening classes were made available to help them improve their academic performance. Jarurat Srirattanaprapat offers tutoring class on Thursday nights. Since Srirattanaprapat is the nursing dean and her subject deals directly with nursing practices almost all eighty-two nursing students attended this tutoring. Kamolnan Lakrod offered her tutoring in Biology on Tuesday nights and around ten nursing students who were weak in this subject attended. Pinyaphat Srikrisinha, a physics and mathematics lecturer, offered her tutoring help on demand for those who struggled academically in her class. Other
lecturers such as Marlise Schneider, Marie Ntep Ntep, and Ani Gjika, who are teaching English, also offered occasional tutoring by appointment for the students.

One session on how to study better was also organized for new students in September 2004 by the chaplain's office and counseling services. Around eighty students, and approximately ten Thai students, attended. Individual counseling service on academic problems was also made available for new students. Around thirty students have used this service between September 2004 and May 2005. One Buddhist nursing student, who was about to drop out of her class, received this help. She later became interested in spiritual matters and accepted Jesus as her personal Savior. She is now one of the many happy Adventist nursing students.

Self Evaluation

As part of a Mission College self-study program a survey of faculty and staff involvement in spiritual programs was conducted in November 2004. It was found that 66 percent of faculty and staff indicated that they share their faith with students at least once per week. Some 86 percent of faculty and staff socialized with students regularly, with an average of ten students per month. About 78 percent said that they maintain friendship with an average of 13 students.

About 48 percent of faculty and staff indicated that they regularly introduce students to Jesus Christ, which amounts to an average of 12 percent of the students are being introduced to Jesus. Out of those, an average of 5 percent of the students

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1See appendix 1, p. 188, for questionnaire. Detailed analysis of all surveys is available on request.
accepted Jesus Christ and were baptized.\textsuperscript{1} Regular baptismal programs are being conducted almost every month. In 2003 there were thirty students and staff members baptized, while fifty have been baptized in 2004 on both campuses. Table 11 shows the baptisms from 1999 to 2005 on both campuses.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Muaklek Campus</th>
<th>Bangkok Campus</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
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<tr>
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<td>24</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Message Development

In an effort to improve the message, a revised textbook for the Christian Beliefs class was produced. The textbook, with twenty lessons, was originally produced in 2003.\textsuperscript{2} As part of this project, the partial revision was completed in December 2004, makes it more suitable for Buddhist students. The order of the lessons was changed to create a more logical sequence for Buddhist students. The

\textsuperscript{1}Only questionnaire is made available, p. 188. Copy of detailed analysis is available on request.

partially revised edition has been used as the textbook in the Christian Beliefs class since January 2005.

**Rewriting Textbook**

Buddhist literature was consulted, and Buddhist terminology was used, in an attempt to make the Bible lessons more readable to Buddhists. A sample translation of the first lesson is provided as a reference in the appendix.¹ In order to learn from others who are working with Buddhists, the project director also attended a Buddhist Evangelism seminar conducted by the South, East and Southeast Asia Network (SEANET) in Chiang Mai, Northern Thailand, on January 28-30, 2005. The presentations and discussions helped improve understanding of how to evangelize Buddhists.

**Presenting Message**

The revised Christian Beliefs textbook was introduced during the Spring Semester 2005 to 125 students. The lessons were assessed by a variety of means. It was found that students performed better than in the previous year. In 2004, only 18 percent of nursing students received grade A, while 38 percent of the 2005 class receive A grade.

¹See appendix 2, p. 205.
Evaluation

At the end of the Christian Beliefs course, a survey was conducted to determine the effectiveness of the textbook and the understanding of the message.\(^1\) 88 percent of respondents said that the textbook was good while 12 percent indicated that the textbook needed improvement. Reflecting on the outcomes of the survey, Elizabeth Role recommends that Mission College takes a special interest in promoting Christian teaching.\(^2\)

Program Methods

It was an aim of the project to conduct culturally sensitive spiritual programs throughout the school year. The college has at least 10 spiritual programs per week. Programs conducted by the chaplain’s office include chapel on Tuesday morning, combined worship on Wednesday night, vespers on Friday night and community outreach programs. The chaplain is also involved in organizing the church worship programs. Programs that the chaplain has limited influence on are the dormitory worships.

Culturally Sensitive Spiritual Programs

A number of religious programs were presented that endeavored to implement culturally appropriate forms. A Campus Ministries Program team was appointed in

\(^1\)See appendix 1, p. 191, for questionnaire. Detailed analysis is available on request.

2003 to design and implement these programs. Musical instruments and sound equipment were acquired to make it possible to introduce contemporary Thai music during the second Festival of Faith in February 2005.

A community outreach program is being conducted as part of this project. In 2005, eleven community outreach activities are conducted by Mission College students on a weekly basis. An AIDS Hospice and Nursing Follow-up project is organized on a fortnightly basis. Approximately 100 out of the 645 students on the Muaklek campus join the outreach ministry each week.

**Christian Functional Rituals and Ceremonies**

The activity to formulate Christian functional rituals and ceremonies has not yet been carried out. It was felt that this part of the project needed further research and consultation with the Thailand Adventist Mission. Therefore, this activity will not be implemented during the period of this project, due to lack of expertise and research.

**Evaluation**

Two studies were conducted to determine students’ satisfaction with the spiritual programs offered during 2004 and 2005. Both studies were conducted after the Festivals of Faith since there was a relatively high attendance during the programs which made it more convenient to do the survey.

