The background of the cover is a deep red color, overlaid with intricate, golden-yellow floral and vine patterns. The patterns include various flowers, leaves, and scrolling vines, creating a rich, textured effect. A horizontal gold band runs across the middle of the cover, containing the title and subtitle.

Marika Björkgren-Thylin

From Pioneer Mission to Autonomous Church

Lutheran Mission Cooperation and
Church Building in Thailand 1976-1994



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Cover: Linn Art/Linnea Ekstrand

Pictures: The Photo Archive of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission

Abo Akademi University Press
Biskopsgatan 13, FI-20500 ABO, Finland
Tel. +358-20 786 1468
Fax +358-20 786 1459
E-mail: forlaget@abo.fi
<http://www.abo.fi/stiftelsen/forlag>

Distribution: Oy Tibo-Trading Ab
P.O.Box 33, FI-21601 PARGAS, Finland
Tel. +358-2 454 9200
Fax+358-2 454 9220
E-mail: tibo@tibo.net
<http://www.tibo.net>

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ABO 2009

ABO AKADEMIS FORLAG - ABO AKADEMI UNIVERSITY PRESS

CIP Cataloguing in Publication

Bjorkgren-Thylin, Marika

From pioneer mission to autonomous church :

Lutheran mission cooperation and church
building in Thailand 1976-1994 / Marika

Bjorkgren-Thylin. - Abo : Abo Akademi
University Press, 2009.

Diss.: Abo Akademi University.

ISBN 978-951-765-502-6

ISBN 978-951-765-502-6

ISBN 978-951-765-503-3 (digital)

Painosalama Oy

Abo 2009

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This study is the result of the efforts, support, and encouragement of many different people. First and foremost my warmest appreciation goes to my supervisor, Professor Ingvar Dahlbacka, for his practical advice and unlimited solicitude and support. I am also greatly indebted to Dr. Henrik Smedjebacka, who in the mid-1990s awoke my interest in the Lutheran mission in Thailand and has followed and assisted my work on the subject. In addition, University Lecturer Kim Groop and Amanuensis Mary Dahlbacka deserve a heartfelt thank you for their backing and advice.

Special thanks go to the Finnish Thailand missionaries, in particular Maija and Jaakko Makela, Kirsti Kosonen, and Anneli Konni. They have always been prepared to discuss the Lutheran mission in Thailand and answer my questions about the development of the Lutheran church and the Lutheran work in the country. Special thanks go also to Missionary Eivind Hauglid of the Norwegian Missionary Society who has assisted me with both information and practical help.

I also want to express my gratitude to the Archives and Library of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission in Helsinki; Archivist Minna Yli-Maunu who has helped me in the hunt for missing documents, and Librarian Hanna Rissanen who has supported me in the search for good literature. In addition, the Archives and Library of the Norwegian Missionary Society in Stavanger let me use their collections for this study.

I am deeply indebted to the Academy of Finland, the Research Institute of Abo Akademi University Foundation, and the

Finnish-Norwegian Cultural Foundation for providing the funding that has made this study possible.

The participants of the doctorate seminars in Church History at Abo Akademi University's Faculty of Theology have given invaluable support, advice, and back-up in the research process. My friends and colleagues deserve to be thanked for having continued to show an interest in my research all these years. They have put up with both cries of joy over new discoveries and moaning about the tough life of a researcher.

I want to thank my parents, Inga-Lill and Bjarne, for providing me a secure and loving home and having brought me up to believe that with hard work you can achieve anything you want. I also have to admit that my father was right; what it takes to write a doctoral thesis is not so much intelligence as determination, persistence, and strong sitting muscles.

Words are not enough to express my thankfulness to my husband Ronny. My fascination for the Lutheran mission in Thailand is as long as our relationship. During all these years, Ronny has encouraged my studies and done everything to facilitate my work. Lucky for me, he does not know any other kind of life, but thinks it is absolutely normal that his wife spends all her leisure time in the sofa with a laptop on her knee and papers all over the living room. Ronny, when I finish this project, I promise that at least every now and then I will make time to bake those fresh cakes you like so much.

I also want to thank our baby daughter Elsa, who was aware of her mother's tight timetable and did not announce her immediate arrival until the very second her mother sent the thesis for proofreading.

Helsingfors, October 26, 2009

Marika Bjorkgren-Thylin

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Object of research

On April 25, 1994, there was a modest news item in the foremost Finnish newspaper, the *Helsingin Sanomat*. The item reported that a Lutheran church consisting of fourteen congregations had been established in Thailand by certain Nordic mission organisations and Asian Lutheran churches, and that pastor Banjob Kusawadee had been elected the first bishop of the church. Even though the news item was short and inconspicuous, it was obvious that such an event must have been preceded by a lengthy and multifaceted process.¹

The aim of this research is to examine how the *Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand* came into being. I will explore the development from the starting of the Lutheran pioneer mission in 1976 to the founding of an autonomous Lutheran church in 1994. In this development, strategic, operational, financial and organisational issues played important roles and these will consequently be given particular attention. However, I will also examine the Lutheran mission enterprise in Thailand in relation to contemporary international mission thinking and mission methods as well as to more local

¹ *The first Evangelical Lutheran church was established in Thailand. The establishment of the church was due to the work carried out by the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission, the Norwegian Missionary Society, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong and the Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore. The 34-year-old pastor Banjob Kusawadee was elected the first bishop of the new church. At present the Lutheran Church in Thailand has fourteen congregations of which ten are working in the Bangkok metropolitan area and four in northeastern Thailand.* Helsingin Sanomat 25.4.1994, Ensimmäinen luterilainen kirkko Thaimaassa. Translation from Finnish to English by the author.

perspectives such as contextualisation and the adaptation of the mission work to Thai society.

Christian missions have been carried out in Thailand since the 16th century, but Thailand has proved a difficult working environment for mission workers. If the result is calculated in the number of baptisms and church members, the Christian mission organisations working in Thailand have seen comparatively poor response to their message. In Thai society, Buddhism, culture, and national identity have traditionally been closely connected with each other. The expression "*to be a Thai is to be a Buddhist*" is an often used argument against Christianity. During the entire 1980s and 1990s, the number of Christians remained at around 0.5 percent of the Thai population.² The Christian community in Thailand was a tiny minority and the Lutherans were a small group within this minority. In the light of this, it is particularly interesting to study how the Lutheran cooperation organisation, *Lutheran Mission in Thailand*, set about with its commission, how the Lutheran work and the Lutheran congregations have taken root in Thai society and how they have considered the Thai context. This investigation of the Lutheran ministry in Thailand is the history of a small minority and reflects its special issues and challenges.

The research will concentrate on the period 1976 to 1994. Lutheran mission work began in Thailand in 1976, when the first Norwegian Lutheran missionaries arrived in the country. Consequently, this is an obvious starting point for the examination. In order to understand the development that led to the commencement of a Lutheran mission in Thailand, it is, however, also necessary to briefly consider the years before 1976. Similarly, a natural point to end the research is 1994 as

² The Europa World Year Book 1994, 2884, 2892.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand was established this year, the first bishop of the church elected and the agreement signed between the church and the Lutheran Mission in Thailand. I am going to follow the young church during its first year of existence, but it is not within the scope of this doctoral thesis to investigate any of the further developments of the autonomous church.

The continent of Asia offers many challenges for Christian missions. About 60 percent of the world's population live in Asia. Asia is known as the birthplace of the world's greatest religions, including Christianity, but the number of Christians has in most Asian countries remained low.³ The Lutheran mission in Thailand is, in my opinion, a good example of how modern mission work has been done. It gives insight into problems and challenges that the modern mission is facing as well as presents examples of working methods and cooperation models used by today's mission workers.

1.2 Sources and methods

The sources for my research consist in the main of minutes, reports, and correspondence from the different bodies of the *Lutheran Mission in Thailand* and the member organisations of the Lutheran Mission.

The source material from the bodies of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand is principally made up of minutes from the *General Assembly* and the *Executive Committee*, the *joint Board for Thailand*, and the different committees of the Lutheran Mission. In connection with the minutes of the General Assembly there are also annual reports written by the

³ Statistical Yearbook of Finland 2001, 585-586.

chairman of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand as well as reports from the different congregations, working teams, and committees of the mission. A further essential section of the source material is the correspondence between the Executive Committee and the Joint Board for Thailand and other contacts of the Lutheran Mission. The minutes from the Executive Committee are in general concise but contain many appendixes, while the other minutes are somewhat more detailed. The annual reports are informative in the respect that they give reviews over the most important events of the year.

Among the member organisations of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand it is mainly the *Norwegian Missionary Society* and the *Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission* that are able to contribute with source material about the origin and development of the Lutheran mission and the preparations for the establishment of an autonomous Lutheran Church in Thailand. This is a natural consequence of these two organisations being the initiators of the Lutheran mission work in Thailand and the main contributors of missionaries and economic support for the mission enterprise. The sources are principally made up of minutes from the internal meetings of the missionaries, annual reports from the mission field, and correspondence between the missionaries in Thailand and the home leaders of the mission organisations. In addition, yearbooks, long-range plans, and periodicals from the mission organisations have been important sources of information.

The source material for this research is principally available in the archives of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission in Helsinki, the Norwegian Missionary Society in Stavanger, and the Lutheran Mission in Thailand in Bangkok. Most of the sources are written in English, but some sections are in Finnish, Norwegian or Thai. The source material from the different bodies of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand is, as a

rule, available in English until 1994, when the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand was established. At least during the first years after the establishment of the church, the most important documents were still translated into English. The documents from the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission and the Norwegian Missionary Society are mainly in Finnish and Norwegian respectively, while the correspondence between the partners of cooperation within the Lutheran Mission in Thailand is in English. This research therefore contributes to the making of archived material in Norwegian and Finnish known and available to a larger public by publishing the results in English.

Despite the source material giving a good insight into how the Lutheran mission enterprise in Thailand started and developed and how the establishment of an autonomous Lutheran church was prepared, it must be acknowledged that the sources give a mainly Finnish or Norwegian view of the subject. In the different bodies of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand there were, as a rule, also representatives from among the Thai coworkers, but usually the views of the missionaries and the home leaders of the member organisations of the Lutheran Mission are better documented in the available source material than the outlook of the Thai Lutherans. Most of the annual reports, the correspondence, the discourses and the verdicts from the Lutheran Mission in Thailand are written by Norwegians or Finns. The Thai employers and parish members appear seldom in the sources. As the Norwegian Missionary Society and the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission had somewhat different views on the work in Thailand it must also be taken into account that the sources might be influenced depending on whether the author was Norwegian or Finnish.

The sources for this research also consist of interviews with some central figures behind the Lutheran mission in Thailand, i.e. Egil H. Eggen, former Mission Secretary of the Norwegian Missionary Society, Henrik Smedjebacka, former Director of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission, and Seikku Paunonen, one of the leaders of the foreign work of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission during the 1980s and 1990s. I have also had discussions with some of the long serving Finnish, Norwegian and Singaporean missionaries to Thailand, as well as with some of the Thai coworkers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand, in the latter case with the help of an interpreter.

In this research, I am chiefly going to use a historic-genetic method. Furthermore, I will pursue source criticism and textual analysis including concept analysis. The method of presentation is descriptive and analytical.

1.3 Previous research and literature

Earlier research regarding the Lutheran mission in Thailand is limited. It consists in the main of unpublished master's theses in theology, brief histories, as well as some articles in mission periodicals and compilations.

In 1989, M. Theol. Stefan Myrskog finished a master's thesis titled *Lutherskt missionsarbete i Bangkok 1976-1986* (Lutheran Mission Work in Bangkok 1976-1986). According to the author, the aim of the thesis was to describe the work and mission achievements of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission in Bangkok and the cooperation with the Norwegian Missionary Society and Asian churches. In 1983, Paul Pongsak LimLhongviruLn, at that time studying theology in Hong Kong as holder of scholarship from the Norwegian Missionary

Society, wrote a master's thesis with the title *The Shaping of Lutheran Mission in Thailand for tomorrow*. This thesis consists partly of a history of Christian missions in Thailand and a description of the current religious situation, partly of the author's own opinions of how the Lutheran mission in Thailand ought to develop. Other present or former employees of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand have also written master's theses in theology. But since they have mostly been written as part of studies in Dogmatics or the Philosophy of Religion and deal with the encounter between Christianity and Buddhism, they have not been able to really contribute to the questions at issue in this study. To date only one of the Thai Lutheran pastors has written a doctoral thesis; in 2005, Banjob Kusawadee finished his thesis with the title *Suffering and the Cross: the Meaning of the Theology of the Cross for a Thai Christian Understanding of Suffering*.

A short history concerning the Lutheran mission in Thailand, *15 Years of Lutheran Ministry in Thailand (1976-1991). Introduction to the History of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand*, was written by the missionary, Dr. Theol. Jaakko Makela. This booklet summarises the Lutheran mission in Thailand from its beginning in 1976 until 1991. It relates the work of the Lutheran Mission and its struggle to establish an autonomous Lutheran Church in Thailand. The 150 year anniversary publication of the Norwegian Missionary Society, *I tro og tjeneste. Det Norske Misjonsselskap 1842-1992* (In Faith and Service. The Norwegian Missionary Society 1842-1992) also contains a survey of the Lutheran ministry in Thailand. In addition, this publication gives an insight into the mission thinking of the Norwegian Missionary Society and provides some information about two of the other members of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand, i.e. the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong and Kinki Evangelical Lutheran Church, both partners of cooperation with the Norwegian

Missionary Society. The chapter about the Lutheran mission in Thailand is written by Cand Theol. Christopher Woie, former missionary to Thailand and Ethiopia.

The works mentioned above all concentrate on the Lutheran Mission in Thailand, particularly the early years of the Lutheran ministry in the country. The publications all imply that an autonomous Lutheran church would be established in Thailand as soon as the Thai Lutherans were ready to take responsibility for their church, but none of them investigate the actual establishment of the church. With regard to studying the Lutheran mission in Thailand, I have consequently some support from earlier research. However, since I have chosen to particularly deal with the preparation for and establishment of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand, I have, in this respect, limited help from previous research. Apart from the works mentioned and my own master's thesis, *Vagen till en luthersk kyrka i Thailand* (The Way to a Lutheran Church in Thailand), in which I preliminarily deal with this subject, no research concerning the Lutheran Mission in Thailand and the establishment of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand is available.

The Lutheran ministry in Thailand received influences from several different directions, for instance from the member organisations of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand, from contemporary international mission thinking and discussions, as well as from Christian churches and organisations in Thailand. In order to form an idea of the mission thinking of the members of the Lutheran Mission, I have used records from the member organisations, statutes, year books, long-range plans, periodicals and booklets containing the principles of the mission view and mission strategy of the organisations. For the purpose of obtaining an appreciation of the international missiological discussions during the 1970s and

1980s, I have referred to the book ... *that the Gospel may be sincerely preached throughout the world* by James A. Scherer, publications in connection with the general assemblies of the Lutheran World Federation, the Lutheran World Federation's mission document, *Together in God's Mission*, as well as the publication, *Let the Earth Hear His Voice*, from the International Congress on World Evangelization in Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1974.

With regard to general descriptions of Christianity and mission in Thailand there are several works available. The Internet catalogue of Herbert R. Swanson⁴, with a bibliography of materials related to Christianity in Thailand, as well as the MissioNordica (MISSNORD) database hosted at the Statsbiblioteket in Aarhus, Denmark, have both been invaluable in the search for relevant literature about Christianity in Thailand. The first extensive study about protestant mission in Thailand, *Historical Sketch of Protestant Missions in Siam 1828-1928*, edited by George Bradley McFarland, appeared in 1928 in connection with the centenary of protestant mission in Thailand. A reprint of the work was made in 1999. Kenneth E. Wells' work, *History of Protestant Work in Thailand 1828-1958*, appeared in 1958. This was a condensed version of McFarland's book and updated the information to 1958. A more recent and comprehensive work on Thai church history is *Siamese Gold. A History of Church Growth in Thailand. An Interpretative Analysis 1816-1982* by Alex G. Smith. The focus of this book is on church growth and the author tries to detect patterns and reasons for church growth or lack of growth. Another recent work about the progress and setbacks of the Christian mission in Thailand is Samuel I. Kim's book *The Unfinished mission in Thailand. The Uncertain Christian Impact on the Buddhist Heartland*, which appeared in

⁴ Available at <www.herbswanson.com>. Accessed January 30, 2009.

1980. In *Krischak Muang Nua. A Study in Northern Thai Church History* from 1984, Herbert R. Swanson deals with the emergence of a Christian community in northern Thailand between 1867-1920. The north of Thailand is the part of the country where Christianity has had its greatest impact and won proportionally most converts.

