

# Thai Church Denominations

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The church landscape in every country looks a bit different, depending on local conditions and the missions history of that nation. Here in Thailand, Catholics have been in the country since the 1600s, and Protestants since the early 1800s. The Christian groups recognized by the Thai government, registered through the Department of Religion are the Catholic Church, the Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT), the Thailand Baptist Convention, the Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand (EFT), and the Seventh Day Adventists. The Hope of Bangkok church denomination and the Rom Glao (โรมเกลา) church association falls within the broadly Protestant evangelical fold but are not registered through the Department of Religion. The Hope churches are registered through as a foundation and I am not sure how the Rom Glao churches are registered. There are other church associations, I am sure, but the ones mentioned above are the biggies. It should also be noted that the Mormons and the Jehovah's Witness are in Thailand as well although I am not sure how they are connected to the government or how they get their visas.

CCT was started by American Presbyterians in the 19th century and currently maintains fraternal ties with the Presbyterian Church (USA), although it now includes Baptists, Lutherans and Pentecostals and is overall probably more evangelical than the PCUSA. The Thailand Baptist Convention is associated with the Southern Baptist Convention in the USA, and the EFT is really more of an umbrella organization that includes many different smaller church groups, including the Associated Churches of Thailand (ACT) which is connected to OMF, the mission organization that we are part of.

Generally speaking, Pentecostal churches make up a large section of Thai Protestant churches and their theology and worship style extends far beyond churches that would identify themselves as Pentecostal. It seems that a majority of Thai churches are egalitarian to a large degree although the most pastors are still men. I have heard however that the Baptist Convention retains more a traditional complementarian view (only men as pastors).

This past week I attended the 7th Thailand Congress on Evangelism in Bangkok which brought together three of the largest Protestant church groups (CCT, Baptists, & EFT). In my next post, I'll share some thoughts on the conference and take a look at the state of evangelical Protestant unity in Thailand.