One survey was conducted after the first Festival of Faith in November 2004.\(^1\)

The majority of students indicated that they liked the song service and the Christian

\(^1\)See appendix 1, p. 187, for questionnaire. Detailed analysis is available on request.
music programs more than any other program. 65 percent of all students and 73 percent of Thai students reported that they liked the music program most. Bear in mind that only 9 to 10 percent of the students stated that they like the other spiritual programs like Sabbath School, sermons, Bible study, prayer meeting, and community outreach. This indicates that students appreciated the new approach to spiritual programs.

Another study was conducted after the second Festival of Faith in February 2005. It was noted that 91 percent of students and staff were satisfied with the program, with 35 per cent very satisfied. 93 per cent indicated that they really like the music program, with 50 per cent very satisfied. Note there was an increase in satisfaction from 65 percent to 93 percent of those who liked the music program. This is a remarkable increase in approval and satisfaction rate and indicates appreciation for the Thai music that was introduced in the second “Festival of Faith.”

**Lessons Learned**

After the initial field testing of the above events it was felt that several aspects need improvement and change.

1. The relationship building program needs to be improved. More faculty and staff and Adventist students need to be encouraged to join the program. The project has initially proven that relationships are indeed an important key presenting the gospel message to Buddhist people in Thailand.

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1See appendix 1, p. 190. Detailed analysis is available on request.
2. The textbook for the Christian Beliefs class needs to be further improved. The author still found it difficult to overcome his Western education background and write Bible lessons suitable for a Buddhist context. The lessons were still largely Western in outlook and content. Using a story style approach should be considered. As already stated earlier in the paper, Buddhists learn their religion through stories, but the author still failed to utilize his own findings. Bible texts were also used extensively very early in the textbook. Buddhists do not know how to open the Bible to look for texts, so a proof text approach is difficult and even irrelevant for them. An appropriate introduction to the Bible must be given before texts are used. The author needs to use fewer Bible texts and more Bible stories in the lessons in order to capture the Buddhist students' attention.

3. There were some problems with conducting "authentic" culturally sensitive spiritual programs. With thirty-four nationalities represented at Mission College, no culturally sensitive program would be appreciated by all students of all cultures, so which cultures would be addressed? In fact, it was found that the modern youth culture was the most prevalent culture at Mission College. It was shown clearly that contemporary music is preferred by most of the students. However, certain teachers do not like contemporary Christian music. The music issue will not go away easily, but those who insist on using only Western church music for religious meetings should realize that such a decision will have a negative affect on the effort to reach out to Buddhist students.

Another problem with conducting spiritual programs at Mission College is the language barrier. Often, organizers tend to overlook the importance of translating
their programs into Thai. They assume that everybody understands English. When this happens, the Thai Buddhist students lose interest in listening to the message. One dilemma is that there are not many translators available, especially from Thai into English. The very few who are available are often asked to translate so often it becomes a burden for them. If those who are less competent translate, the programs lose their dynamic context.

**Recommendations**

In order for the project to continue to produce the kinds of results intended, the followings adjustments are recommended:

1. Concerning the messenger, it has initially been proven that relationships help improve the effectiveness of Christian witness to Buddhists. Although it is still too early to be definite at this stage, it seems that for the project to be successfully implemented, the social groups sponsored by faculty and the social interaction between faculty, staff and Buddhist students should be continued and even increased.

2. Regarding the message, it is suggested from the survey data that the textbook needs further improvement. Further studies on Buddhist beliefs and methods of communicating religious concepts are needed. Lessons produced by the Buddhist Study Center should also be used. Attempts should be made to teach Buddhists about the Christian faith using more stories since Buddhists learn their religion more easily through illustrations.

3. Regarding the method, though high satisfaction was expressed by students it is recommended that cultural elements continue to be utilized to improve the
effectiveness and appropriateness of spiritual programs. It is recommended that Thai musical groups be formed and integrated into the spiritual programs at Mission College.

4. It is also recommended that the project director dialogues with the Buddhist Study Center and the Thailand Adventist Mission to research alternative rituals and ceremonies for Thai Christians.

5. It is recommended that the project director, who is now a full-time lecturer and no longer works as college chaplain, continues to work with the new chaplain to supervise the project implementation.

6. It is also recommended that Adventist Buddhist Study Center and Thailand Adventist Mission collaborate with the Mission College initiative, in order to find ways to transfer some of the lessons learned to the work of the entire mission in Thailand.
APPENDIX 1

A Survey on Buddhist Attitudes towards Christianity
Questionnaire

(แบบสอบถาม)

Please answer the following questions by putting a cross (X) in the appropriate boxes.
กรุณาตอบคำถามต่อไปนี้ด้วยการภาคครึ่งวงมาญ (x)
inช่องว่างที่เหมาะสม

Your age: _____  Sex: Male ☐ Female ☐
อายุ เพศ ชาย หญิง

Are you a Christian?  Yes ☐ (Please start with Q. 1 เช็คอีทช่อง 1
เป็นต้นไป)

Yes ☐ (Please start with Q. 3 เช็คอีทช่อง
3 เป็นต้นไป)

1. How did you first learn about Christianity?
เรียนรู้เกี่ยวกับคริสต์ศีลธรรมแรกได้อย่างไร
☐ From Christian friends จากเพื่อนคริสต์ศีลธรรม
☐ From Christian books, magazines, or tracts จากไปสนิทคริสต์ศีลธรรม
☐ From a Christian relative จากญาติที่เป็นคริสต์ศีลธรรม
☐ At a Christian meeting จากการประชุมประจำวันของคริสต์ศีลธรรม
☐ At a Christian institution จากสถาบันของคริสต์ศีลธรรม
☐ Other อื่น ๆ ___________________________________