Several of the works on Christian missions in Thailand show a great dependence on earlier research in the area. The greater part of the works are written by individuals connected to the Presbyterian mission in Thailand and/or the national church, the Church of Christ in Thailand. Consequently, they are particularly occupied with clarifying the role and importance of these church communions and Christianity in Thailand is considered from their angle of approach. The protestant mission in Thailand outside the Presbyterian mission and the Church of Christ in Thailand, particularly during the latter half of the 20th century, is poorly documented.

Of course, others before me have investigated the coming into being of new autonomous churches. In my attempts to create a picture of the process of establishing a new church I have obtained useful insight, for instance, from Bengt Adkler's study *Church of South India*, Henrik Smedjebackas doctoral thesis *Lutheran Church Autonomy in Northern Tanzania 1940-1963* as well as Mirja Pesonens doctoral thesis *Taiwan Suomen Lahetysseuran tydalueena 1956-1986*. International mission cooperation and the cooperation between mission organisations and a self-governing church has, for instance, been studied by Ingmar Lindqvist in his doctoral thesis *Partners in Mission*.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

The structure of this research is primarily chronological. However, as the introduction and realisation of the different Lutheran activities and the preparations for the establishment of a Lutheran Church in Thailand were often parallel and/or intertwined, I will also allow a thematic division within the chapters.

Apart from the *Introduction*, the research consists of the following seven chapters.

In *the second chapter*, I analyse the context in which the Lutheran Mission in Thailand came into being and functioned and in which the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand was established. I briefly depict the history of Thailand, its religions, cultures, and socioeconomic context, as well as account for earlier missions in the country and the situation of Christianity in Thailand during the period of this investigation.

In *the third chapter*, I examine the background of the Lutheran mission in Thailand. I analyse why Lutheran mission work was started in Thailand, how the cooperation organisation, Lutheran Mission in Thailand, was established, and how both Nordic missionary societies as well as Asian Lutheran churches joined the work in Thailand. I also study the Lutheran mission in Thailand in relation to contemporary international mission discussions and development during the 1970s and 1980s.

In *the fourth chapter*, I look more closely into how the Lutheran mission in Thailand developed and expanded. I investigate how new fields of action were chosen, different working

methods were tested and what changes the work of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand experienced through the years.

In *the fifth chapter*, I examine the geographical expansion of the work both in Thailand and abroad. In particular I consider the reasons for the expansion and how new areas were chosen for the work.

The sixth chapter, I devote to an examination of how the establishment of an autonomous Lutheran Church in Thailand was prepared, for instance through forming a Thai Lutheran liturgy, ordaining pastors, working on the self-reliance, building a head quarter for the work and strengthening the parish members' Lutheran identity.

In *the seventh chapter*, I investigate how the constitution of the church and the agreement on cooperation between the church and the Lutheran Mission in Thailand were developed. I also give an account of how the church was established, how it elected indigenous leaders and started to lay down its own guidelines for the work.

Finally, in *the eighth chapter, the conclusion*, I try to evaluate the methods and effects of the Lutheran mission in Thailand and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand as well as summarise the results of the examination.

1.5 Language and terminology

A few words are needed about the language and terminology of this study. The word *mission* is central to the investigation. When I use the word mission, I have in mind the total mission endeavour of the worldwide church, all mission work performed in Thailand by different mission agencies working

in the country and the Lutheran mission work in Thailand in particular. The words *missionary* or *mission workers* are used as overarching designations for the foreign employees, i.e. not the Thai coworkers of the member organisations of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand or other mission agencies. The two terms are used for both sexes, and used without regard to the person's profession. The term *church* refers both to the physical church building as well as to the church as an administrative unit and an organised fellowship of believers. The word church does, at times, occur in the English names of the Thai Lutheran congregations, but in general, it is not used when referring to local congregations. The local congregations are called *parishes* or *congregations*, not churches. Sometimes, the term *church center* is also used as a synonym for a local congregation, but then it is rather the church building and the activities in the premises that are intended.

The term *Protestantism* is used as the counterpart to *Roman Catholicism*. In addition to the historical Reformation churches, the term Protestantism also includes, in this study, the younger evangelical churches, and Christian organisations.

Until 1939 *Thailand* was known as *Siam* to the rest of the world and all documents written prior to 1939 use the name Siam. In accordance with this, the inhabitants of Thailand were, prior to 1939, usually referred to as Siamese. In 1939 the name of the country was changed from Siam to Thailand due to a government decision. In this research I am, however, going to use the terms Thailand and Thai regardless of whether I am talking about the period prior to 1939 or the time after. The same procedure is implemented for other countries that have changed their names and that are mentioned in this research. Throughout, I am going to use the name that was in use when writing this thesis in order to avoid misunderstandings.

The word *Thai* as a substantive is principally used as a general designation for individuals who are citizens of the Kingdom of Thailand, regardless of whether they are ethnic Thais (about 75 percent of the population in 1995) or, for instance, of Chinese origin (around 11 percent of the population) or members of one of the ethnic minorities in the country (approximately 14 percent of the population). If it is explicitly the ethnic Thai population that is referred to it is specifically pointed out or becomes evident from the context. The word Thai as an adjective is used in a similar way as an overarching designation for groups, matters and phenomenons, which originate in the Kingdom of Thailand.

Some of the Lutheran congregations in Thailand changed their names during the period investigated by this research. In these cases, the most recent name, i.e. the name that was in use at time of the establishment of the Lutheran Church in Thailand in 1994, will be used.

The transliteration of Thai words into English varies. For instance, the Royal Institute in Thailand has made recommendations and agreed on a general system of phonetic transcription of Thai characters into Roman letters.⁵ The originators of the sources used in this study, with their varying knowledge of the Thai language, are however not unanimous concerning the transliteration of Thai characters and do not always follow the recommendations. The Thai words used in this study are principally proper names. The proper names are, as far as possible, given in the form that the individuals themselves, the churches, or the organisations write them, otherwise in the form that the names mostly frequently occur in the source material. In some cases,

⁵ For more information on the transcription of Thai characters into Roman, see for instance Rajadhon 1971.

transliteration has also been used as a guide for pronunciation. With respect to names of places, I use the forms that seem to be most widely used in present-day Thailand.

2. SOCIETY AND CHRISTIANITY IN THAILAND

In order to attain a deeper understanding of the context in which the Lutheran mission in Thailand operated and the Lutheran Church in Thailand was established, some knowledge of Thai society, religion, culture, and Christianity is needed. The Lutheran Mission in Thailand and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand did not come into existence in a vacuum, isolated from the surrounding society. The Lutheran Mission in Thailand was in its formation and activities influenced by conditions, events, and trends in Thai society and in building up an autonomous Lutheran church it had continuously to take a stand on how it was going to consider the Thai context.

2.1 Thai society in history

The Kingdom of Thailand is located in Southeast Asia on the Indochinese peninsula, and Burma, Laos, Cambodia, and Malaysia are its closest neighbours. The country is 513 115 square kilometres in area. In 1980, Thailand had an estimated population of 44.8 million inhabitants. By 1990, the population had grown to an estimated 54.5 million inhabitants, of which more than 5.8 millions were living in the Bangkok capital area.⁶

Thailand is usually divided into four geographical zones. 1) The central plateau of the capital Bangkok includes the valley and delta of the Chao Phraya river. It consists of fertile and arable land that during the yearly floods is mostly covered by

⁶ The Europa Year Book 1985, 2677; World Geographical Encyclopedia 1994, 259; The Europa World Year Book 1994, 2884

water. The region is the centre of farming, trade and industry. It is chiefly inhabited by Thais, but large groups of Chinese live in the cities. 2) Northern Thailand is mountainous and to pursue farming is arduous, but the valleys are fertile. The area is inhabited by Thai peoples whose language differ somewhat from official Thai. There are also more than twenty different hill tribes living in the area, all with their own distinct culture and language or dialect. Many of these tribes having come as immigrants or refugees from the neighbouring countries. 3) Southern Thailand is part of the Malay Peninsula. It is a rainy and fertile region. In addition to Thais that speak a southern dialect, also Malays, Chinese, and Indians live in the area. 4) Northeastern Thailand, called in Thai Isan⁷, extends over a vast tableland, the Khorat Plateau, where drought and floods make the soil impossible to cultivate part of the year. The people of Isan are in linguistic, cultural, and religious respects closely related to the Laotians. Except for the southern isthmus, which belongs to the tropical rainforest region, Thailand is part of the tropical region of Asia. The monsoonal climate is characterised by alternating rainy and dry seasons, but the storms are not predictable and the rains vary in length, length, and intensity. The temperature is high throughout the year, mostly between 18° c and 35°c. The peoples of Thailand have adapted themselves to the climate and spread across the country with reference primarily to mountains and rivers.⁸

On the origins of the Thai people there are divergent opinions. The most common explanation is that the Thais originate from the valleys between the Yunnan plateau and the Southeast

⁷ There are different ways of transliterating the Thai name of northeastern Thailand, for instance Isan, Isarn and Esarn. In this research Isan is used, since it is most frequently applied by the sources.

⁸ Allman *varldsgeografi* 1971, 399-403; Keyes 1989, 6-7, 14-22; World Geographical Encyclopedia 1994, 257-258; Heikkila-Horn & Miettinen 2000, 19-20.

Asian lowland⁹. From the 7th century, the Thai peoples were forced to move southwards from Yunnan due to a steady increase in the population of the Thai communities, the constant pressure from the Chinese population and later from the Mongolic conquerors of China, as well as the prevailing ecological conditions. Their removal resulted in the foundation of several small Thai states in the area that in the end of the 20th century comprised of the countries Thailand, Burma, Laos, and Vietnam. The new states were founded at the cost of the Khmer and Mon peoples who inhabited the region before the arrival of the Thais.¹⁰

The early history of the Thais in Southeast Asia is divided into periods according to which capital city had supremacy. During the 13th century two important Thai states emerged. Sukhothai on the central plateau was founded around 1220 after a successful Thai revolt against the Khmer empire. In the north, the kingdom of Lan Na arose in 1296 after the Thais had defeated the Mon state of Hanpunjaya. In 1350, the Thai kingdom of Ayutthaya succeeded Sukhothai as the regional power of importance. During the reign of the kingdom of Ayutthaya the Thai rulers obtained for the first time control over the territory that at the end of the 20th century constituted the kingdom of Thailand. Even though Ayutthaya was involved in repeated conflicts over people and territory with its neighbours, Ayutthaya's rule lasted for over 400 years. However, in 1767 the Burmese occupied the Thai capital,

⁹ In opposition to this theory some scholars assert that the Thais originate in Thailand, but were banished northwards by Khmers and Mons who were superior in numbers. In Yunnan the Thais developed their distinct culture. During the pressure of the Mongolic conquerors of China, the Thais returned south and took over the declining Mon and Khmer kingdoms. See Thailand into the 80's 1980,15.

¹⁰ Thompson 1941, 15-19; Harrison 1965; 53-55; Hall 1981, 185-186; Syamananda 1981, 6-12; Wyatt 1984, 9, 41.

destroyed the city, and removed a great part of the court to Burma; thereby ending Ayutthayan rule.¹¹

A few officers of the Thai army managed to escape the Burmese attack. Commanded by General Taksin they established a new capital southwards, in Thonburi, at the delta of the Chao Phraya river. Taksin proclaimed himself king of Thailand (in reign 1767-1782). After Taksin's death General Chaophraya Chakri seized power. As ruler, he took the name Rama I (1782-1809), and founded the Chakri dynasty which has ruled ever since. Rama I moved the capital city across the river to Bangkok, which he considered less vulnerable to any new Burmese attacks. The following kings strengthened the Thai rule further and increased Thai territory. Towards the end of the 19th century, the monarchy in Thailand became absolute.¹²

The colonial period was a time of change in Southeast Asia. Thailand's earlier contacts with Western nations had mainly been through seafarers, tradesmen, and missionaries and relationships with the west had not been permanent. When Cambodia passed into the hands of France and Burma was taken by the British it looked as if Thailand would also be assimilated by these powers. However, in 1896 the British and the French signed a treaty which guaranteed the neutrality of Thailand and which kept France and Great Britain from violating Thailand's sovereignty. Thailand managed to remain the only sovereign nation in Southeast Asia during the colonial period. The cost of independence was some loss of territory to France and Great Britain and the accordance of

11 Thompson 1941, 19-27; Harrison 1965, 97-99, 150-151, 181-182; Syamananda 1981, 20-22, 30-36, 91-92; Wyatt 1984, 44-60, 63-74, 90-103, 132-138; Heikkila-Horn & Miettinen 2000, 105-107, 112-113, 119-127.

12 Thompson 1941, 27-29; Syamananda 1981, 93-103; Wyatt 1984, 139-175; Heikkila-Horn & Miettinen 2000, 196-197.

freedom of trade and almost total exemption of duty for Westerners.¹³ Even though Thailand was never colonised, Western influence increased during the 19th century. The Thai leaders started modernising the country and implementing Western internal reforms. A task above all accomplished by king Mongkut (1851-1868) and his son king Chulalongkorn (1868-1910).¹⁴

During the 20th century Thailand took active part in world politics. In 1917 Thailand entered World War I on the side of the Allies. A motive for joining the Allies was the hope that it might add weight to Thailand's efforts to end the unequal treaties made with Western countries during the 19th century.¹⁵ World War II had a profound influence on Thailand. In December 1941, Thailand surrendered to the Japanese and became their ally. The following year Thailand declared war against the United States and Great Britain, even though the declaration of war against the United States was never delivered as the Thai ambassador in Washington did not think it represented the will of the Thai people. Instead, a resistance movement, Free Thai, was formed against the Japanese. When Japan surrendered to the Allies in August 1945, Thailand performed a turnaround. The declaration of war was cancelled and all agreements with Japan were repudiated. The contacts with the West were restored, but Thailand had to make significant concessions to France and Great Britain in order to regain its position, and be accepted as a member of the United Nation.¹⁶

13 Hall 1981, 709-711, 720-741; Syamananda 1981, 132-141; Wyatt 1984, 181-186, 199-208; Rajchagool 1994, 34-40.

14 Hall 1981, 708-711; Wyatt 1984, 187-198, 208-212; Trocki 1994, 118.

15 Syamananda 1981, 151-153; Wyatt 1984, 230-231.

16 Syamananda 1981, 173-177; Wyatt 1984, 252-262; Heikkila-Horn & Miettinen 2000, 206-209.

In 1932, during the reign of King Prajadhipok (1925-1935), a coup d'etat ended the absolute monarchy and established a constitutional monarchy. After the coup, military or military-supported governments ruled Thailand until the late 1980s. The coups and counter-coups were numerous, but the changes of government generally took place through bloodless takeovers. The Thai monarchy obtained a new role as the authority who legalized the shifts of power and represented continuity in an unstable situation.¹⁷ The visible political opposition was principally conducted by students. In 1973, a student-led uprising forced the military strongmen to give up power, but the movement was violently suppressed in 1976. From this time on the Thai governments have not been military as such, but the military has continued to play an important role in the political sphere. A gradual opening of Thai society and a strengthening of democratic processes has taken place. In the 1990s, democratic parliamentary elections were held and civilian government nominated. In spite of this development, military takeovers have also occurred during the period of this investigation, the latest being in 1991.¹⁸

After World War II, Thailand developed a special relationship with the United States. Having a considerable Chinese population and neighbours such as Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, Thailand considered communism an obvious threat to the country. Since the United States was eager to restrict and prevent the further expansion of communism, considerable financial aid was given to the Thai government and Thai soldiers and police were trained in the United States. In return, Thailand supported the United States during the

¹⁷ anakijboriharn 1976, 37; Morell & Samudavanija 1982, 64.69; Wyatt 1984, 234-242, 306-307; Keyes 1989, 208-211; Rajchagool 1994, 85-92, 155-161; Hewison 1997, 3,13, 58-63, 66.

¹⁸ Morell & Samudavanija 1982,137-151, 273-280; Keyes 1989, 82-84, 97-100, 141-144; Samudavanija 1997, 55-57; The World Guide 1997, 541-542; Heikkila-Horn & Miettinen 2000, 214-222.

