

Christians without a church

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We rode our bikes through three different Isaan districts, with a total of over 100,000 people. In none of these districts is a church. We were looking for openings to share the Gospel. At the same time we tried to find out if there maybe already were Christians.

In Samchay we only heard about one police officer who is a Christian. In Khammuang we met a woman who is a Christian together with her husband. At her biological farm we talked for a long time with her, while enjoying wonderful mushroom soup and papaya salad, all made from ingredients growing not more than 15 meters from the low Isaan table we sat on.

She told how difficult it is to be the only Christian family in the district, and how they are trying to raise their child as Christian in a totally Buddhist environment. We promised to send a children's Bible to her. But more than that I hope we will be able to place a missionary church planter couple (or an Isaan church planter couple) in Khammuang. The first important new contact was there.

In the third district we went, Sahatsakhan, a lot more was happening. We heard about three different groups of Christians, each about five people, and about a few solitary Christians. If they could be brought together (which is not a given), a church could be started immediately.

Two encounters were special to me. At a school a teacher told us that she had a Christian student. She called him out of the class room. It was evident: he had a necklace with a huge cross. We visited his mother. She was speaking Thai with a heavy accent, and we found out she was tribal from North-Thailand who had married an Isaan man. Almost half of all Christian in Thailand are tribal, though the tribes have less than 2% of the population. Meeting her made me realize once again there is a potential for a mission movement within Thailand itself: from the tribes to the Thai.

A bit later we met a young teacher who also is a Christian. Sometimes he goes to a church over a hundred kilometers away. The closest church is 'only' 30 kilometers, but he didn't know anybody there. He reassured us: "I attend the Facebook church every day." Internet church can never take

the place of real churches where you know each other, see each other, and eat together. Yet they can play an important role in supporting isolated Christians.

Yet, Christians without a church: it's far from ideal. Therefore I hope in time to come we will be able to plant churches (no, not buildings, but groups of people called together by God around his Word and the breaking of the bread) in Samchay, Khammuang, and Sahatsakhan.