2. What was the most influential factor in your decision to accept Jesus?
อะไรเป็นแรงผลักดันให้ทานตัดสินใจรับอาษาพระคริสต์
☐ Experiencing God ประสบการณ์กับพระเจ้า
☐ Liking the Christian lifestyle ชอบวิถีชีวิตแบบคริสต์ศีลธรรม
☐ Knowing God is real รู้ว่าพระเจ้ามีจริง
☐ Knowing Jesus is the Savior รู้ว่าพระเยซูคือองค์พระเจ้าซึ่งมีจริง ๆ
☐ Other อื่น ๆ ___________________________________
3. What is the most important obstacle stopping you from accepting Jesus?
- Family pressures
- The Christian lifestyle
- Feeling no need to change religion
- Alienation from society
- Other

4. What do you think Christians should do in evangelism?
- Make their message relevant in the Buddhist context
- Have a personal interest in others
- Other

5. Why do you think Thai Buddhists do not accept Jesus?
- Belief that Christianity is a Western religion
- Lack of understanding of Christianity
- No desire to change their religion
- Other
Results of a Survey on Buddhist Attitudes Towards Christianity

### Personal Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Christian</th>
<th>Non-Christian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>155</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>15-20</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94</td>
<td>21-35</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>36+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. How did you first learn about Christianity?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Christian</th>
<th>Non-Christian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From Christian friends</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Christian Literature/Radio</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Christian Parents/Relatives</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Christian Meetings</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Christian Institution</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Christian pastor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Searching</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. What was the main influential factor in your decision to become Christian?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Christian</th>
<th>Non-Christian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experienced God/Desire to experience Him</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>48.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like Christian lifestyle</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>33.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know that God exists</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know that Jesus is the Savior</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. What is the most important obstacle that prevents you from becoming Christian?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Obstacle</th>
<th>Christian</th>
<th>Non-Christian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family does not give permission to become Christian</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian lifestyle is too strict</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>18.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society pressure/Afraid of being disowned</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inconsistency of Christians (do not live out their faith)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel the need to remain Buddhist</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yet to know about God</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No obstacle</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>41.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. What do you think Christians should do to reach out to Buddhists?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Christian</th>
<th>Non-Christian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Make the message simple and relevant to Buddhists</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>33.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay attention to Buddhist physical &amp; spiritual needs</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>56.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live a good life</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasize experience with God</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 5. Why Thai Buddhists find it hard to become Christians?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christianity is seen as a western religion</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't understand Christianity</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>42.6%</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>33.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't see the need to change religion</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>58.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't see Christ in Christians</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thai should be Buddhist</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A Survey on Spiritual Programs

Questionnaire

You are...

___ Male  ___ Female  ___ New Student  ___ Existing Student
___ Church member  ___ Non church member

To help us improve our spiritual programs please help us by answering the questions below. Please rate the program by writing numbers from 1 to 10, with 1 being the worst and 10 the best.

___ Friday Vespers
___ Sabbath School program
___ Sabbath Worship program
___ Sabbath Community Outreach program
___ Adventist Youth (AY) program (Sabbath Evening program)
___ Chapel program
___ Dormitory Worship program

What do you like most about the worship programs?

___ Singing/Music program
    ___ Contemporary music
    ___ Church hymns
___ Sermon
___ Children Story
___ Prayer
___ Special Music
___ Thai Worship program
___ International Worship program
___ Combined (Translated Worship program)
A Survey on Faculty and Staff Participation in Spiritual Programs

Questionnaire

You are: [ ] Administrator [ ] Faculty [ ] Staff
[ ] Thai National [ ] International

1. In the past year, how often did you participate in these spiritual programs? (Average per month) Please write number 1, 2, 3 or 4.

[ ] Monday Faculty/Staff Worship
[ ] Tuesday Chapel
[ ] Wednesday Combined Worship
[ ] Friday Vespers
[ ] Sabbath School
[ ] Church Worship
[ ] Sabbath Afternoon Student Outreach
[ ] Adventist Youth Worship (AY)

2. Do you currently run/participate in other spiritual activities at your or other faculty's home? Please mark [x] in boxes below.

[ ] Bible study group
[ ] Seminar group
[ ] Fellowship group
[ ] Social group
[ ] Other, please specify _______________________

3. How often do you share your faith with non-SDA students? Please estimate on average per week.

[ ] per week

4. How often do you socialize with students? For example, playing sports, eating out, social get-together, having party with students, etc... Please average the number per month.

[ ] per month

5. How many student friends do you have and maintain? _______

6. How many students have you introduced to Jesus Christ, in 2004? ______

7. How many of the students you introduced to Jesus were actually baptized? ______
A Survey of Student's Participation in Spiritual Programs

Questionnaire

Please help us fulfill our responsibility by answering the questions below.