Korean War and the Vietnamese War by allowing American airbases and soldiers on its territory.¹⁹

Thailand was long known under the name Siam. The name was renounced in 1939 when the leaders of the country wanted to emphasize that the country belonged to the Thais, not to the other peoples inhabiting the area. After World War II, the change of name was rejected. European countries such as Great Britain and France had continued using the old name and in its desire to please the Allies, Thailand felt it necessary to reintroduce the name Siam. In 1949, the name Thailand, the Land of the Free, was once again taken into use and has since then been the official name of the kingdom.²⁰

2.2 Development and change in Thai society since the mid-20th century

During the 1960s, fuelled by the United States' financial support and military presence, Thailand entered a period of economic growth and structural changes in trade and industry. To the surprise of many experts, the economic boom continued after the United States lost interest in the area. The 1980s and the first half of the 1990s were times of particularly rapid changes and growth. Despite Thailand's long history as an agrarian nation, the country achieved, in the mid-1990s, a complex multifaceted economy embracing industries using modern and advanced technology. The agricultural share of the national income had declined steadily from 40 percent in 1960, 25 percent in 1980 to about 12 percent in 1992. However, 63 percent of the employed labour force was still engaged in this sector in 1992. At the same time, the manufacturing

19 Girling 1981, 232; Wyatt 1984, 271-272, 283-290, 304; Keyes 1989, 112-114; Heikkila-Horn & Miettinen 2000, 209-214.

²⁰ Syamananda 1981, 4-5; Wyatt 1984, 253-254; Reynolds 1991, 4-6, 20.

section had increased its portion of the national income from 13 percent in 1960, 20 percent in 1980 to 26 percent in 1990. Only 9 percent of the labour force however was engaged in manufacturing activities in 1989.²¹

Several factors have contributed to Thailand's strong economy. One of its advantages has been the abundance and diversity of its natural resources. With large expanses of fertile land and good growing conditions, Thailand has not only enjoyed agricultural self-sufficiency, but agricultural products have been its most important export goods. Other exported goods have been textiles, furniture, metals, minerals, jewels, and computer components.²² Since the mid-1970s, tourism has become more and more important. In 1993, tourism was Thailand's principal source of foreign exchange and an estimated number of 5.4 million foreign visitors arrived in Thailand that year.²³ The long period of economic growth came to an end when Thailand, as a consequence of the East Asian economic decline, moved into a severe economic crisis in 1997.²⁴

Thailand was for a long time an obviously rural society. In 1947, only 5 percent of the population lived in urban areas. In the mid-1990s, some 30 million people, around 60 percent of the total population, still lived in rural communities. In 1980, agriculture employed 76 percent of the working population. However, the rapid economic growth and the changes in trade and industry altered Thai society and Bangkok in particular

²¹ Arumugam, Low & Rajaretnam 1973, 23, 28-29; Thailand into the 80's 1980, 159, 166-184; The Europa World Year Bok 1982,1543; Keyes 1989, 151-159; Komin 1989, 4; The Europa World Year Book 1994, 2883.

²² Thailand into the 80's 1980, 159-184; The Europa World Year Book 1985, 2675; Keyes 1989,151-159; The Europa World Year Book 1994, 2882.

²³ Thailand into the 80's 1980, 185-187; The Europa World Year Book 1994, 2883, 2897.

²⁴ Thailand 2000, 22.

was affected by urbanisation. In 1978, the Bangkok metropolitan area had a population of 4.9 million inhabitants. In 1990, approximately 5.8 million people lived in the capital city, i.e. 10.8 percent of the entire Thai population. The political and economical power became concentrated in Bangkok. Most of the institutes for higher education and national culture were located there, together with the most important symbols of the monarchy and Buddhism. Rural society also went through profound changes socially, economically and culturally. The booming urban economy demanded labour from the villages. Many of the labourers migrated temporarily to the capital city for periods ranging from a few months to a few years. The urban and rural poor benefited little from the economic growth and the gap between the Bangkok elite and the rural and urban masses increased.²⁵

A characteristic of Thai society is its hierarchical structure. The basic unit of the society is the family. Every household has within it a system of dynamics and attitudes governing personal interaction and this is repeated on all levels of society. Diffidence, deference, and respect is shown to people with higher status. The mother is the moral force of the family, a symbol of virtue and sacrifice, goodness and forgiveness. Her self-sacrificing attachment to her child results in a moral debt and demands that the child shows her love and obedience. The father is seen as the provider of the family. The competition for status and power is intense in Thai society and with the mothers providing the stability for the family, the

²⁵ ANMS Thailand Noen refleksjoner over den økonomiske utviklingen i Thailand og dens innvirkning op samfunnsutviklingen sett fra en misjonsers staded, July 16,1990 by Jan Helge Kristensen; Keyes 1977, 291-292, 305; Girling 1981, 88-89, 101-102; The Europa Year Book 1982, 1543-1544; The Europa Year Book 1985, 2677; Keyes 1989, 13, 159, 168-174; Kornin 1989, 2, 5, 17, 21-22; The Europa World Year Book 1994, 2884; Phongpichit & Baker 1997, 35.

male can seek adventure and self-aggrandizement outside the family. Even if Thai women can occupy high positions in public life, they are supposed to find fulfilment in their roles as wives and mothers. They should defer to men and accept the latter's privileged status. Women without their own family, husband and children, have traditionally had a weak position. The traditional Thai family is easiest to discern in rural areas. Life in the countryside is centred around the local Buddhist temple and the primary school. The villagers' lives are controlled by the cycle of religious, official, and family festivals. The family is often extended beyond the nucleus of parents and their offspring to include grandparents and other relatives. However, an increasing number of young people are migrating to Bangkok and other urban centres in the hope of finding work and prosperity. The urban households retain similar values, but are modified by the pressures of modern life and foreign influences. Family ties are not as pervasive in the city as in the villages. The imitation of Western manners with emphasis on individuality and privacy makes young people leave the home in order to live on their own. They get married later and give birth to fewer children.²⁶

Although highly individualistic, the Thais stress an emotionally and physically stable environment. They believe that social harmony is best maintained by avoiding unnecessary friction or turbulence in contacts with others. In general, Thais will do their utmost to avoid personal conflicts. Outward expressions of anger are regarded as dangerous to social harmony and as obvious signs of ignorance, crudity, and immaturity.²⁷

26 Phillips 1965,18, 22-25; Wells 1975, 86,198, 233; Keyes 1977,125, 305; Thailand into the 80's 1980, 56-64, 229; Klausner 1983, 37, 331; Komin 1989, 84-92; Komin 1991, 40-46; Mulder 1992, 45-51, 65-73; Prachayaporn 1998, 24; Thailand 2000,4.

²⁷ Thailand into the 80's 1980, 70; Klausner 1983, 54-55, 59, 331; Mulder 1992,47.

The consequences of the rapid development and economic growth have not been entirely positive. The development has been, for instance accompanied by inadequate infrastructural development, inequality of income distribution and mismanagement of the environment and the natural resources. Rural environmental problems include: deforestation, destruction of critical watersheds, flooding and soil erosion, sedimentation of irrigation reservoirs, cultivation of fragile land, overuse of pesticides, and loss of genetic and biological resources. In urban areas, the rapid growth of industrial and agro-industrial production has resulted in air pollution as well as surface and groundwater pollution. In addition, the increasing amount of tourism has involved strains on the environment.²⁸

Prostitution has a long tradition in Thailand and to have a minor wife or a mistress is a well-known custom among Thai men, even if the practice has started to decrease among the highly educated. The status as mistress of a wealthy man has traditionally been honourable and sought-after, particularly among women of distinctly lower social level, since the power and wealth of the man was reflected on the mistress. The arrival of Westerners in Thailand increased the volume of prostitution and brought about new structures and problems in the area. The prevailing sex industry has led to an acute AIDS problem, and also among injecting drug addicts there is a high rate of infection. The first cases of AIDS were identified in 1984. The UNAIDS and the WHO have estimated that 500,000 Thais were infected with HIV in the early 1990s. An estimation from the Thai Red Cross Society suggests that

²⁸ ANMS Thailand Noen refleksjoner over den økonomiske utviklingen i Thailand og dens innvirkning op samfunnsutviklingen sett fra en misjoners staded, July 16,1990 by Jan Helge Kristensen; Komin 1989, 21-22; The Europa World Year Book 1994, 2883; Hirsch 1997,180; The World Guide 1997, 541; Thailand 2000, 5, 24.

800,000 HIV were infected in 1993. This was one of the highest numbers of AIDS cases in Asia and AIDS related illness placed increasing demands on the country's health services and exacted considerable social and economic costs.²⁹

2.3 Religion and culture

Buddhism is the dominant religion in Thailand, but Buddhism did not arrive in the region until the last centuries before the beginning of the Christian chronology. The first inhabitants practised animism or belief in benevolent and malevolent spirits of lands, trees, hills, rocks, rivers etc. According to their conviction, all land was owned by a spirit. A spirit house had to be erected in every compound, residence, or shop, to make the "owner" of the land benevolent. The spirits' protection was invoked by offerings of flowers, candles, incense, food, and rice wine. Worship of ancestors' spirits was also practised. In addition, the early inhabitants paid homage to the forces of nature, which controlled or endangered their life, such as the sun, the earth, the rain, thunder, earthquakes, and the moon. In course of time, man started to personalise these natural forces and formulate rituals to appease them. The intention was to make the supernatural forces that controlled the unpredictable weather benevolent towards the people. At the end of the 20th century spirit cults still occurred in Thailand, alongside and mixed with other religions. The practise of erecting spirit houses was a vital part of (traditional) life and

29 Klausner 1983, 181; Keyes 1989, 157; Komin 1989, 69; Komin 1991, 42; Mulder 1992, 52-53; Phongpaichit 1992, 3-6; Sittirai & Williams 1995, 3-7, 31-32; The World Guide 1997, 542; Thailand 2000, 5; Epidemiological Fact Sheet on HIV and AIDS Thailand. Available at <www.who.int/globalatlas/predefinedReports/EFS2008/full/EFS2008_TH.pdf>. Accessed February 20, 2009.

ancestor worship was common especially among Chinese immigrants.³⁰

Hinduism arrived in Southeast Asia in the early Christian chronology along with Indian traders and settlers. Hindu deities like Vishnu, Shiva, Rama, Krishna and Brahma were worshipped, but confined mainly to the court due to the grandiose rites. In the late 20th century traces of Hinduism could be seen in Thai language and literature as well as in customs and public ceremonies, for instance in the wedding ritual and at royal courts. Brahma in particular was venerated by the Thais. The Erawan shrine, in the middle of Bangkok's modern trading centre, was dedicated to Brahma and a popular place of worship since Brahma was known for his great beneficial power. Hinduism as such was, however, mainly practised by immigrants from India and the Hindu temples found throughout Thailand chiefly served these immigrants. Among the immigrants from India, there were also followers of Sikhism. In the early 1990s Brahmins, Hindus and Sikhs in Thailand numbered about 85,000.³¹

Buddhism was first introduced into the region in the 3rd century before the Christian chronology when the area still was inhabited by the Mon people. Buddhist missions sent by the Indian emperor Asoka succeeded then in converting the ruler of the kingdom and Buddhism was introduced at the court. The new religion was not effectively spread among the people and the peasantry continued to live in a predominantly animistic world. Buddhism mixed with Animism and Hinduism and developed into the amalgam that characterises

30 Tambiah 1970, 263-269; 312-318; Jumsai 1980, 48-50; Majupuria 1987, 35-43; Jackson 1990, 57-61; Mulder 1992, 16-25; Watson Andaya & Ishii 1994, 508-509, 511.

31 Thompson 1941, 137-138, 623; Majupuria 1987, 43-46, 49-53; Rajavaramuni 1990,18; Heikkila-Horn & Miettinen 2000, 29-30; The Europa World Year Book 1994, 2892.

Thai Buddhism. The Thai people were at this time still living in Southwest China, but encountered Buddhism through Chinese Buddhists.³²

Buddhism arrived first in its more orthodox form, Theravada Buddhism³³. Later Mahayana Buddhism was introduced by the kingdom of Srivijaya, with its capital on Sumatra, and the Khmer empire. From the 11th century there was also a significant Theravada Buddhist kingdom in the region as Anurath the Great, king of Pukham, seized control over Burma. As a result Mahayana did not replace Theravada Buddhism, but the two schools lived on side by side. When the Thais settled down in Southeast Asia, they encountered both Mahayana Buddhism and Theravada Buddhism. After the emergence of the Thai kingdoms Sukhothai and Lan Na in the 13th century, Theravada Buddhism became the predominant religion of the new states. Theravada Buddhism of the Sri Lankan tradition became popular. Thai monks visited this new centre of Buddhism and brought back with them a faith which had gone through an internal spiritual and structural reform. Traces of Mahayana Buddhism can nevertheless still be detected in Thai Theravada Buddhism.³⁴

It is possible to trace the close connection between the Thai royal family and the sangha, the Buddhist monastic order

³² Suriyabongs 1955, 38; Keyes 1977, 82; Smith 1977, 78-93; Jumsai 1980, 7-9; Rajavaramuni 1990, 18.

³³ Another term for Theravada Buddhism is Hinayana Buddhism (Small Vehicle), used in contrast to Mahayana Buddhism (Great Vehicle). The term Hinayana is not, however, used by Theravada Buddhists as it was given by Mahayanists to distinguish two Buddhist schools with doctrinal differences. Instead the term Theravada (School of the Elders) is used as it implies the orthodox character of the school. Shin 1990, X, 26.

³⁴ Suriyabongs 1955, 38; Wells 1975, xiii-xv; Ishii 1986, 60-62; Rajavaramuni 1990, 18-20; Shin 1990, 29-30; de Caspari & Mabbett 1994, 298, 300.

back to the Sukhothai period and the late 13th century when king Ramkhamhaeng invited Buddhist monks to reside in his capital. According to the Buddhist faith, the king has a special position. Mahayana Buddhism sees the king as a bodhisattva, a person who would qualify as a Buddha but chooses to postpone his enlightenment in order to help others to salvation. Theravada Buddhism, on the other hand, considers the king the most merited man in the community. It is the king's duty to share with others his spiritual merit and uphold the backbone of Buddhism, the sangha.³⁵ During the period studied in this thesis, the constitution of Thailand required that the king professed the Buddhist faith. Nevertheless, the king is also considered to be the protector of all religions and citizens were guaranteed freedom of religion. All religions are generally considered good as they contribute to maintaining harmony and balance in society and raising moral standard.³⁶

At an early stage Buddhism exerted considerable influence on the Thai language, culture, and society. The Thai language consists of several different levels. There is royal vocabulary, formal language and colloquial language as well as religious language. Pali, the language of the scriptures of Theravada Buddhism, became the basis of the vocabulary of not only the Thai religious language, but also of the language within humanistic and social sciences.³⁷ Much of classical Thai art,

35 Reynolds 1978, 100-101; Jackson 1990, 40-43; Heikkila-Horn & Miettinen 2000, 30.

36 Suriyabongs 1955, 38; Wells 1975, 1; World Christianity 1979, 143; Thailand into the 80's 1980, 44; Norsk Misjonstidende 33/1981, Religion oppdrar folk til gode statsborgere; Norsk Misjonstidende 4/1982, Religion er ikke narkotika for folket; Shin 1990, 102-103; Sritandorn 1996, 230-231; Kusawadee 2005, 5-6.

37 ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1984/Vision and strategy for our joint Lutheran ministry in Thailand; Woie 1992, 328; Prachayaporn 1998, 66; Kosuke 1999, xi, 58-59; Heikkila-Horn 2000, 26; Makela 2000, 157-159; Makela 2006, 80, 94-95. For more information on the nature and

sculpture, painting, architecture, and early literature is really Buddhist art. However, Thai culture also acquired influences from Hinduism. The most important classical literary work, Ramakien, which has been a great source of inspiration for Thai art forms, is in fact a Thai version of the Hindu epic Ramayana. At the end of the 20th century Thai art was, however, in a transitional stage. The growing European influence since the late 19th century and the embracing of Western values weakened Buddhism's influence on Thai art, particularly architecture, painting, and music. But art continued, nevertheless, to play an important role in the lives of the Thais.³⁸

In the early 1990s, more than 95 percent of the population in Thailand were Buddhists. The foundation of Thai society was considered to rest on three pillars; the nation, the religion, and the monarchy. The religion, i.e. Buddhism, was the moral and social force in society and the most important symbol of the Thai nation, intimately connected with Thai national identity. The assertion "*to be a Thai is to be a Buddhist*" was an often used argument against other religions. The king was regarded as the unifying bond of the nation and the defender of Buddhism. Particularly after the coup d'etat in 1932, the Thai government recognized the stabilising force of the Buddhist sangha in times of political change and strong emphasis has since then been placed on religion.³⁹

development of Thai language see for instance Rajadhon 1971.

³⁸ Thailand into the 80's 1980, 243-245; Rajadhon 1981, 10-15; Prachayaporn 1998, 70; Heikkila-Horn & Miettinen 2000, 223-235; Kusawadee 2005, 34.

³⁹ Wells 1975, 2-3; Suomen Lahetyssanommat 13/1979, Buddhalaisuuden keskella; Suomen Lahetyssanommat 13/1980, "kon tulee nakya"; Suksamran 1982, 12; Prachayaporn 1998, 2; The Europa World Year Book 1994, 2892.

Thai Buddhism was centred on the sangha and the laity's endeavour to achieve merit. The sangha was highly venerated. The members of the sangha committed themselves to the study of the sacred texts that contained the Buddhist faith, dhamma, and followed a discipline that was intended to advance them along the path to salvation. The sangha was also a "field of merit" for the laity since the best moral act a layperson could perform was to materially support the sangha. The responsibility for everyday religious practices was principally laid on the Thai women. It was also a common practise for young Thai men to spend some time as a monk in order to gain merit, usually about three months during the rainy season.⁴⁰ In addition to the two main sects of the monastic order in Thailand, the Thammayutnikai and the Mahanikai, movements centred around certain Buddhist monks grew rapidly in size and influence during the latter half of the 20th century.⁴¹

Although Buddhism in the late 20th century was still at the centre of the Thai way of living and constituted the source of most values and attitudes, it had undergone significant changes due to the stress of the modern, urban lifestyle. In the countryside, the Buddhist temples continued to be the foundation of social life, but in Bangkok the temples had started to play a less important social role and religion had become more private. People had a small home altar for praying and meditation rather than going to the temple to worship. In the villages, the role of religion was also changing as migrants returning from Bangkok brought with them new ideals and world-views. In substance, however, Thai

⁴⁰ Bunnag 1973, 53-62,144-146; Jumsai 1980,13-14; Thailand into the 80's 1980, 44-51; Keyes 1989, 35-36; Shin 1990, 74-75, 98-99; anububha 1994, 71-71; Heikkila-Horn 1996,76, 82-90; Jackson 1997, 81; Prachayaporn 1998, 2, 28.

⁴¹ Suriyabongs 1955, 39; Jackson 1990, 115-116; Rajavaramuni 1990, 21; Shin 1990, 76; Heikkila-Horn 1996, 7, 90-114, Jackson 1997, 75.

Buddhism remained the same and the Thais were obviously religious.⁴²

Despite the syncretistic character of Thai Buddhism with influences from Animism and Hinduism, Thailand was in the 1990s one of the countries where Buddhism had its strongest foothold. The *World Fellowship of Buddhists*, which worked for peace and the well-being of people through following Buddha's teaching, had its headquarters in Bangkok and it was in Thailand that the movement for the renewal of Buddhism was most accepted.⁴³

The third foreign religion to arrive in Thailand was Islam. Islam was brought to Southeast Asia by traders and adventurers during the 13th century. It spread among the tradespeople in the seaports on both sides of the Strait of Malacca and on Java. In the early 1990s, the Muslims constituted Thailand's largest religious minority. About 4 percent of the Thai population were Muslims, mostly *Shafiite* of the Shafiite rite. The Thai Muslims were concentrated in the southernmost provinces of Thailand - Narathiwat, Pattani, Yala, Songkhla and Satun - where Muslims were the predominant group. They were an ethnic minority who spoke Malay and had strong cultural ties to the people in Malaysia.⁴⁴ The Muslim provinces were something of a trouble spot. By 1960, the *National Liberation Front of Patani* had been founded with the aim of establishing a democratic Islamic state and the emergence of several other militant Muslim groups followed.

⁴² Suriyabongs 1955, 40; Keyes 1977,125; Thailand into the 80's 1980, 44-47, 227; Hill 1982, 32-33; Komin 1990, 171-176; Prachayaporn 1998, 26, 64; Hiltunen 2002,124.

⁴³ Wells 1975, 266; World Christian Encyclopedia 1982, 664-665; Chareonwongsak 1997, 211; Hiltunen 2002, 214.

⁴⁴ Thailand into the 80's 1980, 51-52; World Christian Encyclopedia 1982, 665; Noer 1988, 211; Keyes 1989, 19-20; The Europa World Year Book 1994, 2879.

The wishes of these groups clashed with the attitude of the Thai government, which aimed at assimilating the Muslims with the Thais. Clashes between Muslim separatist groups and the Thai army and police were also regularly reported during the period studied in this thesis.⁴⁵

Christianity arrived in Southeast Asia in the 16th century. In 1992, there were about 305,000 Christians in Thailand. These made up about 0.5 percent of the population. Of the Christians more than 75 percent were Roman Catholics.⁴⁶

In the early 1990s, Thailand also had a significant number of Chinese immigrants; most being followers of Chinese folk-religions such as Taoism and Confucianism. Many of the Confucianists were also adherents of Mahayana Buddhism. In addition, Mahayana Buddhism was found among the Vietnamese living in Thailand.⁴⁷

2.4 History of Christianity in Thailand

Historic records witness that Christianity reached Thailand in the 16th century through the Portuguese. As to the traditions concerning earlier contacts with Christianity through Nestorian Christians there is no evidence. Some historical accounts still mention a catalogue of Nestorian bishops that is said to report a Nestorian episcopate in Thailand in the 9th century. Any possible Nestorian presence in Thailand at this time appears, however, to have disappeared leaving no trace

⁴⁵ Arumugam, Low & Rajaretnam 1973, 20-21; Noer 1988, 211-212; Bangkok Post 1.2.1998, Operation Falling Leaves: Chronology of South Violence & Calm before the storm?; Bangkok Post 12.8.2001, Governors' Dilemma & Pattani in Perspective.

⁴⁶ The Europa World Year Book 1994, 2892.

⁴⁷ Thailand into the 80's 1980, 53-54; World Christian Encyclopedia 1982, 665.

and it seems impossible to conclude whether or not there were Nestorian Christians in the country between the 9th and 16th century.⁴⁸

The Portuguese at the end of the 15th century had discovered the seaway to Asia. When Pope Alexander VI in 1493 divided the world into two parts from a demarcation line in the Atlantic, the Portuguese acquired the eastern part of the world and the Spaniards the western.⁴⁹ During the following years Portuguese seamen and traders established themselves in Southeast Asia. After the Portuguese had captured Malacca in 1511, they sent ambassadors to the city of Ayutthaya in order to set up trade relations with the Thais.⁵⁰ The first resident Christian missionaries in Ayutthaya were two Portuguese Dominican friars, Jeronimo da Cruz and Sebastiao do Couto. They arrived in the kingdom in the mid-1550s and worked as chaplains among Portuguese soldiers in the Thai army. They succeeded in converting about 1,500 Thais to Christianity. The Muslims in Ayutthaya were displeased with the progress of Christianity and the commercial privileges of the Portuguese. The mission came to an abrupt end when the two friars were martyred by Muslims, da Cruz soon after his arrival, do Couto in 1569.⁵¹

Despite this setback, the Catholic mission in Ayutthaya continued. During the remainder of the 16th century, both Dominican and Franciscan friars worked in the kingdom and in the early 17th century they were accompanied by Jesuits. The missionaries met with misfortune and troubles, and at

⁴⁸ Smith 1982,13; Moffet 1998, 459-461.

⁴⁹ Mulders 1960, 195-197; Schlunk & Peltola 1973, 82; van der Cruyssen 2002, 6-7,11.

⁵⁰ Thompson 1941, 24-25; Wyatt 1984, 88; van der Cruyssen 2002, 7-11.

⁵¹ Schmidlin 1924, 252; Enciclopedia Cattolica 1954, 36; Syamananda 1981, 64; World Christian Encyclopedia 1982, 665; van der Cruyssen 2002, 12-13.

times also persecution. The work never really flourished and the missionaries preferred to work among the Portuguese and other foreigners than among the Thais. Until the late 17th century, Catholic mission in the eastern part of the world was controlled by the Portuguese and most of the missionaries were either Portuguese or Spanish.⁵²

The French interest in the Indochinese peninsula was awakened in the mid-17th century after all Christians had been expelled from Japan and the Catholics from Malacca. The main objective of the French mission was China and Indochina. Since persecutions prevented the French from going to these areas at that time, they decided to work in the Thai kingdom instead. The Thai king Narai (1656-1688) welcomed the French. He had found the Portuguese and their successors in Asia, the Dutch, hard to cooperate with, and strived to increase the French influence in the region.⁵³

The responsibility for the Catholic enterprise in Thailand was now given by Pope Clement IX (1667-1669) to the newly-founded *Societe des Missions Etrangeres de Paris*. In 1662, Bishop Pierre Lambert de la Motte arrived in Ayutthaya accompanied by two French priests. There they found a community of about 2,000 Christians, mainly Portuguese, ministered by three priests and a few monks. The Portuguese priests disliked the appearance of French missionaries, but since the French had papal authorisation for their mission, the Portuguese had to subordinate to their authority. The French, on the other hand, were critical of the spiritual status of the Portuguese congregation.⁵⁴ Despite the internal tension among the

⁵² Schmidlin 1924, 252; Thompson 1941, 168; Enciclopedia Cattolica 1954, 36; van der Cruysse 2002,13-14,118-120.

⁵³ Thompson 1941, 26,168; Syamananda 1981, 76.

⁵⁴ Thompson 1941, 169-170; Hall 1981, 385-386; Syamananda 1981, 76; van der Cruysse 2002,130-131,149-152.

Catholics, the French missionaries enjoyed some success. As a reward for helping to construct a new palace and other buildings, king Narai provided the missionaries with land and houses. They founded two parishes, a number of chapels, a convent, a hospital, a school, and a seminary. In 1673 they erected the vicariate of Thailand.⁵⁵

The French nourished hopes of converting king Narai, but the Thai king was merely politely interested in the faith of the foreigners. The reason for the king to cultivate friendly relations with the French seem to have been a strive to counterbalance the British and Dutch influence in southeast Asia and a wish to make the Thai kingdom known abroad. King Narai was also attracted by the culture, philanthropy, and charitable work of the missionaries. The problem was that the French gained too strong a position in the country, which led to opposition to the growing French influence. After king Narai's death in 1688, an anti-French surge swept over the area. French priests and monks were imprisoned or driven from the kingdom, the work of the Catholics languished, the Thais became suspicious of Europeans and their religion, and the 18th century was characterized by persecution of Christians⁵⁶ The Thai monarchies tried to maintain a policy of non-communication with the West for the next 150 years. Despite this, the French mission continued, but the work was fruitless. Not until 1811, when king Phra Phutthaloetla (1809-1824) granted the missionaries more freedom, the hardships of the Catholic mission came to an end. At this time the French Catholics still had six churches in the kingdom.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Thompson 1941, 647-648; Wells 1958, 5; Syamananda 1981, 76-77; van der Cruysse 2002, 164-165.

⁵⁶ Schmidlin 1924, 388; Thompson 1941, 170-176; Mulders 1960, 327; Kim 1980, 35-38; Wyatt 1984, 111-117.

⁵⁷ Thompson 1941, 648-650; Enciclopedia Cattolica 1954, 36; Wells 1958, 5; Kim 1980, 38; Hall 1981, 397.

In the latter part of the 19th century, during the reign of king Mongkut and king Chulalongkorn, the Catholic mission took on new life. A Franco-Thai treaty in 1856 gave the mission permission to erect churches, seminars, schools, and hospitals all over Thailand. When masses of Chinese immigrants started to pour into Thailand in search of work, the Catholic missionaries concentrated their efforts on the newly arrived. Funds were sent from France, the work expanded geographically, social institutions were opened, dioceses were established in the south and east of Thailand, and the number of converts increased. But there were hardly any Thais among the converts. In 1909, the Catholic Church in Thailand finally became a juridical person with the right to buy property in the country.⁵⁸

The Catholic Church in Thailand acquired its first Thai bishop in 1945. In 1992 there were two Catholic archbishops in Thailand, eight bishops and a large number of foreign priests, monks, and nuns. The estimated number of Catholics was 236,500. The Catholics were dispersed all over the country, but more dense populations were found in the Bangkok metropolitan area and in northeastern Thailand. A majority of the Catholics were ethnic Chinese and Vietnamese. From the beginning the Catholic mission had used both education and medical service as means to reach the Thais with the Christian gospel. Eventually the missionaries realised that the effects of many years of Christian schooling were much deeper than a visit to a Christian hospital. In consequence, the Catholic mission focussed above all during the 20th century on educational work⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Schmidlin 1924, 460-461; Thompson 1941, 651-653; Latourette 1944, 242-243; Hall 1981, 711; Keyes 1989, 47-48.

⁵⁹ Thompson 1941, 653-655. World Christian Encyclopedia 1982, 665; Keyes 1993, 270, 272; Catholic-Hierarchy: Statistics by Country. Available at <www.catholic-hierarchy.org/country/scl.html>. Accessed September 18, 2009.

The first attempt to propagate Protestant Christianity among the Thais took place in the first part of the 19th century. At this time Ann Hasseltine Judson, wife of Missionary Adoniram Judson, working for the American Baptist Mission in Burma, came into contact with Thai captives in Rangoon. She studied their language and translated a Burmese catechism, a Christian tract and the Gospel of Matthew into Thai. But she never visited Thailand herself.⁶⁰

The first Protestant missionaries to actually work in Thailand were Karl F. A. Gutzlaff, an independent missionary who had earlier served with the Netherlands Missionary Society, and Jacob Tomlin of the London Missionary Society. Gutzlaff and Tomlin arrived in Bangkok in August 1828. They concentrated their missionary effort on the Chinese population, but also had some contact with the Thais. Gutzlaff threw himself into the work of translating the Bible from Chinese to Thai. Within a year, he had translated the New Testament and large sections of the Old Testament⁶¹. Tomlin worked on a Thai-English dictionary, but had to leave the country in May 1829 for reasons of health and in order to get a fresh supply of books and medicine. After the departure of Tomlin, Gutzlaff married the missionary Mary Newell. Together they translated parts of the Bible into Lao and Cambodian, carried on the work on Tomlin's dictionary, and prepared an English-Chinese dictionary. Following the death of his wife and due to his own ill health, Gutzlaff left Thailand in June 1831. Gutzlaff's aim

⁶⁰ Latourette 1944, 243; Robert 1996, 45; Historical Sketch of Protestant Missions in Siam 1828-1928 1999, 1, 27; Moffet 2007, 350.

⁶¹ The Bible translation method used by Gutzlaff and Tomlin was special. Firstly, a Chinese assistant read a part in Chinese and translated it into halting Thai. After this a Burmese assistant, whose Thai was slightly more fluent, tried to rephrase it and write down what he had understood. Gutzlaff and Tomlin were not content with the method and as a consequence the latter started working on a Thai dictionary. See for instance Wells 1958, 6; Smith 1982, 15.

had been, from the beginning, to work as a missionary in China. Now he felt that the time had come to carry out the original plan. During his stay in Thailand he baptized one convert, a Chinese named Boon-Tee. Tomlin returned to Thailand in July 1831, but stayed only for half a year and the London Missionary Society did not continue its mission in Thailand for long.⁶²

Gtitzlaff and Tomlin did not, however, leave the mission work in Thailand to its fate. They sent appeals to several missionary societies in order to interest them in the mission task in Thailand. The *American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions* and the *American Baptist Mission* answered their appeal. The first missionary of the American Board to arrive in Thailand was David Abeel, who came from Canton where he had been stationed as a seamen's chaplain. Abeel arrived in June 1831 but did not stay long as ill health forced him to withdraw the next year. His place was taken by Dan Beach and Emelie Royce Bradley, who arrived in Thailand in 1835. Dr. Bradley came to play an important role in the early years of the Protestant mission in Thailand.⁶³ During his 38 years as a missionary, Bradley served as a medical doctor, printer, interpreter, government advisor, and unofficial ambassador. Due to his introduction of modern medicine in Thailand and his fight against smallpox, Bradley won the favour of the royal family. Bradley was the first English teacher of prince Mongkut, the future king. When he received too many commissions to find time to continue his teaching task, Bradley recommended another American Board missionary,

⁶² Schlyter 1946, 48-62; Historical Sketch of Protestant Missions in Siam 1828-1928 1999, 1-5; Early Missionaries in Bangkok 2001, 8-13, 29, 31-34, 47-48; Moffet 2007, 350, 354-355.

⁶³ Strong 1910, 114; Schlyter 1946, 59; Historical Sketch of Protestant Missions in Siam 1828-1928 1999, 6-8.