You are: [ ] Thai Speaking Student [ ] International Student
[ ] SDA [ ] Non-SDA
[ ] Male [ ] Female

1. How often have you participated in spiritual or “worship” programs?
[ ] More than 5 times per week
[ ] Just 5 times per week
[ ] Less than 5 times per week

2. How many times per month have you participated in Student Community Outreach programs such as Branch Sabbath School, AIDS Hospice, Hospital Singing? Please circle one.
1 2 3 4

How satisfied are you with the program you are involved in? Please circle one.
1. (Dissatisfied) 2. (Less satisfied)
3. (Somewhat satisfied) 4. (Very satisfied)

3. Have you actively taken part in organizing or participating (not just attending) any of the additional programs listed below this past year? Please tick one or more as applicable to you.
[ ] Church Building Project
[ ] Evangelistic Project
[ ] Prayer Group (small group)
[ ] Youth/Pathfinder Project
[ ] Week of Prayer
[ ] Personal Witnessing
[ ] Visitation Team
[ ] Other _______________

4. What spiritual program do you like most? (Please tick only ONE box)
[ ] Song Service (Music Program)
[ ] Spiritual Talk (Sermon)
[ ] Bible Study
[ ] Sabbath School
[ ] Community Outreach Program
[ ] Prayer Meeting
[ ] Other _______________
Satisfaction Survey on Festival of Faith 2

Questionnaire แบบสำรวจความพึงพอใจ

To help us improve spiritual programs for your own benefit please kindly answer survey questions below. Please use the scale below to rate your satisfaction.

เพื่อช่วยให้พวกเราก้าวกระฉับรายการฝ่ายจิตวิญญาณในครั้งต่อไปให้ดีขึ้น กรุณาตอบคำถามในแบบสำรวจนี้ โปรดใช้มาตราฐานการให้คะแนนความพึงพอใจของล่าง

-2 Very Dissatisfied น ไม่พอใจมาก 0 No Comment ไม่มีความเห็น +2 Very Satisfied พอใจมาก  
-1 Dissatisfied ไม่พอใจ 0 Satisfied พอใจ  
+1 Satisfied พอใจ

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program:</th>
<th>รายการ</th>
<th>Rating คะแนน</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall program</td>
<td>รายการโดยรวมทั้งหมด</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Music:</td>
<td>รายการดนตรีทั้งหมด</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thai Music</td>
<td>เพลงไทย</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Music</td>
<td>เพลงนานาชาติ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Music</td>
<td>เพลงพิเศษ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sermons:</td>
<td>การเทศน้า</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall theme</td>
<td>โดยรวมทั้งหมด</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevancy</td>
<td>ความหมายจะสมกับชีวิตประจำวัน</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Preachers:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dolly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shimona</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juji</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Randy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tresor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somchai</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apinan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min Min</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bayu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A Survey for Christian Beliefs Class

Questionnaire

You are: [ ] Nursing Student [ ] General Student [ ] Christian [ ] Buddhist [ ] Other [ ] Male [ ] Female

Please rate the following questions by giving numbers:
1 = Need serious improvement 2 = Need some improvement 3 = Good 4 = Very Good 5 = Excellent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What do you think about the textbook?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What do you think about the delivery or teaching?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What do you think about the teaching of Christianity?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please rate the following questions by giving numbers:
1 = No 2 = A Little 3 = Not sure 4 = Yes 5 = Yes, very much

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. Did you believe in God before studying this course?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Do you now believe in God or that He exists?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Would you like to accept Jesus as your personal Savior?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. If “No”, what do you think is a problem preventing you from accepting Jesus?
   [ ] Family Prohibition ครอบครัวไม่สนับสนุน [ ] Not ready as yet ยังไม่พร้อม [ ] No need to change religion ไม่ยอมเปลี่ยนศาสนา [ ] Yet to fully understand Christianity ยังไม่เข้าใจคำสอนคริสต์ศาสนาที่ควร
[ ] Other, please explain อื่น ๆ โปรดอธิบาย
APPENDIX 2

Teaching Christianity: A Case Study

by Elizabeth Role

Introduction

Adventist education imparts more than academic knowledge. It fosters a balanced development of the whole person—spiritually, intellectually, physically, and socially—and seeks to develop a life of faith in God and respect for the dignity of all human beings. Thus, Adventist institutions of higher education provide students a unique environment needed in pursuit of learning the arts, humanities and religion, sciences and various professions, within the perspective of the Adventist philosophy of education and spiritual commitment. Students completing the tertiary level at an Adventist institution should have had the opportunity to commit themselves to God and therefore live a principled life in accordance with His will, with a desire to experience and support the message and mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. (General Conference Policy Manual, Education Departmental Policies, 2003).

In consonance with the Seventh-day Adventist philosophy of education, the general education curriculum of Mission College is designed to transmit a distinctive common heritage and develop the student in spirit, values, and social abilities. One of the objectives of the general education curriculum is for students to encounter a Christian worldview of knowledge that will give the opportunity to develop an understanding of God and the value of Scripture as resources for giving meaning to
life and personal spiritual growth and development (Academic Bulletin, Mission College, 2003-2004). One strategy to accomplish the objective stated is the inclusion of religion courses in the general education requirements for all degree courses offered by the college, both in the Thai and international programs.

The Survey

Every student in the Thai-medium programs is required to take the course Fundamental Beliefs (Christianity). This subject was offered during the second semester 2004-2005 and was taught by the college chaplain, Pastor Khamsay Phetchareun.

Before the end of the second semester, the lecturer conducted a survey among the students of the class with the following purposes:

1. To obtain students' feedback on the textbook, the delivery or teaching, and the teaching of Christianity.
2. To determine the effect of studying the course on students' belief in God.
3. To identify students' interest in accepting Jesus as their personal Savior and the problems related to this issue.