Jesse Caswell, who became tutor in English and science to the prince.⁶⁴

At first, it seemed as if the work of the American Board would be reasonably successful. The missionaries made contact with people from different social classes and the working possibilities appeared unlimited. It transpired that very few, if any, Thais were willing to convert to Christianity. Internal theological disputes strained the relations among the missionaries. When China, in the 1840s, was opened for Christian mission work it seemed like a more attractive place to work.⁶⁵ The American Board gave up its Thailand mission in 1849 without baptizing one single Thai and transferred the work to the American Missionary Association. The latter did not develop any extensive work, but Bradley continued in its service.⁶⁶

The American Baptist Mission was the second group to respond to the appeal from Tomlin and Gützlaff. The Baptists hoped that Thailand would be an intermediate station for the penetration of the then closed China. The work in Thailand began in March 1833 when Rev. John Taylor Jones together with his wife Eliza Grew Jones were sent over by the Baptist mission in Burma. Although appointed to work among the Thais, Rev. Jones started with the Chinese as they seemed more receptive to the Christian gospel. Six months after his arrival, Rev. Jones baptized the first converts. In 1835, the Joneses were joined by William and Matilda Coman Dean. Rev. Dean took over the work among the Chinese. In 1837, he founded the first protestant church in the Far East, the Maitri

Strong 1910,114-115; Lord 1969, 69, 85, 93,169-170,178; Kim 1980, 40-41; Moffet 2007,350-351, 595, 597.

⁶⁵ Strong 1910,114-16; Swanson 1984, 4.

⁶⁶ Strong 1910,116; Lord 1969,143; Swanson 1984, 4; Historical Sketch of Protestant Missions in Siam 1828-1928 1999, 21-26.

Chit Baptist Church in Bangkok. Rev. Jones concentrated on work among the Thais through translation, production, and distribution of Christian literature.⁶⁷ In 1861, a separate church was inaugurated for the Thais, but the Thai work never grew to be successful and in 1869, it was suspended. Lack of reinforcement and a series of misfortunes made the American Baptist Mission terminate its work in Thailand in 1893, but the mission left a strong Chinese church to continue the work.⁶⁸ The American Baptist Mission returned to Thailand in 1952. Since then its most fruitful work has been among the Karen people in the north.⁶⁹

The *Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions* was established in 1837. Three years later its first missionaries to Thailand, William p. and Seignoria Buell, arrived in Bangkok. Due to the illness of Mrs. Buell, the work was suspended from 1844 until the arrival of Rev. Stephen Mattoon and his wife Mary Lourie as well as Dr. Samuel R. House in 1847. A mission press was started and schools were opened. In 1849, the missionaries founded a church in Bangkok, although they did not yet have any converts. The first Thai was not baptized until 1859. The early years of Presbyterian mission were filled with hardship, owing mainly to the resistance of the anti-foreign king Phra Nangklao (1824-1851) and the lack of new missionaries. The turning point came in 1851 when the king died and prince Mongkut ascended the throne. King Mongkut, who had studied under the tutoring of missionaries, showed a more tolerant attitude to western influences. Some of the Presbyterian missionaries and early converts gained prominent positions in society, especially in the areas of

⁶⁷ Wells 1958, 16-18; Blanford 1977, 34-36; Smith 1982, 16, 19-20; Hill 1982, 36; Historical Sketch of Protestant Missions in Siam 1828-1928 1999, 27-29.

⁶⁸ Thompson 1941, 657; Wells 1958,19-21; Historical Sketch of Protestant Missions in Siam 1828-1928 1999, 30-34; Makela 2000, 28.

Gold 1975, 638; Kim 1980,191; Hill 1982,36-37.

education and medicine. Until the mid-1860s, the Presbyterian mission focussed on Bangkok as the missionaries' residence was restricted to the capital. For trips outside Bangkok they needed special permission. Petchaburi, southwest of the capital, was the only place outside Bangkok where permanent mission work was started.⁷⁰

The Lao mission in northern Thailand was launched by Rev. Daniel McGilvary and his wife Sophia Bradley, daughter of Dan Beach and Emelie Royce Bradley. Rev. McGilvary had arrived in Thailand in 1858 and his interest in northern Thailand was awakened by his father-in-law. During a survey trip to the north in 1863-1864 McGilvary felt strongly that the Presbyterian Mission should take up work in Chiang Mai. In 1867, he had all the necessary permissions and along with his family Daniel McGilvary travelled north in order to commence work in Chiang Mai. The next year they were joined by Rev. Jonathan Wilson and his wife Maria.⁷¹

The first baptisms in Chiang Mai took place within two years of the arrival of the first missionaries. The success of the Presbyterian mission led to a brief persecution and two of the early converts were executed by men loyal to the local ruler, Chao Kaviorot (1855-1870). After the death of Chao Kaviorot, the mission could develop in a more friendly atmosphere. New mission workers arrived, mission stations were opened, churches organised, medical work started, several schools and a theological seminary established. Through evangelistic excursions contacts were made with different tribes in the North. Tours were also undertaken into Chinese, Burmese,

70 Wells 1958, 22-24, 34; Smith 1982, 27-29; Swanson 1984, 5; Historical Sketch of Protestant Missions in Siam 1828-1928 1999, 38-42, 44-51, 92-93; Moffet 2007, 597-598.

71 Wells 1958, 50-53; Swanson 1984, 5-10; Historical Sketch of Protestant Missions in Siam 1828-1928 1999, 95-96, 113-116; McGilvary 2002; 45, 52, 57-71.

and French territory.⁷² Even though the mission activity in central Thailand had started more than 35 years earlier than in the north, it was in the north that the Presbyterians had their largest Christian communities. The difference has been explained by the fact that Animism had a stronger impact on the north than on the south. Theravada Buddhism has proved resistant to any new and foreign religion, but the Laos were mostly nominal Buddhists and therefore more open to Christianity.⁷³

It took 19 years before the Presbyterians baptized their first convert, Nai Chune. Despite the hardships and the lack of results, they persevered. A milestone was reached in 1934 when the churches of the Presbyterian Mission contributed to the establishment of the *Church of Christ in Thailand* (CCT). In 1928, the centenary of the Protestant mission in Thailand was celebrated. The following year a meeting was held in Bangkok in order to discuss the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism in Jerusalem 1928 and consider the applicability of the Jerusalem findings to the Thai context⁷⁴. As a consequence, the time was considered favourable to start planning the formation of a national church. A first step was to form a National Christian Council in 1930, in which practically all

72 Thompson 1941, 661-663; Wells 1958, 54-62, 66-71; Swanson 1984, 11-17, 29-34, 37-38, 51-55, 80, 85, 135; McGilvary 2002, 86-89, 96-110, 134-136, 149-159, 276-288, 291-292, 386, 418-423; Moffet 2007, 601-602.

73 Latourette 1944, 245; Kim 1980, 43-53;

⁷⁴ At the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism in Jerusalem in 1928 the young churches, for the first time, took on a larger scale part in a joint deliberation with older churches and mission agencies. The young churches were recognized as equal partners, who had the right and the obligation to develop independently and serve their people. The Bangkok conference was part of a series of conferences in Asia 1928-1929. The leader of the conference was John R. Mott (1865-1955), an American Methodist evangelist, who served as chairman for the International Missionary Council between 1921-1942. For more information about the Jerusalem conference see *The World Mission of Christianity* 1928.

churches and mission agencies in Thailand at the time became members. Four years later the Church of Christ in Thailand was established. The founders were predominantly Presbyterian bodies and Chinese Baptists. The intention was to give the Thais an indigenous national church and the founders hoped that all Protestant churches would join the church in time.⁷⁵ A complete integration between the Church of Christ in Thailand and the Presbyterian Mission took place in 1957. The mission conferred its property to the church and the missionaries became fraternal workers under the church. The beginning of the new church was not easy. Problems were faced in the areas of spirituality, leadership, economy, church growth, and the relationship between the mission agencies and the church. In the late 20th century, the Church of Christ in Thailand was nevertheless the largest Protestant denomination in the country.⁷⁶

In the early 20th century, several new mission agencies set up work in Thailand. Anglican Christianity entered Thailand through English residents as early as 1894. For them a church and a chaplain were maintained in Bangkok. In 1903, Canon . Greenstock resigned his post as chaplain in order to serve under the *Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts* as a missionary to the Thais. In 1903, the *Churches of Christ in Great Britain* entered Thailand by way of their Burma undertaking. The *Seventh Day Adventists* came to Thailand in 1918 concentrating mainly on medical work and literature

Thompson 1941, 671; Wells 1958, 27, 137-143; Kim 1980, 75-78; World Christian Encyclopedia 1982, 665

⁷⁶ Norsk Misjonstidende 19/1976, Glimt fra kirke og misjon i Thailand; Kim 1980, 79-91; Smith 1982, 183, 179-184, 196-198, 212; Makela 2000, 32-33. The later development of the Church of Christ in Thailand is dealt with in section 2.5 *Thai Christianity in the last quarter of the 20th century*.

work and the *Christian and Missionary Alliance* began work in 1929 with their main focus on eastern Thailand.⁷⁷

The numerical progress of Christianity during the first century of Protestant mission in Thailand was slow, but the Christian impact was substantial. The mission workers were pioneers in introducing western culture and science to Thailand and Christianity became more influential than the size of its communities implied.⁷⁸ The significance of foreign missions in Thailand has been expressed by the former king Chulalongkorn: "*Siam has not been disciplined by English and French guns, like China; but the country has been opened by missionaries, to whom Siam owes the introduction of printing, European literature, vaccination, modern medicine and surgery, and many useful mechanical appliances*".⁷⁹

During World War II, Christian work was almost completely suspended due to the Japanese occupation. Thailand was drawn into war with Great Britain and the United States. American and British missionaries were interned and many school and church buildings were requisitioned for military purposes. Catholic missionaries, being chiefly French and Italian, were not placed under equally close restrictions. After the end of the war most of the mission agencies returned to Thailand.⁸⁰ Due to the closing of China to foreign missions in 1949, many mission agencies redirected their interest to other countries and several new missions entered Thailand. The largest of these from a personnel point of view was the *Overseas Missionary Fellowship* (former China Inland Mission),

77 Wells 1958, 195-201; Gold 1975, 639; Smith 1982, 188-190; Historical Sketch of Protestant Missions in Siam 1828-1928 1999, 55, 257, 261-262, 267-268.

78 Latourette 1944, 245-246.

79 Thompson 1941, 664.

80 Latourette 1945, 325-326; Gold 1975, 627-628, 639; Kim 1980, 61-63; Smith 1982, 202-213, 222.

who concentrated its work on ethnic groups in northern Thailand. The Pentecostal movement's interest in Thailand was awakened, and also Asian churches, particularly Korean and Philippine churches, started sending missionaries to Thailand.⁸¹ The arrival of new mission agencies made it clear that many of the newcomers did not share the philosophy of the Church of Christ in Thailand. Consequently the *Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand* was formed in 1970 in order to provide an umbrella organisation for missions not affiliated with the Church of Christ.⁸²

With regard to Protestant missions, Thailand has above all been an American mission enterprise. It was not until after World War II that European mission agencies, on a larger scale, became interested in Thailand. As a mission field, Thailand has been pushed into the background by larger countries such as India and China. Often Thailand has merely been seen as a springboard into China or as substitute at times when nations such as China or Japan have been closed to foreigners.⁸³

Thailand has proved a difficult mission field where little progress has been made if counted in number of converts and baptisms. In addition, the tendency of Thai converts to slip back into animistic Buddhism, have been significant. Only in northern Thailand have there been larger groups of Christians and Christian villages. The Chinese population in Thailand has generally been more receptive to Christianity than the

⁸¹ Gold 1975, 627; Suomen Lahetyssanommat 13/1979, Thaimaa; World Christianity 1979, 145; Kim 1980, 194-196; Smith 1982, 222-224; Hill 1982, 34, 36; Makela 2000, 61-62, 66.

⁸² Smith 1982, 226; Makela 2000, 62. The Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand is more thoroughly dealt with in section 2.5 *Thai Christianity in the last quarter of the 20th century*.

⁸³ Norsk Misjonstidende 13/1979, Protestantisk misjon i Thailand 150 ar.

Thais; the Chinese influence on the congregations in Thailand has been significant. The main obstacle to mission work has not been open hostility or persecutions, but the indifference of the peoples in Thailand and the strong bonds between the Buddhist religion, Thai culture, and nationalism. The national character of Thai Buddhism has made most Thai Buddhists "immune" or "resistant" to universal Christianity. Religious affiliation has not simply been about personal religious conviction; it has also entailed a commitment to a particular form of authority. Thais that have converted to Christianity have placed themselves outside the religion that constitutes the foundation of the Thai state and have had an ambiguous relation to the state that rules in the name of a Buddhist nation. Christianity has been seen as a foreign religion for foreigners. This view has been underlined by the fact that a significant percentage of the Thai Christians belong to the ethnic minorities in the country. That an ethnic minority chooses another religion than that of the majority population is on the other hand not uncommon. It is a way of defining one's identity in relation to the majority.⁸⁴

2.5 Characteristics of Thai Christianity in the last quarter of the 20th century

In the late 1970s, every foreign mission agency that wished to work in Thailand had to register with an organisation officially recognised by the Thai government. These legal

⁸⁴ AFELM Hk 8 Kertomus Paavo Kilven matkasta Thaimaahan 25.02-09.03.1976; Nida 1965, 90-91; Gold 1975, 629; Petchsongkram 1975, 3-4, 6-7; World Christianity 1979, 142-143; Blanford 1977, 63, 70-80; Keyes 1993, 262, 270-272, 277; Holzmann 1997, 63-66; Makela 2006, 82. The conversion to Christianity among ethnic minorities in Thailand has, for instance, been investigated by Anders p. Hovemyr in his doctoral thesis about the identity of the Karens in Thailand. For more information see Hovemyr 1989.

organisations were the earlier mentioned *Church of Christ in Thailand* and *Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand* as well as *the Thailand Baptist Churches Association*, *the Seventh Day Adventist Church of Thailand* and *the Catholic Mission in Thailand*. On behalf of the Thai government the Department for Religious Affairs, a sector of the Ministry of Education, was responsible for maintaining contacts with the religious communities, including the Christian churches and organisations.⁸⁵

Concerning the propagation of religion by expatriate missionaries the Department of Religious Affairs stipulated special regulations. According to the regulations, the propagation "*must be in an orderly manner, not interfere with the peace of community, and must be in accord with the customs, culture, regulations and laws*". It was stressed that the propagation of religion should not use methods that offended other denominations or religions, for instance forcing, deceiving, offering financial gain, promising supernatural experiences outside the basic doctrine of faith, calumniating, "sheep stealing" or copying methods and characteristics of other denominations or religions. For the Thai government it was important that the propagating of religion would not cause division amongst the people but support the national unity.⁸⁶ The number of Christian mission workers in Thailand was at the beginning of the 1980s estimated to be around 700, but increased rapidly and exceeded 1,000 by the mid-1980s.⁸⁷

During the period studied in this thesis, the Church of Christ in Thailand was the largest Protestant church denomination in Thailand. In 1998, the church reported a membership of about

⁸⁵ World Christianity 1979, 145; World Christian Encyclopedia 1982, 666; Hill 1982, 35.

⁸⁶ AFELM II 42 Policies and Procedures of LMT/Regulations of the Department of Religious Affairs, September 29, 1981; AFELM I 68 Letter from Kjell Sandvik to Seikku Paunonen, February 8, 1993.

⁸⁷ Suomen Lahetyssanommat 13/1979, Thaimaa; Makela 2000, 64-65.

107,000. The reliability of the statistics was, however, uncertain. According to other sources the number of members might have been as low as 60,000, at least if only the adult communicants were counted. The Church of Christ in Thailand consisted of Thai-, Chinese-, Karen-, and English-speaking congregations. Most of the members came from northern Thailand. In addition to evangelisation and parish work, the church was involved in education, medical service, and social work.⁸⁸

The Church of Christ in Thailand was characterised as an ecumenical church. It allowed its member churches to maintain their creeds and liturgies provided they did not conflict with the constitution of the Church of Christ. At times, the church strived to strengthen its Presbyterian identity, but particularly in the 1980s, the Presbyterian influence decreased due to the church members' becoming a more and more heterogenous group. The Presbyterian origin was nevertheless still visible for instance in the administration of the church. The influence of the constitution of the Church of Christ in Thailand on the ecclesiological thinking of other church denominations in the country has, according to Missionary Jaakko Makela of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission, been substantial as individuals leaving the church and joining other Christian groups brought with them the patterns and ideas of the Church of Christ. Beginning in the mid-20th century, the Church of Christ experienced internal tensions between groups considered to be theologically either liberal or conservative. The conservatives became a minority, a development that led to defection from the church and to the establishment of new independent churches and congregations.⁸⁹

88 LNMS Nordb0 & Harbakk 1976,12-14; Makela 2000,42-43.

89 LNMS Nordb0 & Harbakk 1976, 18-19; Kim 1980, 163-170; Makela 2000, 60-61,167; Makela 2006, 85.

The *Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand* (EFT), a loosely structured fellowship for some of the evangelical organisations, institutions, denominations and local churches in Thailand, was established in 1969. The organisation had its origin in the increased cooperation between different Evangelical groups from the mid-1950s and on. While the Church of Christ in Thailand strived to be a national church, the Evangelical Fellowship was not a church but an umbrella organisation for Protestant work in Thailand. The requirement for membership in the Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand was that the presumptive member accounted for its creed and view of the Bible as well as its organisation and church background, accepted the constitution, and paid the annual fee. The members of the Evangelical Fellowship were expected to subscribe to the principles and practise of the fellowship and abide by its objectives to 1) promote the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, 2) promote fellowship among Christians, 3) promote the spiritual life of Christians, 4) promote social services including health and education, and 5) abstain from involvement in the politics of Thailand. Churches, missions, groups, and individuals could all become members of the Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand. Membership was granted by the Annual Meeting of the fellowship.⁹⁰

According to the Norwegian missionaries Anund Nordbo and Ernst Harbakk who visited Thailand in the mid-1970s on behalf of the Norwegian Missionary Society, the churches and mission organisations that were members of the Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand could be considered conservative and

⁹⁰ ANMS Thailand Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand Constitution 1969; ANMS Det Norske Misjonsselskaps Generalforsamling 1975/11 Skal NMS ta opp nytt misjonsarbeid i Brasilia og *soto* t-Asia, Laos/Thailand?; LNMS Nordbo & Harbakk 1976, 16-17; Smith 1982, 226; Sritandon 1996, 235; Makela 2000, 62-63; A Dictionary of Asian Christianity 2001, 276-277.

evangelical. Generally, they had a fundamentalists view of the Bible. Their work concentrated on preaching and the aim was to establish new congregations. The member organisations did not, strictly speaking, have any obligations to each other, but they tried to avoid working in the same geographical areas in order to prevent unnecessary competition. Occasionally the members of the fellowship also cooperated for instance in arranging larger meetings and in purchasing special equipment.⁹¹

The ranks of the Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand have swelled since its foundation, but the exact number of members have been hard to estimate as local churches have been allowed to either be members directly under the fellowship or belong to a denomination that is a member. In 1993, the Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand reported a total of 383 members, of which 265 were churches and 118 were Thai or foreign mission groups and organisations. The fellowship functioned mainly as a representative body and coordinator for government related matters, including visa and work permits. In addition, the fellowship could step in to help resolve conflicts between members and decide on disciplinary actions. The fellowship also contributed to gathering statistics regarding Christian churches and missions in Thailand.⁹²

The Thailand Baptist Churches Association and the Seventh-Day Adventist Church of Thailand have managed to register their own organisations with the government. These organisations however, have not attained as high a status as the Church of Christ in Thailand and the Evangelical

91 LNMS Nordb0 & Harbakk 1976, 17; AFELM Hia 39 A seminar discourse by Markku Ala-Uotila for the employees of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission, April 14, 1982, 8; Norsk Misjonstidende 13/1979, Protestantisk misjon i Thailand 150 ar.

92 Sritandon 1996, 235; Makela 2000, 62-64, 217-220; A Dictionary of Asian Christianity 2001, 277.

Fellowship of Thailand. Neither have all Baptists joined the Baptist Association. In 1998 the members of the Baptist Association in Thailand numbered 3,844. According to the General Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists, the church had 12,206 members in Thailand by the end of the year 2000. The Catholics had already attained legal status in Thailand by 1909. The Catholic Mission in Thailand functions as an official contact to the Thai Government, and as a unifying body for the Catholic work in Thailand. Several Protestant missions and churches have their own registered foundations and some churches belong to two or three different associations.⁹³

According to the missionary Jaakko Makela, the contacts between the Catholic Church and the Protestant churches in Thailand have been few. Until the mid-20th century, the contacts were nonexistent or strained, at times even hostile. Subsequently the contacts have increased, but the Protestants and the Catholics remain at a distance from each other. The Catholic Church in Thailand has several times found itself in conflict situations with the Thai authorities and the Buddhist leaders. A fact that has increased the caution of the Protestant churches in their contacts with the Catholics. Even if the schisms have not directly affected the Protestants, they have influenced the attitudes towards Christians in Thailand. The strains between Buddhists and Catholics have at least partly been due to the Catholic attempts to indigenize Christianity, for instance, by using Buddhist vocabulary in rites and religious texts.⁹⁴

⁹³ World Christianity 1979, 145; Makela 2000, 43; Statistics from the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Available at <www.adventiststatistics.org>. Accessed September 18, 2009.

Makela 2006, 82; Keyes 1993, 273-274.

The most successful Protestant church denomination in Thailand during the second half of the 20th century was the Pentecostal Movement as well as independent churches with their origins in this movement. The Pentecostal Movement in Thailand has, however, been divided. Pentecostalism in Thailand includes for instance the *United Pentecostal Church*, *Thailand Assemblies of God*, *the Full Gospel Assemblies of Thailand*, and *the Full Gospel Churches in Thailand*. Several fractions of the Pentecostal movement have been accused of building up their communities largely at the expense of other churches. Most of the Pentecostal churches have been members of the Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand, but the United Pentecostal Church has not joined any officially recognized Christian body.⁹⁵

Thai Protestantism has often been described as individualistic. Most of the Thai church communions and congregations have felt that they are sufficient unto themselves; not needing or wanting closer connection or cooperation with other communions or congregations. Outside traditionally Protestant churches there have been many independent churches and congregations. The congregations have in general been small and isolated. Their membership rates have rarely exceeded 100 members. The threshold between the church communions has however been low and both members and coworkers have easily transferred from one church communion to another. There have been few forums, where it has been possible to discuss joint assignments, problems between the church communions, and the distribution of the work. In the late 1970s, most of the missionaries and churches

⁹⁵ Norsk Misjonstidende 19/1976, Glimt fra kirke og misjon i Thailand; Kim 1980, 202-203; World Christian Encyclopedia 1982, 665; Keyes 1993, 274-275; Chareonwongsak 1997, 212; Makela 2000, 81-82, 165-166, 194-195; Makela 2006, 83; Hosack, James: *The Arrival of Pentecostals and Charismatics in Thailand*. Available at <www.aps.edu/aips/00-3/i-hosack.pdf>. Accessed at September 18, 2009.

worked in the north of the country, while northeastern Thailand had comparatively few missionaries. One of the forums where joint topics were discussed was the *Thailand Church Growth Committee*. The aim of the committee was to support local congregations and encourage them to be outgoing and to evangelise. The committee organised evangelistic congresses and campaigns as well as courses for both Thais and missionaries. By collecting information about Christianity in Thailand, the committee also tried to coordinate the work and prevent the concentration of Christian activity to certain parts of the country.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ ANMS Arsmote for misjonserene i Thailand 1979/Arssrapport fra Thailandfeltet; Misjon i en ny tid 1979, 66-68; Suomen Lahetyssanomat 13/1980, Pysahtyrmsen armoiahja; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1981/Five Years Plan of Lutheran Mission in Thailand 1981-1985; Kusawadee 1989,14; Sritandon 1996, 240-241, 250; Makela 2006, 83.

3. THE ORIGIN OF LUTHERAN MISSION IN THAILAND

Thailand had seen many mission enterprises before the Lutheran interest in the country was awakened in the early 1970s in particular. Christian missionaries had been working in Thailand since the 16th century. Yet the Lutherans wanted to make their own contribution to the Christian mission in the country by starting work of their own. In this chapter I am going to investigate the background of the Lutheran mission in Thailand. I will analyse why Thailand was chosen as a mission field, how the work was started, and how the Lutheran mission placed itself on Thailand's map of Christianity, i.e. what were its relationships with other Christian churches and organisations in the country. In addition, I will look more closely at the member organisations of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand, and how they came to join the Lutheran mission undertaking in Thailand.

3.1 Reasons for Lutheran mission and mission cooperation

Like so many other new mission enterprises in Asia during the latter half of the 20th century, the Lutheran mission in Thailand can trace its origin back to the closing of Mainland China to foreign missions from the late-1940s onwards. For many American and European mission agencies China had until then been the main mission field in Asia. This was also the case with the *Norwegian Missionary Society* (NMS) and the *Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission* (FELM), who after the closing of China had to reconsider their work in Asia. Their former missionaries to China were without placings and new job opportunities were needed for them. It was also considered important to find new mission fields in order to keep up the mission interest among the supporters at home.

Furthermore, both the NMS and FELM wanted to continue working among people of Chinese origin. In consequence, they both started to look for new mission fields in Asia, preferably countries with a Chinese population or a large Chinese minority⁹⁷. Within a few years, the NMS as well as FELM placed some missionaries in Hong Kong and Taiwan. The work in Hong Kong and Taiwan was not yet considered official, but missionaries were stationed there on a temporary basis while the Nordic missions were waiting for the situation in Mainland China to settle. Thus, the question about how and where to continue working among the Chinese remained unsolved.⁹⁸

Within the NMS, the possibility of starting mission work among the Chinese living in Thailand and Indochina was mentioned as early as in 1949 at a meeting for former missionaries to China. At this stage, the thought of sending missionaries to Southeast Asia was nevertheless abandoned and the NMS chose to concentrate on the already existing mission fields and the new work that was started in Japan in 1951.⁹⁹ The thought of mission among overseas Chinese¹⁰⁰ continued, however, to appear in the discussions and plans of the NMS. When the then Secretary General of the NMS, Magne Valen-Sendstad, in 1972 visited Hong Kong, the

⁹⁷ The wish to continue working among the ethnic Chinese was shared by many other Western mission agencies that, just like the NMS and FELM, had been forced to discontinue their mission in mainland China and now started to look for new mission fields, preferably countries with a Chinese population or a considerable Chinese minority. Winter 1970, 48-49.

⁹⁸ AMBT Conversation with Egil Eggen, February 17, 2003; Jarva 1982, 17-19, 23-24; Pesonen 1990, 20, 22-36; Strandenes 1992, 184-185.

⁹⁹ Strandenes 1992, 184.

¹⁰⁰ The concept "overseas Chinese" is in this context used as a common designation for the Chinese ethnic groups that emigrated from China and settled in most countries in Southeast Asia.

possibility of mission work among overseas Chinese was also discussed with the Norwegian missionaries. According to Valen-Sendstad, mission among overseas Chinese would have at least two positive effects. Firstly, more Chinese would be reached with the Christian Gospel. Secondly, the mission field in Hong Kong would acquire a stronger position and become something of an outlook for the work among the overseas Chinese. As a result of the discussions, missionary Ernst Harbakk of the NMS in Hong Kong prepared a report about the overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia. The report deemed that due to political reasons it would be difficult to start mission work in Burma, North Vietnam, and Indonesia. In Singapore and Malaysia, there was already a well-established Lutheran church and Lutheran mission work. According to Harbakk, the countries that could come in question were Thailand, South Vietnam, the Philippines, and possibly Cambodia. Among these countries, only the Philippines had a national Lutheran church.¹⁰¹

At the request of the Home Board of the NMS, the Annual Meeting of the NMS in Hongkong agreed to make reconnoitring tours to Southeast Asia in order to conduct a closer investigation into the prospects for a Lutheran mission enterprise. The possibility of a mission cooperation with FELM and the *Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong* (ELCHK), the partner church of the NMS and FELM in Hong Kong, was already mentioned at this stage. As the NMS knew that also the Finns had plans to expand their work in Asia, the NMS considered it an advantage if they could combine their strengths. In addition, the ELCHK had shown interest in starting mission among the overseas Chinese and particularly the leaders of the NMS in Norway advocated a close cooperation with the ELCHK. If the NMS wanted to work among overseas Chinese, it would be both natural and

101 Jesus er Herre 1975,17; Strandenes 1992, 212; Woie 1992, 329.

necessary to seek help and advice from the Chinese themselves. The ELCHK was especially interested in mission work in the Philippines. The Philippines had a significant Chinese minority and the number of Philippine guest workers in Hong Kong was increasing in the mid-1970s.¹⁰²

Late in 1974 a reconnoitring tour to the Philippines was made by Missionary Ernst Harbakk of the NMS, Missionary Seikku Paunonen of FELM and Pastor Victor Tsu from the ELCHK. A longer tour to Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Laos was planned for 1975. However, before this tour, the NMS made an important decision by agreeing that even though the overseas Chinese had been the main focus of interest until then, the other ethnical groups would be also be considered in the future. Moreover, Paunonen questioned if it was meaningful to continue concentrating on the Chinese since mission work among the Chinese in Southeast Asia would mean work among a minority group. In addition, most of the Chinese churches had already developed their characteristics and started their own mission enterprises. The reconnoitring tour in January 1975 was finally made by missionaries Ernst Harbakk and Nils Peder Kjetsa of the NMS in Hong Kong. The Finnish representative could not participate due to the strained missionary situation in Hong Kong and none of the representatives suggested by the ELCHK were able to participate.¹⁰³

¹⁰² ANMS Arsmotet i Misjonsersamradet Hong Kong 1973, Sak nr. 6; ANMS Arsruatet for Misjonsersamradet i Hong Kong 1974, Sak nr 5 & Sak nr 6 including Svarsskriv Hong Kong 1973; Strandenses 1992, 212; Woie 1992, 329.

¹⁰³ AFELM Hk 8 Tyomahdollisuudet ulkokiinalaisten parissa Filippiineilla. Kertomus Filippiineille tehdystä matkasta 20.11.-4.12.1974, Seikku Paunonen; AMBT Conversation with Seikku Paunonen, December 17, 2004; Ga ut og her dem 1977, 40; Strandenses 1992, 212; Woie 1992, 329.

The representatives of the NMS reported that they were warmly welcomed by churches in both Laos and Thailand. In their travel report Harbakk and Kjetsa admitted that the political situation in Southeast Asia was uncertain, but they hoped that the NMS would not let this get in the way of mission. Harbakk and Kjetsa recommended that the NMS should take up mission work in both Laos and Thailand. Work in Laos was their first priority as the national church, *Church of Christ in Thailand* (CCT), was already well established in Thailand and for decades it had not been thought imaginable that it would be possible to pursue mission work in Laos. At this stage, no one knew how long it would be possible to carry on mission work in the country, but at least for the time being Laos was open to Christian missions. Within the NMS Laos was considered a neglected area from a missionary point of view and it was felt that now was the right time to act. As for Thailand, Harbakk and Kjetsa recommended that work should be started in northeastern Thailand, close to the border with Laos. It was the Church of Christ in Thailand that had recommended this area to the NMS. Although several churches and mission organisations were working in Thailand, the work was unequally divided between different parts of the country and northeastern Thailand had comparatively few missionaries and mission projects. Since this part of Thailand bordered on Laos, the NMS also considered it important from a strategical point of view. In case the mission work in Laos had to be discontinued for political reasons, the missionaries could be transferred to Thailand as the language and culture were similar in Laos and northeastern Thailand. The suggestion of the Church of Christ in Thailand that the Lutherans should concentrate their mission work in northeastern Thailand can also be considered from a church political and strategical point of view. If the Lutherans joined the CCT, it would strengthen its influence in northeastern Thailand. However, if the Lutheran mission decided not to apply for membership in the CCT, the

Lutherans would be out of the way and would not threaten the activities started by the CCT.¹⁰⁴

The sources do not mention why Cambodia, South Vietnam, and the Philippines were no longer considered options for the new mission work. Yet it is reasonable to assume that the thought of starting mission work in Cambodia and South Vietnam had to be abandoned due to political reasons as both countries came under Communist rule in 1975-1976. The Philippines, on the other hand, had a proportionately large Christian population while Laos and Thailand had very few Christians. By comparison work in Laos and Thailand probably felt more urgent.