Profile of the Respondents

There were 68 students who participated in the study by responding to the survey questionnaire. As shown in figures 1, 2, and 3, the majority of the respondents were nursing students (42 of 68). The other students were accounting, management, and English majors.
Figure 1. Course Major

- Nursing: 62%
- Others: 38%

Figure 2. Gender

- Male: 15%
- Female: 64%
- Not indicated: 21%

Figure 3. Religion

- Buddhist: 58%
- Christian: 29%
- Not indicated: 13%
There were more female respondents than males, which followed from the fact that most nursing students are females. A greater number of students enrolled in the class were Buddhists (39) compared to the number of Christians (20) while 9 (13 percent) of them did not indicate their religion.

Teaching Christian Beliefs

Figure 4 presents the frequency of students' rating on the textbook, the delivery or teaching, and the teaching of Christianity. The scale used in rating is as follows:

1 – Needs serious improvement
2 – Needs some improvement
3 – Good
4 – Very good
5 – Excellent

Figure 4. Students' Evaluation
The Textbook

The textbook used in the class was a compilation on fundamental beliefs of Christianity prepared by the lecturer, Pastor Khamsay Phetchareun. The students rated the textbook at an average of 3.5, which is very good, and a standard deviation of 0.837. Although a great majority of the students was very positive on the textbook used, it is worthy of note that there were 8 students (11.8 percent) who saw a need for improvement.

The Delivery or Teaching

The students appreciated the way the lecturer taught them as shown by a mean rating of 3.6. There was only 1 student who sensed that an improvement was needed. A small standard deviation of 0.674 shows that the students were homogeneous in their positive feedback toward the delivery or teaching of the course.

Impact of the Teaching of Christianity

The average rating of the students on the teaching of Christianity was 3.94 with a standard deviation of 0.770. The figure above shows that most of the students, regardless of religion, were positive about the course. This is an overwhelming response, indeed.
Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What do you think about the textbook?</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>0.837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you think about the teaching of Christianity?</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you think about the delivery or teaching?</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>0.674</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall

Table 2 presents the students' response to the questions: Did you believe in God before studying this course and Do you believe in God or that He exists now?

Table 2. Frequency of Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did/do you believe in God or that He exists?</th>
<th>Before Studying the Course</th>
<th>After Studying the Course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A little</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>30.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>26.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, very much</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in the table, before studying the course, 5 (7.4 percent) students categorically stated that they did not believe in God and 21 (30.9 percent) reported a little belief. However, after studying the course, a majority of the respondents (62
percent) reported that they believe in or in the existence of God, in one way or another. There was a remarkable decrease in the number of students who expressed a little belief in God and a remarkable increase in the number of those who became very positive in their belief after studying the course. Although there was an increase in the number of students who were not sure of their position, there was no more student who reported unbelief after studying the course.

The frequencies shown in table 2 can be better understood with the data presented in tables 3 and 4. The following scale was used to quantify students' responses:

1 – No
2 – A Little
3 – Not Sure
4 – Yes
5 – Yes, very much

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics (Overall)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired Samples Statistics</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did you believe in God before studying this course?</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>1.223</td>
<td>.150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you believe in God or that He exists now?</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>.975</td>
<td>.120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4. Test of Differences (Overall)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired Differences</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1</td>
<td>-0.65</td>
<td>1.015</td>
<td>0.125</td>
<td>-5.214</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you believe in God before studying this course? - Do you believe in God or that He exists now?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The mean response to the question about their belief in God before studying the course was 3.17, which was within the uncertainty level, with a standard deviation of 1.223. After studying the course, the mean response rose to 3.82, which was toward a positive state, with a standard deviation of 0.975. The decrease in standard deviation shows that the students’ responses to the latter question are more homogeneous than the former.

The paired samples t-test of differences in table 4 shows that there is a significant difference, with a p-value of 0.00, in the mean responses of the students to belief in God or in His existence before and after studying the course. This means that the course of study has opened to the minds of the students that God exists.

Christians

The descriptive statistics and test of differences in responses among the Christian students in the class are shown in tables 5 and 6.
Table 5. Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired Samples Statistics (^a)</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1 Did you believe in God before studying this course?</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>.769</td>
<td>.176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you believe in God or that He exists now?</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>.597</td>
<td>.137</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) Religion = Christian

Table 6. Test of Differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired Samples Test (^a)</th>
<th>Paired Differences</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did you believe in God before studying this course? - Do you believe in God or that He exists now?</td>
<td>-.21</td>
<td>.419</td>
<td>.096</td>
<td>-2.191</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) Religion = Christian

The statistical analysis provided evidence that studying the course had a positive effect even among Christian students. The course of study strengthened their belief in God as revealed in the increase of their mean response from 4.42 (before studying the course) to 4.63 (after studying the course). The mean difference is statistically significant at \(\alpha = 0.05\).

Buddhists

Tables 7 and 8 present the descriptive statistics and test of differences for the Buddhist respondents.
Among this group, the change in their belief due to the course of study was really notable. The mean response to the question of whether they believed in God before studying the course was 2.62, which was between the scales “a little” and “not sure." After studying the course, their mean response improved to 3.51, which can be interpreted as “yes," a trend towards a definite belief in God or in His existence. This increase from 2.62 to 3.51 is statistically significant, as seen in table 7, with a p-value of 0.00. This finding supports the view that teaching the fundamental beliefs of Christianity can have a positive outcome on students, regardless of religion, toward a better understanding of God’s character and purposes as revealed in the Bible.
Students' Interest in Commitment to God

The survey questionnaire asked the students whether they would like to accept Jesus as their personal Savior. Table 9 shows the responses to the question.