When the General Assembly of the NMS gathered in Oslo, Norway, in 1975 the preparations for the new mission field in Southeast Asia were still only half ready. The General Assembly decided that the investigations were to be continued and gave the Home Board of the NMS permission to start work in the area even before the next assembly was due to meet. Within the NMS it was deemed that it would be too long to let the decision wait until the General Assembly in 1978. In addition, the General Assembly decided that the work should not solely aim at overseas Chinese, as their situation was too diverse and complicated, but that all ethnical groups should be taken into consideration. Laos and Thailand should be considered new mission fields and not extensions to the

¹⁰⁴ ANMS Det Norske Misjonsselskaps Generalforsamling 1975/11 Skal NMS ta opp nytt misjonsarbeid i Brasilia og Øst-Asia, Laos/Thailand?; ANMS Årsrapport i NMS' Thailand 1977/Rapport fra Thailand feltet; Norsk Misjonstidende 6/1975, Den evangeliske kirke i Laos; Norsk Misjonstidende 6/1975, Hundrevis av smabyer er uten Guds ord!; Woie 1992,329-330.

mission in Hong Kong.¹⁰⁵ From the beginning of 1975, the Norsk Misjonstidende magazine of the NMS started to prepare the Norwegian supporters for the new mission fields by including reports from Thailand and Laos.¹⁰⁶ The magazines of FELM did not at this point supply reports from possible new mission fields in Asia, but published general articles about the situation and need for mission in Asia. Not until the first missionaries of FELM had been sent to Bangkok, were articles about Thailand printed in the Finnish magazines.¹⁰⁷

Soon, however, the NMS had to abandon any thought of work in Laos and northeastern Thailand. After the Communist takeover in 1975, the borders of Laos were closed to foreign missions and in Thailand there were reports of increasing guerilla activities, particularly in the northeastern part of the country. Mission work in Laos and northeastern Thailand had become impossible at least at that time. On one hand, the uncertain political situation in Southeast Asia made the Home Board of the NMS cautious regarding the decision to take up work in Thailand. On the other hand, the decision about new work was urgent, as no one knew how long the Christian mission would be allowed in Thailand. According to the

¹⁰⁵ ANMS Det Norske Misjonsselskaps Generalforsamling 1975/11 Skal NMS ta opp nytt misjonsarbeid i Brasilia og SØrøst-Asia, Laos/Thailand?; Norsk Misjonstidende 19/1976, To misjonserfamilier kalles til Thailand; Ga ut og lser dem 1977, 40.

¹⁰⁶ Norsk Misjonstidende 6/1975, Hundrevis av smabyer uten Guds ord!; Norsk Misjonstidende 6/1975, Folk i Laos trenger hjelp andelig og materielt!; Norsk Misjonstidende 6/1975, Den evangeliske kirke i Laos; Norsk Misjonstidende 15/1975, Thailand har 40 millioner mennesker - bare 200.000 kristne.

¹⁰⁷ Suomen Lahetyssanommat 15/1974, Kenen tehtava ja mita?; Suomen Lahetyssanommat 16/1976, "Lahettakaa meille tyontekijoita!".

*domino theory*¹⁰⁸ Thailand would be the next country to fall into the hands of the communists.¹⁰⁹

In February 1976, the NMS sent Ernst Harbakk and Assisting Mission Secretary Anund Nordbo to Thailand in order to further investigate the prospects for mission work. The Norwegians were accompanied by the Hong Kong based missionary Paavo Kilpi from FELM. The picture that Flarbakk, Nordbo, and Kilpi obtained, was that time was limited for the Christian mission work in Thailand. Most of the church leaders they met assumed that Thailand within a few years would become a communist regime. In the travel report by Nordbo and Harbakk, it was emphasized that the NMS should not let itself be influenced by the doomsday atmosphere that prevailed¹¹⁰. The report recommended that the NMS should initiate mission work in Bangkok and that the work should aim at expanding to the countryside, particularly to northeastern Thailand. The report proposed that one or two Norwegian missionary families should be sent to Thailand that same year. For Nordbo and Harbakk it seems to have been of outmost importance that the NMS as soon as possible sent missionaries to Thailand in order to get the work started. In spite of the uncertain political situation, the NMS did not

¹⁰⁸ The hypothesis of the domino theory was that if one country was taken over by a Communist regime the neighbouring countries would also fall like dominos to Communism See for instance Nationalencyklopedin 1991, 83-84; Norsk Misjonstidende 19/1976, Thailand pa vei mot en ny politisk framtid.

¹⁰⁹ Norsk Misjonstidende 11/1976, Prekser situasjon for evangelisk kristne i Laos; Hill 1982, 47; Stuart-Fox 1989, 32-35; Woie 1992, 330; Luthersk Kirketidende 6/1994, En asiatisk kirke blir till.

¹¹⁰ The closing of mainland-China to mission work upset the efforts of many mission agencies profoundly. Some of the agencies became obsessed with the thought of being able to predict if any other government was likely to exclude all missionaries. These agencies considered everyone that started work in unstable areas ignorant or foolish. Winter 1970, 49.

want to give up the thought of mission work in Thailand, but was forced to move the centre of the work from the northeast to the capital Bangkok.¹¹¹

One year after the General Assembly had given the Home Board of the NMS authority to pursue further investigations in Southeast Asia, the board decided that the investigations should from now on be made on the spot in Bangkok. One or two missionaries should be sent to Bangkok with the mandate to initiate new work. When the Annual Meeting of the NMS in Hong Kong met in 1976, it decided that some of the missionaries in Hong Kong should be put at the NMS's disposal in order to get the work in Thailand going, even if the work in Thailand could not be seen as an expansion of the mission field in Hong Kong. Later that year EH and Emil Aarsheim, as well as Bjorg and Nils Peder Kjetsa, were transferred from Hong Kong to Thailand. Their task was to follow up the earlier investigations and draft guidelines for the mission work in Thailand.¹¹²

In the sources from the NMS, it is, above all, the political and mission strategical reasons that explain the Norwegian interest in Southeast Asia. The NMS wanted to continue working among the Chinese and since most of the Southeast Asian countries had a significant Chinese population, the NMS's interest in the area was awakened. Indochina was a politically burning region and by the NMS was seen as a neglected area from a missionary point of view. Since no one knew how long Laos and Thailand would be open to Christian mission work, the NMS considered it important to be active as long as

111 LNMS Nordb0 & Harbakk 1976, 29-30; AFELM Hk 8 Kertomus Paavo Kilven matkasta Thaimaahan 25.02-09.03.1976; Ga ut og lser dem 1977, 40; Woie 1992, 331-332.

¹¹² ANMS Arsmotet i Misjonsersamradet Hongkong 1976, Sak nr. 1; Norsk Misjonstidende 19/1976, To misjonserfamilier kalles til Thailand; Strandenes 1992, 212-213; Woie 1992, 332.

possible. An important principle for the NMS was to prioritise people and areas with little or no Christian work. Consequently, Thailand with only 0.5 percent Christians was seen as an urgent area.

For FELM, it seems above all to have been mission strategical reasons that led to a wish to expand the work in Asia. According to the former director of FELM, Henrik Smedjebacka, it was particularly the International Congress for World Evangelization in Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1974 that aroused FELM's interest in expanding its mission in Asia. During the congress, statistics over the religious situation of the world were presented. It was demonstrated that more than half of the world's non-Christian population was living in Asia, particularly in the large Asian cities. One of the Finnish representatives at the congress was Henrik Smedjebacka. He, among others, started to advocate that FELM should move the main focus of its work from the countryside in Africa to the large cities in Asia.¹¹³ The argumentation of Smedjebacka could for instance be seen in articles in the Finnish magazine of FELM, Suomen Lahetyssanommat. The mission efforts in the world were unequally divided. Ninety-five percent of the Christian mission (missionaries and mission funds) was directed to (African) Animists, even if they only constituted 17 percent of the world's population. Among the 2,000 million Hindus, Muslims, and Chinese of the world only 5 percent of the Christian missionaries were working. It was thus more or less an obligation for FELM to concentrate its future mission on Asia. The year 1977 was announced as a special year for the

¹¹³ AMBT Conversation with Henrik Smedjebacka, September 3, 1998; AMBT Conversation with Seikku Paunonen, December 17, 2004; Suomen Lahetyssanommat 15/1974, Kenen tehtava ja mita?; Let the Earth Hear His Voice 1975, 18-21, 99-101, 147-150, 213-241, 464-469, 790-799, 816-843; Hukka 1978, 43; Smedjebacka 1978, 24; Faithful to our Calling 1981, 2-3; Suomen Lahetyssseuran III viisivuotissuunnitelma 1981b, 44; Paunonen 1989, 21-22.

mission in Asia and the theme of the Annual Festival of FELM was *The Asia of the Future*¹¹⁴. The following year the Annual Festival had a still stronger message as *Moving the main focus to Asia. The Right to the Gospel* was chosen as theme for the festival.¹¹⁵ Additionally, Norsk Misjonstidende, the magazine of the NMS, ran a series of articles based on information from the Congress for World Evangelization, but on the whole the congress seems not to have had as substantial an impact on the mission strategy of the NMS as it had on FELM.¹¹⁶

In addition, the mission strategy of FELM was influenced by the mission thinking of the Lutheran World Federation¹¹⁷. Particularly at the Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania in 1977, the challenges of world mission were discussed. It was stressed that mission work was an obligation and expected of every church and the member churches of the federation were urged to find new models for Lutheran cooperation and interdependence in mission work. This was done during a series of regional mission consultations that were held during the following years by member churches on all continents. As a result of the discussions about world missions during the 1970s and the

¹¹⁴ In Finnish "Tulevaisuuden Aasia".

¹¹⁵ AFELM Cbb 89 Johtokunnan kokous, May 21, 1976, §132 Liite 6/1; Suomen Lahetyssanommat 15/1974, Kenen tehtava ja mita?; Suomen Lahetyssanommat 16/1976, "Lahettakaa meille tyontekijoita!".

¹¹⁶ Norsk Misjonstidende 12/1975, Myten om det fullforte oppdrag; Norsk Misjonstidende 13/1975, 2100 millioner mennesker i Asia kjenner ikke evangeliet!.

¹¹⁷ The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) had been established in 1947 in the aftermath of two world wars and was a continuation of the Lutheran World Convention founded in 1923. The reasons for the establishment of the LWF were many. Partly it was a reaction to the international political and social situation, but also the needs of the Lutheran churches of the world promoted the foundation of the LWF. For more information about the LWF see, for instance, *From Federation to Communion 1997*.

1980s, the Lutheran World Federation published in 1988 a mission document, *Together in God's Mission*. In the document, a Lutheran understanding of mission was defined and modern challenges in the area of mission were dealt with. Moreover, the need for mission work among the followers of the great Asian religions, i.e. Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam, as well as among the increasing number of urban dwellers and urban poor was stressed. As Henrik Smedjebacka played a central role in developing the mission thinking of the Lutheran World Federation it is probable that FELM was influenced also by these thoughts.¹¹⁸

At the end of the 1970s, FELM made the large cities in Asia one of the main destinations for its mission. The intention to gradually move the focus of the mission from Africa to Asia was, for instance, expressed in The Five Year Plan 1976-1980. The vision was to create a belt of large cities around the world where FELM pursued urban ministry, from Asia via Africa and Europe to Latin America. Since FELM already had several undertakings in Asia¹¹⁹, the decision to engage in work in Thailand could not however be made lightly. In addition, the political unrest in Southeast Asia made FELM careful not to make any rash decision.¹²⁰

118 Daressalaam 1977 1977, 21-39, 76-105, 204, 230-234; Scherer 1982, 200-207; From Dar es Salaam to Budapest 1984, 14-19; Together in God's Mission 1988, 5-13, 17-19; Smedjebacka 1990, 31-36.

⁹ By this time FELM had work in the following Asian countries: Taiwan, Hong Kong, Pakistan and Nepal (work was started in 1978).

¹²⁰ AFELM Cbb 89 Johtokunnan kokous, February 27, 1976, 132 § Liite 6/1; AFELM Cbb 89 Johtokunnan kokous, April 9, 1976, 93 § Suomen Lahetyseuran Viisivuotissuunnitelma vuosiksi 1976-1980; AFELM Cbb 91 Johtokunnan kokous, February 10, 1977, 7 §; AFELM Cbb 92 Johtokunnan kokous, December 16, 1977, 309 §; AMBT Conversation with Seikku Paunonen, December 17, 2004; Into Many Nations... 1981, 46-47.

When the NMS, in 1976, sent its first missionaries to Thailand, FELM decided to wait and continue investigating the possibilities for new work in Asia. In 1976, in connection with a trip to Hong Kong and Taiwan, Henrik Smedjebacka along with the then Director of FELM, Alpo Hukka, stopped for two days in Bangkok. Their aim was to become acquainted with the work that recently had been started by the NMS. During the visit Smedjebacka and Hukka concluded that the need for Christian mission in Thailand was considerable. In their travel report they proposed that FELM should take up mission work in Bangkok. An estimated number of 1,500 missionaries were already working in Thailand at the time but since only 0.5 percent of the population was Christian and there were only about 50,000 protestant Christians in the country Smedjebacka and Hukka considered the need for Christian missions in Thailand apparent. Furthermore, the social needs were obvious.¹²¹

While FELM's investigations of the prospects for starting work in Thailand still continued, the Board of FELM decided to send two missionaries to the country. These missionaries were Lector Salli Lamponen and Youth Leader Raija Kakko, who arrived in Thailand in October 1978. Within FELM, it was regarded important that among the first missionaries to Thailand there should be at least one person who had experience from another mission field. Salli Lamponen was considered suitable as she was a former missionary among the Chinese in Taiwan and there was a large group of Chinese living in Thailand.¹²² Formally, Lamponen and Kakko had to work for the NMS. When the NMS began its work in Thailand,

¹²¹ AFELM Hk 8Katsaus Kauko-idan työkenttiin. Lahetysjohtaja Alpo Hukan ja dosentti Henrik Smedjebackan matka 6.10.-7.11.1976; AFELM Cbb 91 Johtokunnan kokous, February 10, 1977, 7 §; AMBT Conversation with Henrik Smedjebacka, September 3, 1998; Suomen Lahetyssanommat 16/1976, "Lahettakaa meille työntekijöitä!".

¹²² AFELM Cbb 94 Johtokunnan kokous, September 14, 1978, 179 §.

it had been accepted as a member of the *Evangelical Fellowship in Thailand* (EFT). The EFT was, however, reluctant to also register FELM as a member organisation and, as a consequence, the Finnish missionaries had to officially work within the framework of the NMS.¹²³ Thailand was not the only country that FELM took into consideration when choosing a new mission field in Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, while the negotiations with other possible partners of cooperation went slowly, the NMS warmly welcomed the Finns to Thailand and promised to help at the initial stage. Moreover, it was also felt within FELM that as long as the political situation in Thailand allowed, mission work should be pursued in the country.¹²⁴

At this stage, there were already discussions about establishing a cooperation body for the Lutheran mission work in Thailand. From the very beginning, it had been the wish of both the NMS and FELM to work together in equal partnership. However, how this partnership was to be designed, seem not to have been clear to either of them. Even if both missionary societies wanted to continue as separate units, the NMS as well as FELM emphasised that the aim of the work was to establish a united Lutheran communion in Thailand.¹²⁵ The FELM missionaries in Thailand continued to formally work under the NMS until the *Lutheran Mission in*

¹²³ ANMS Arsruate for misjonsere i Thailand 1979/Arssrapport fra Thailandfeltet; ANMS General Assembly for LMT 1982/Report from the chairman; AMBT Conversation with Eivind Hauglid, February 27, 2003. The church association of the Lutheran mission in Thailand and the unwillingness of the EFT to accept FELM as a member organisation is more thoroughly dealt with in section 3.2 *Church connection of the Lutheran mission*.

¹²⁴ AFELM Cbb 92 Johtokunnan kokous, December 16, 1977, 309 § Liite N:o 14; AFELM Cbb 94 Johtokunnan kokous, September 14, 1978, 179 §; Suomen Lahetyssanommat 15/1978, Thaimaa - uusi alue.

¹²⁵ AFELM Cbb 94 Johtokunnan kokous, September 14, 1978, 179 § Liite N:o 9/1; ANMS Thailand FU-m0te April 2, 1979, Sak nr 2; Woie 1992, 338.

Thailand (LMT) was established in 1980 and accepted as a member of the Evangelical Fellowship in Thailand. Not until June 7, 1980 did the Annual Meeting of FELM officially approved of Thailand as one of its mission fields.¹²⁶

With regard to the Lutheran mission work in Thailand, the close contacts between the NMS and FELM stemmed in the main from Hong Kong, but also in Taiwan there was cooperation between the two. After the NMS and FELM had become associated members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong in 1970, they felt that the cooperation between the two organisations could be developed, in Hong Kong as well as in other mission fields. From the minutes of the Annual Meeting of the NMS in Hong Kong, it appears that Seikku Paunonen together with his wife Liisa were invited several years in a row during the early 1970s to this meeting. The joint discussions revolved around the cooperation between the NMS and FELM and in 1974, they both expressed a wish that the organisations coordinate their investigations for new mission fields in Southeast Asia.¹²⁷ Concrete expression of the desire to cooperate was given in 1974 when Seikku Paunonen, Ernst Harbakk, and Victor Tsu made a reconnoitring tour to the Philippines and again in 1976 when Paavo Kilpi together with Ernst Harbakk and Anund Nordbo made a similar trip to Thailand.¹²⁸ The first missionaries of the NMS in Thailand had already expressed a wish that other Lutheran churches and missions would engage in work in the country as well. It was considered that in cases where other

¹²⁶ AFELM Hia 29 Thaimaan työn lahettienkokous, April 8, 1979, 6 §; AFELM Hia 29 Thaimaan työn hallintokunnan kokous, March 14, 1980, 5 §; AFELM Cbb 97 Suomen Lahetykseuran vuosikokous, June 7, 1980, 13 §; Finska Missionssällskapetets årsbok 1980, 47.