The responses of the Christian students (not necessarily Seventh-day Adventists) are within expectation. 90 percent of them responded positively to accepting Jesus. Moreover, among the 9 students who did not indicate their religion, 5 (55.5 percent) of them indicated their positive decision to accept Jesus as their personal Savior.

Table 9. Frequencies of Responses by Religion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Would you like to accept Jesus as your personal Savior?</th>
<th>Christian</th>
<th>Birdhust</th>
<th>Not Indicated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$f$</td>
<td>percent</td>
<td>$f$</td>
<td>percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A little</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>35.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>41.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, very much</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 39 Buddhist students, 22 (56.4 percent) of them expressed their willingness to accept Jesus. This is indeed encouraging—a very good indication that the course of study did not only develop in these students an understanding of God but also fostered a desire to commit their lives to Him.

There was one Buddhist student, the only one among the group of respondents, who was definite in his/her response of unwillingness to accept Jesus as his/her
personal Savior. There were 22 out of the 68 respondents (32.4 percent) who did not respond to the question or responded "a little" or "not sure."

**Problems Preventing Students Accepting Jesus**

The students who indicated that they were not willing or who were hesitant in accepting Jesus pointed out some problems inhibiting them from making a stand. These problems are shown in table 10. There were 4 choices given in the questionnaire and some students ticked more than one. The percentage given in the column "total" was based on the total number of respondents (68).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problems</th>
<th>Religion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Christian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Prohibition</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not ready as yet</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No need to change religion</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yet to fully understand</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were 13 students who are contented with their present religion as suggested by their not seeing a need to change religion. A problem likely to surface was family prohibition and this was identified by 11 Buddhist students. A hopeful response was given by 15 students who indicated that they were not ready as yet.
The option “yet to fully understand Christianity” was chosen by 24 respondents, 20 of whom are Buddhists. This is very promising and is an indication that these students are open to a deeper study of the Christian religion.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

The findings from this case study provided confirmation that the introduction of religion courses in the general education curriculum of all degree programs is beneficial in that students are able to gain an experiential understanding of God’s divine plan in their lives. The teaching of Fundamental Beliefs of Christianity contributes to the attainment of the goal of Mission College to provide an environment for the students to grow in the development of personal faith and integrate into their lives Christian Beliefs and values.

The majority of the students who took the course were nursing students who after the second semester transferred to Bangkok campus for their clinical study. Although the chaplaincy program of the college provides Bible study follow-up to students in the Bangkok campus, it would have been more profitable if these students who are receptive to Christian teachings were nurtured while they were still in the Muaklek campus.

It is highly recommended that the course Fundamental Beliefs (or a related course) be offered during the first semester. Assessments should be made to find improvements to religious activities with the end goal of giving interested students the opportunity to commit their lives to God through conversion, baptism, service, and a desire to do God’s will in every area of living.
Lesson 1: Christian Teaching about God

I. Is there a God?

Most humans of all races and nationalities do believe in supernatural beings. They have witnessed things involving more than human hands. They are amazed when “miracles” happen. They believe in spirits, ghosts, angels, heaven, and hell. It seems incomprehensible that people are prepared to believe in all these things and yet deny the existence of God. Yet, it is undeniable that faith in God can hardly be proven by any means except personal experience.

A. Thai Belief in Sacred Supreme Being

Thai people have long believed in a sacred and Supreme Being who is not of the human realm. We have heard our ancestors pray to this Being. Even today, Thai people, including Buddhist monks also pray to this Supreme Being. If they did not believe in the existence of a Supreme Being why would they bother praying to it? However, the belief of Thai people about the existence of the Supreme Being is not clearly understood. On one hand we pray to it, but on the other hand our Buddhist mind tends to remind us that there is no God.

B. Thai Belief in Heaven and Hell

Thai people also believe in heaven and hell. Although nobody has ever seen these places, it seems that all religions teach about places where dead people go after their earthly lives have ended. It would be unthinkable for us to deny the existence of heaven. Thailand and Laos both have named their cities with reference to this.
Thailand has a city called Nakhon Sawan (Heavenly City) and Laos has Sawannekhet (Heavenly Area). Why would they call these cities “heaven” if they do not believe it exists at all? The name of the capital city of Thailand is similarly called Krung Thep (City of Angels). If people do not believe in heaven and angels why have these names been used? It would be logical to understand that when there are evil spirits, who we call ghosts and good spirits who we call angels, there must surely be the king of angels and spirits. Who is this Being? Could it be the most Supreme Being that Buddhists used to pray to or God as the Christians call Him?

C. The Greek “Unknown God”

Even from ancient times, the Greeks knew that there was a Supreme Being who they could not quite identify. The Bible has a record about Jesus’ apostle; named Paul, who went to Greece to preach the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ. As he walked around the city of Athens, then capital city of Macedonia, he noticed that the people of Athens worshipped many gods. They had a god like Zeus, the sky god, and a goddess like Diana, the fertility goddess. They also believed that these gods lived on Mount Olympus. They had an inscription dedicated to each god. However, Paul came across an inscription dedicated to the unknown god who they could not see but who they believed existed.

The Christian Bible records the conversation Paul had with the Greeks on that day in the Christian Bible. He said to them, “For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this
inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you” (Acts 17:23). Then, Paul preached to the Athenians about Jesus Christ and many accepted Jesus as their personal Savior on that day.

D. The Chinese Belief in Heaven

The Chinese have always had a connection with divine beings. They believe in heaven and the king of heaven. Most Chinese religions are theistic ones. Even when they accepted Buddhism they still kept it theistic in a belief that the Buddha is now in heaven and that he would personify others who would become like him, called Bodhisattvas (the merciful), such as Avalokitesvara, and Kwan Im goddess and others.

E. The Buddha’s Enlightenment

The account of Buddha’s enlightenment is fascinating. It was told that the Buddha was meditating under a Bo (Banyan) tree. While meditating there the Mara (devil) came to tempt him. The Mara would disguise himself as a beautiful lady to tempt Gotama to break his concentration and so on.

If we stop and think for a moment we should know that if there is a Mara there should be a Pra (God). That Being was not beyond human reach then and He is not beyond our reach and understanding now.
II. How Do We Know God Exists?


"I look up at your macro-skies, dark and enormous, your handmade sky-jewelry, moon and stars mounted in their settings" (Ps 8:3 MSG).

The Bible here claims that God is the Creator of the universe and all living forms, both visible and invisible. The notion that life just happened to evolve from nothingness to something is too hard to believe. And to believe that the universe just happened by itself in a process over millions of years is also unthinkable. It would require more faith to believe such a thing. Just consider the earth. If it was a little closer to the sun it would burn up. If it was a little further from the sun it would freeze. If it rotated a little faster it would not be able to support life. Everything is perfectly balanced and tuned. This could not happen by itself. Whatever power started the universe must have been a power that knew how to design and calculate precisely.

Let us consider a desert ant. Professor Colin Mitchell, a renowned biologist from Cambridge and Harvard universities wrote in his book, *Creation Revisited*, that these ants possess a campus-like navigation system. They are well able to calculate distance, topography of the soil and direction. Therefore, these ants can go out from their nests for hundreds of meters and still find their way back. The question is, how did these ants learn to navigate? Though evolution or creation? The problem is that if these ants had learned their navigation skills through an evolutionary process none of them could have survived the heat and harshness of the Sahara desert long enough to
find out how to navigate. Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that they were made that way by God. The Bible records that “There are four small creatures, wisest of the wise they are—ants—frail as they are, get plenty of food in for the winter” (Prov 30:24-25 MSG).

When we look at beautiful nature, the mysterious multitudes of galaxies or just the beauty of a tiny flower or an incredibly intelligent ant we might have thought that they just happened to be that way. Nature alone cannot prove that there is a God, the Creator of all things. Nature may be like a television without sound. However, nature is not the only factor that points to the existence of God. There are other things. God has not left us without evidence of His existence.

2. Through Reason

To believe that there is a God is probably more reasonable. When we glance at the sky and study the stars we are left with a very challenging question, “Could all these have come into existence by themselves?” The Bible again challenges us to think by saying, “But the basic reality of God is plain enough. Open your eyes and there it is! By taking a long and thoughtful look at what God has created, people have always been able to see what their eyes as such can't see: eternal power, for instance, and the mystery of his divine being. So nobody has a good excuse” (Rom 1:19, 20 MSG).

We may argue that we cannot believe in something we cannot see. But, nobody can argue the same with the air we breathe and the wind. We do not see the wind, but we know that we can feel it. We cannot see it, but we know it exists. The same can be said about God. We do not often see Him, but we can feel Him. That is
why we know He exists. Nobody would argue that the air does not exist. All of us breathe it and our lives depend on it.

We can experience God and feel Him if we are willing to reach out to Him. However, experiencing God alone is not the best way to substantiate His existence. Reason alone is not the best evidence of God. There are other ways to know God, too (John 1:18; Rom 11:33; 1 Cor 2:14; 1 Tim 6:16).

3. Through Morality

Human beings are moral beings. They know right and wrong, good and evil. A baby is born with innate tendency to evil. Despite parents’ and teachers’ best efforts to teach them good things children innately know how to do evil. Human beings may live in different environments, speak different languages, have different cultures but they all have one thing in common—they are sinful. They were born with sin and have a tendency toward sin. They are different from animals that do not have the knowledge of good and evil. If humans evolved from animals why is there an ethical quality in humans which is missing from animals? This points towards the account of creation and the fall of the human race in Eden as recorded in the Bible.

If evolution is a process of improvement from lower to higher complexity then why is human morality getting worse as time goes by? Is it a reverse evolution? The truth is that humans were created morally, but sin has spoiled their conscience (Rom 2:14-16).
4. Though the History of Israel

Israel as a nation owes its existence and survival solely to God. The Bible records that God called Abraham from Ur, Babylonia. Later God made a nation out of Abraham and gave his descendents the land of Canaan, present day Israel. History has recorded that the Israelites were enslaved in Egypt for more than 400 years and God delivered them from slavery through Moses. No one would deny the fact that there is the nation of Israel whose origins came directly from God.

5. Though the Revelation of the Bible

The best revelation of God is actually from His own Word, the Bible. The Bible is God’s Word written in the languages of human beings. It contains God’s message for humanity. Without the Bible humans would find it very difficult to know God and His will. So, the Bible is the best record of God’s existence.

6. Through God’s own Voice

We can learn to know God through personal contact with Him. Many people throughout history have been able to hear God’s voice. In the Bible God used to speak directly and audibly to many people, including Abraham, Moses, Elijah, and others. Nowadays, we can still hear God’s voice if we really know Him.

7. Through God’s own Manifestation

God also appeared to human beings in many forms. He appeared to Abraham in the form of an angel or a human being, and to Moses in a form of a burning bush. However, through Jesus, God appeared to us as a real flesh and blood human being. If
we would accept Jesus as our personal Savior then we will be able to experience and see God in real life.

8. Through Personal Inspiration

God can appear to us through personal inspiration, dreams and visions. Many people, even these days, experience God through personal inspiration, dreams and visions. God may speak to them directly in their visions or dreams and sometimes He also impresses things upon their minds.

9. Through Signs and Wonders

Strange things that happen in the world which are inexplicable by human science may be God's work. Miracles which happened in this world can either be the work of God or Satan. In Thailand, strange things happen such as mysterious events inexplicable by human terms, Naga (King of Serpents) fireballs in the Mekong River at Nongkhai province, Thailand; demon possession; mysterious illness and death and other extraordinary phenomena are common. We know that these things are not from human inventions. Some are not explainable by human sciences. The only solution is to accept that these things happened by supernatural forces. Thus, if there are supernatural forces, then, it is not reasonable to deny God's existence.

Consider this, if the world is without God there is no way we can determine right from wrong. For what is right for one person may be wrong for another. Without an absolute law of God we can never agree on many controversial and ethical issues. If there is no God, then there is no sinner or saint, there is no good nor evil, there is no difference between humans and animals. After all, do we believe we are all animals of
different levels? What kind of a world would this be without God? Fortunately, the world does have a God who cares and loves. So, it is imperative that we study with an open mind. In that case, after finishing this course, we might find God and become His children.

III. What is God Like?

1. God is Transcendent.

He is above all things and there is nothing to compare with Him. Nothing can challenge His sovereignty. He has no twins. He lives from everlasting to everlasting. He said, “I AM WHO I AM” (Exod 3:14). He is not like anybody and nobody is like Him. As Moses declared it, “Attention, Israel! GOD, our God! GOD the one and only!” (Deut 6:4 MSG).

2. God is Personal

   (1) God is a person. He is not an object or an imagination. He is real and has a personality. The Bible says that God created human beings in His image. Thus, it means that He has character and personality. Abraham was called God’s friend. Thus, it means that God is personal. An object or imagination cannot form a friendship or relationship. If God is not real or personal there is no point in praying to Him. He wouldn’t be able to hear or answer our prayers. Yet, on the contrary, we receive answers to our prayers (1 John 5:14). Moreover, we can feel God and experience Him as we can feel and experience ghosts. However, dealing with ghosts will not do any good for our lives. In fact, it will eventually do more harm than good.
(2) God is Spirit – He has no Body

If God is not Spirit He could be limited in space, time, and knowledge. The Bible says God is Spirit and He prefers people to worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). Because God is Spirit we cannot see Him as He is, unless He chooses to reveal Himself to us in bodily form (Deut 4:15; 1 Tim 6:16). Because we cannot see God we don’t know what He looks like. Therefore, we should not make any image or picture of God for the purpose of worshiping it (Exod 20:4; Psalm 145:3; Rom 1:20).

3. God is Sovereign

God is almighty. His power is so great that no one can ever match it. His will is absolute and no one can question it. He is perfect in every way. Everything is complete in Him. He has life in Himself and lives by Himself. He does not depend on anything. He does not lack anything or need anything. Most importantly He does not need humans to care for Him and give Him anything (Acts 17:24-30). God can exist without having to depend on any elements such as earth, air, food, and the universe. He is the origin of all life.

4. God is Unchangeable

God’s love is unchangeable. His mercy is unchangeable. God said that He never changed or wavered from His commitment to love us (Mal 3:6).
5. **God is Immortal**

God is immortal. He cannot die. He does not have any beginning or any ending. He lives from everlasting to everlasting. All life is sustained by Him. Immortality is available for humans only through Him (Job 11:7-10; Ps 90:2; 139:7-10; Isa 66:1; Acts 17:27-28).

6. **God is Omnipresent**

God is able to be everywhere at the same time (1 Kgs 8:27; Ps 139:7-8; Isa 66:1; Jer 23:24).

7. **God is Omniscient**

God knows everything. His knowledge is beyond our comprehension. He knows the future just as we know our names. Moreover, God is in control of the future. (Isa 41:4; 46:10; John 2:25; Heb 13; 1 Cor 4:5).

8. **God is Omnipotent**

There is nothing God cannot do. He is all-powerful. He can do all things and sustain all things (Ps 89:8).

9. **Other Characteristics of God**

(1) God is Holy (Exod 15:11; Lev 19:2; 1 Sam 2:2; Isa 6:1-4; Rev 4:8).

(2) God is Righteous (Ps 7:9-12; 19:9; 97:2; 112:4; 145:17).

(3) God is Love (1 John 4:16).

- *He is sacrificial* (Rom 5:12)
- *He is patient* (Phil 2:6-8)
He is faithful (Heb 12:2)

He is impartial (John 3:16; 13:1)

(4) God also has other characteristics:

- He is merciful
- He is slow to anger
- He is gracious
- He is caring

There are many things to learn about God. The Bible is full of accounts that help us can learn about this loving, caring, and merciful God. Throughout this semester you will learn about God and Christian Beliefs which are solely based on God and His plan for our salvation and happiness. First of all, it is important that we allow ourselves to drop our guard of prejudice and unbelief. Secondly, we need to keep an open mind to learn what others believe. Remember that those who are willing to learn will gain knowledge, but those who refuse to learn will fail.
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