¹²⁷ ANMS Arsmotet i Misjonsersamradet Hong Kong 1972, Sak nr 8; ANMS Arsmotet i Misjonsersamradet Hong Kong 1973, Sak nr 2 & Sak nr 6; AMBT Conversation with Seikku Paunonen, December 17, 2004.

¹²⁸ AFELM Hia 29 Thaimaan työn lahettienkokous, April 8, 1979, 8 §.

Lutherans started work in Thailand, cooperation with these churches and missions would be natural. It was also the plan of the NMS to include the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong in the Thailand mission, as the NMS was aware of the church's wish to work among overseas Chinese.¹²⁹

When the NMS and FELM started their work in Thailand there were no Lutheran congregations and no autonomous Lutheran church in the country. Lutheran missionaries of the German Marburger Mission as well as American Lutheran missionaries had been working in Thailand, but the fruit of their work had been incorporated in the Church of Christ in Thailand and the work had neither resulted in any explicitly Lutheran congregations nor any Lutheran church. On the one hand, the lack of a Lutheran church and Lutheran congregations in Thailand was used as an argument for starting a Lutheran mission in the country and on the other hand the want of a Lutheran partner of cooperation made the work challenging. This was because the Lutheran Mission in Thailand had to pursue pioneer mission work and in every respect had to start developing the work from the beginning.¹³⁰

3.2 The church associations of the Lutheran mission

As was mentioned earlier in this research, every foreign mission organisation, who wished to work in Thailand, had to register with one of the Thai Christian organisations that had

¹²⁹ ANMS Arsruatet i NMS' Thailand 1977, Sak nr. 2; AMBT Conversation with Henrik Smedjebacka, September 3, 1998; Woie 1992, 329.

¹³⁰ LNMS Nordbo & Harbakk 1976, 19-20; ANMS Arsmotet for misjonsererna i Thailand 1978/Arsmelding fra Thailandfeltet; AMBT Conversation with Henrik Smedjebacka, September 3, 1998; AMBT Conversation with Seikku Paunonen, December 17, 2004; Kirkkomme lahetys 1/1994, Lahetyksesta kirkoksi; Makela 2006, 89.

been officially recognised by the Thai government. Due to theological reasons, only the Church of Christ in Thailand and the Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand could, however, be regarded as a partner of cooperation for the Lutheran mission in Thailand.¹³¹

The question of their affiliation with the officially recognised Thai Christian organisations was not an easy issue for the *Norwegian Missionary Society* (NMS) and the *Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission* (FELM). At first, they had thought that it would be possible to register the Lutheran mission in Thailand directly under the Department for Religious Affairs, but this understanding was soon corrected. During the reconnoitring tours to Thailand, the NMS and FELM had already established contact with the ecumenical national church, the *Church of Christ in Thailand* (CCT). The Church of Christ welcomed the Lutheran missionary societies to Thailand and showed them an area in the north-eastern part of the country where the need for Christian missions was particularly great. There were also informal discussions about the Lutheran mission joining the CCT. When representatives of the NMS had more thorough discussions with the CCT, they were informed that there were two kinds of membership in the CCT, integrated membership and associated membership. The leaders of the Church of Christ did not conceal that they preferred that the Lutheran mission would aim at a full integration in the CCT. In fact, they were reluctant to discuss any other form of membership. According to the leaders of the CCT, the Lutherans arrived too late to establish a church of their own in Thailand and their mission was consequently to be integrated into the CCT from the beginning. Despite the clearly expressed view of the CCT, the NMS considered an associated membership a better option. The main reasons for the unwillingness of the NMS to

131 LNMS Nordb0 & Harbakk 1976, 16; World Christianity 1979, 145; World Christian Encyclopedia 1982, 666.

become fully integrated into the CCT were that the theology and church tradition of the CCT were considered to be too different from that of the NMS. For the NMS, it was important to be able to maintain its integrity and Lutheran identity. However, the NMS appreciated the fact that the CCT was a national church, and through having associated membership they hoped to provide a sufficient church relationship with the Lutheran work in Thailand.¹³²

In addition to the CCT, the *Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand* (EFT) was also contacted during the reconnoitring tours to Thailand and the leaders of the EFT seemed positively disposed to the plans of the Lutherans to start mission work in the country. The NMS was, however, more inclined to cooperation with the CCT as the EFT was not a church but a Christian umbrella organisation. From the travel report written by Assisting Mission Secretary Anund Nordbo and Missionary Ernst Harbakk in 1976, it seems as if it would have been more or less self-evident for the Norwegians that the NMS's partner of cooperation in Thailand should be the CCT. The question was not if there should be cooperation between the NMS and the CCT, but how the cooperation ought to be achieved. Nordbo and Harbakk recommended an associated membership rather than full integration. One reason for their preference for the CCT was the political situation in Thailand. Due to the political unstableness in the area, the possibility of the Lutheran mission in Thailand becoming transient had to be taken into consideration. It was deemed important to have good relationships with the national church, the CCT, as this could guarantee a church affiliation for the Lutheran congregations even if the Lutheran missionaries were forced to leave the country. Since the EFT was not a church it was felt

¹³² ANMS Arsmotet i Misjonsersamradet Hongkong 1976, Sak nr. 1; LNMS Nordbo & Harbakk 1976, 21, 27,30; Limthongvirutn 1983, 94, 97.

that membership in the EFT would not guarantee enough of a church affiliation for the Lutheran work.¹³³

As the CCT in connection with the first contacts between the NMS and the CCT had welcomed Lutheran missionaries to Thailand, it was natural for the NMS to plan cooperation with the CCT even if no formal agreement was made. However, after the NMS had decided to send its first missionaries to Thailand, difficulties with the CCT emerged. According to Missionary Christopher Woie of the NMS, Ernst Harbakk received a telegram from the CCT only a few days before the departure of the Norwegian missionaries to Thailand. The telegram informed the NMS that the CCT could not take responsibility for the new missionaries. According to Woie, the message came as a bolt from the blue considering the earlier discussions and the information that the NMS had received from the CCT. The NMS decided nevertheless to send its first missionaries to Thailand as planned. The matter of a church connection was temporarily solved as the Scandinavian Pentecostal Mission agreed to serve as guarantor for the Norwegian missionaries. This meant that the NMS was formally a part of the Pentecostal Mission and this was not a permanent solution to the question of a church affiliation.

After his arrival in Thailand, Ernst Harbakk tried to contact the secretary general of the CCT, but without success. The NMS was informed that the CCT could only accept a full integration of the NMS in the church. This did not mean that the CCT opposed the work of the NMS. It meant that the CCT,

¹³³ ANMS Arsmotet i Misjonsersamradet Hongkong 1976, Sak nr. 1; LNMS Nordbo & Harbakk 1976, 22, 27, 30; AMBT Conversation with Eivind Hauglid, February 27, 2003; Woie 1992, 331.

¹³⁴ AMBT Conversation with Eivind Hauglid February 27, 2003; Limthongvirutn 1983, 93; Woie 1992, 332.

due to its view of church and mission, could only accept an integrated membership of the NMS, not the associated membership that the NMS aimed at. Despite this, the NMS stuck to its opinion that a full integration was not what it wanted at that present time. The CCT was still considered the most suitable partner of cooperation and according to the NMS, it was not out of question that there could be cooperation between the two in the future. On a personal level, there were good contacts between the CCT and the NMS and some of the leaders of the CCT even had commissions of trust within the Lutheran mission.¹³⁵

The mentions of these difficulties between the NMS and the CCT are scarce in the sources. The sources also give slightly differing reasons why the cooperation between the two was not realised. In the 150 years anniversary publication of the NMS, Christopher Woie emphasizes that it was the CCT that, due to internal problems, withdrew from the cooperation with the NMS a statement that is supported by Missionary Eivind Hauglid of the NMS. In several other passages in the source material it is intimated that it was, the NMS that made the decision not start any close cooperation with the CCT due to problems within the CCT. Concerning the internal struggles of the CCT, the sources generally agree that they were the consequence of some of the leaders of the church having become involved in politics and fallen into disfavour with the regime in office. In addition, the fear of the NMS that it would lose its integrity and Lutheran identity was mentioned as a reason why the NMS decided not to join the CCT. It is, however, possible that the advocates of these opinions only

¹³⁵ ANMS Det Norske Misjonsselskaps Generalforsamling 1975/11 Skal NMS ta opp nytt misjonsarbeid i Brasilia og Øst-Asia, Laos/Thailand?; ANMS Arsrutet for misjonserne i Thailand 1978/Arsmelding fra Thailandfeltet; ANMS Arsrutet for misjonserne i Thailand 1979/Arssrapport fra Thailandfeltet; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1982/LMT and EFT/CCT related matters; Kristus kommer 1978,100; Woie 1992,332-333.

intended that the NMS should wait until the CCT again accepted associated members. According to Thai Evangelist Paul Pongsak Limthongvirutn, the relations between the NMS and the CCT were further complicated by the CCT's attitude that as a national church it would only negotiate with the Home Board of the NMS and not with the missionaries in Thailand. As a consequence, the negotiations between the NMS and the CCT were unusually slow and intricate.¹³⁶ Despite some differences the sources seem thus to agree that it was the internal problems of the CCT that caused the cooperation to fail to occur. Even if some sources mention that the CCT withdrew from the cooperation with the NMS, most of them intimate that it was the NMS who made the decision not to join the CCT due to theological and practical matters. The Norwegian sources are unanimous that in the very beginning it was the plan and the wish of the NMS to cooperate with the CCT through an associated membership in the church.

While cooperation with the CCT seemed impossible at the time, the Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand welcomed the NMS into its organisation. As a first step, the missionaries of the NMS applied for personal membership in the EFT. This meant that the EFT served as a guarantor of the missionaries for the Thai authorities. The missionaries's personal membership in the EFT was, however, not enough to give the NMS as an organisation the right to pursue mission work in the country. In 1976, the Norwegian missionary meeting in Thailand decided unanimously to recommend that the NMS

¹³⁶ ANMS Arsruatet for misjonsererna i Thailand 1978/Arsmelding fra Thailandfeltet; ANMS Arsmotet for misjonsererna i Thailand 1978/Nye misjonserer/nasjonale medarbeidere; ANMS Arsmotet for misjonsererna i Thailand 1979/Arssrapport fra Thailandfeltet; AMBT Conversation with Eivind Hauglid February 27, 2003; Limthongvirutn 1983, 47, 50.

should apply for membership in the EFT. On November 23, 1976 the NMS was admitted as a member of the EFT.¹³⁷

The question of a church affiliation was one of the matters where some disagreement could be noticed between the NMS and FELM. Within FELM, both by a majority of the Finnish missionaries in Thailand as well as the leaders of FELM in Finland the EFT was generally considered a more suitable partner of cooperation than the CCT. According to the former director of FELM, Henrik Smedjebacka, FELM preferred a cooperation with the EFT since it was feared that it would be hard to preserve a Lutheran identity within the ecumenical church of the CCT. In a theological respect, FELM might have been closer to the CCT, but due to the looser structure of the EFT, the Lutheran mission had better possibilities to realise a Lutheran identity within the EFT. Seikku Paunonen, one of the leaders of the foreign work of FELM during the 1980s, maintains that the reason for FELM preferring the EFT was not so much theological but practical. If the Lutheran mission wanted to fulfill its task to establish Lutheran congregations and a Lutheran Church in Thailand, the Lutheran mission could not be part of another church, as it would be if it joined the CCT.¹³⁸

When FELM sent its first missionaries to Thailand in 1978 it was thus natural to aim at a membership in the EFT. To the surprise of FELM, the EFT was reluctant to register FELM as a member organisation. Instead, the EFT encouraged the Finnish missionaries to work within the framework of the NMS. The reason for the EFT not accepting FELM as a member was not

¹³⁷ Woie 1992, 334.

¹³⁸ AFELM 117 Letter from Salli Lamponen to Mirja Pesonen, September 4, 1979; AMBT Conversation with Henrik Smedjebacka, September 3, 1997; AMBT Conversation with Seikku Paunonen, December 17, 2004; Myrskog 1989,18.

clearly stated. In the sources, it is assumed that the reluctance of the EFT had to do with the Thai Government's endeavours to increase control over the foreign workers and organisations in the country. At the time, about 1,500 missionaries were working in Thailand. Many of these were members of the EFT and they were listed under some forty member organisations and working in a considerable variety of activities and areas. The Religious Department had indirectly criticised this complexity and the unwillingness of the EFT to accept FELM as a member might be found in relation to this matter. At the time, there were also a large number of foreign humanitarian organisations working among refugees in northeastern Thailand. According to Missionary Eivind Hauglid, the Thai Government did not manage to distinguish between humanitarian organisations and mission organisations and this led to a general unwillingness to allow new foreign organisations in Thailand. Since both the NMS and FELM had difficulties in registering with the CCT and the EFT, it can also be questioned if this was not an insinuation that there were already enough missionaries in Thailand.¹³⁹ Later there were also further discussions within FELM about applying for membership in the EFT, but the leaders of the EFT recommended FELM to continue working in the name of the NMS until the work of the NMS and FELM could be organised under a joint Lutheran cooperation organisation. Thus, the NMS served as guarantor for the work of FELM in Thailand until the *Lutheran Mission in Thailand* (LMT) was established in 1980 and admitted as a member of the EFT.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ AFELM Hia 29 Thaimaan tyon lahetienkokous, April 8, 1979, 7 §; AFELM I 17 Letter from Salli Lamponen to Mirja Pesonen, March 2, 1979; ANMS General Assembly for LMT 1982/Report from the chairman; AMBT Conversation with Eivind Hauglid, February 27, 2003; Finska Missionssällskapets årsbok 1980, 47.

¹⁴⁰ AFELM Hia 29 Thaimaan tyon lahetienkokous, April 8, 1979, 6 § & 7 §; AFELM Hia 29 Thaimaan tyon hallintokunnan kokous, March 14, 1980, 5 §.

Within the Lutheran mission, it was soon noticed that the contacts with the Thai authorities functioned well with the help of the EFT. As the political situation in Thailand became more stable, the need of a church affiliation for the work lessened and cooperation with the EFT began to appear as a perfectly satisfactory solution. Instead, the LMT started to make long-term plans and focus on the task of establishing Lutheran congregations and an autonomous Lutheran Church in Thailand. A small group within the Lutheran Mission was, however, not ready to relinquish the thought of cooperation with the CCT and the further investigation will show that the question of a church affiliation continued to be broached in various discussions within the Lutheran Mission. Later, the CCT also seems to have been interested in cooperation with the Lutheran mission and suggested that the LMT join the CCT.¹⁴¹

For the most part, FELM was unanimous that the Lutheran Mission in Thailand should continue as a member of the EFT. Moreover, a majority of the Norwegian missionaries were content with the cooperation with the EFT. Some Norwegian missionaries continued, however, to nourish hopes of a membership in the CCT. On several occasions, usually in connection with critical questions and policy decisions, this group brought forward what they considered as a necessity for the Lutheran work in Thailand, i.e. cooperation with the Church of Christ in Thailand, and demanded that this alternative be thoroughly investigated. These Norwegians had a few of the Thai coworkers of the Lutheran Mission on their side. The common opinion among the Thai Lutherans was nevertheless that the EFT handled the contacts with the Thai

¹⁴¹ AFELM 117 Letter from Salli Lamponen to Mirja Pesonen, September 4, 1979; ANMS Arsruate for misjonserene i Thailand 1979/Arssrapport fra Thailandfeltet; AMBT Conversation with Eivind Hauglid February 27, 2003; Limthongvirutn 1983, 93.

authorities well and that within the EFT the Lutherans were free to realise their plans to establish a Thai Lutheran church. It was thus hard for the Lutheran Mission to find sufficient reasons to leave the EFT. It was also felt that if the *Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong* (ELCHK) was soon to join the Lutheran Mission in Thailand, the final decision about membership in the EFT or the CCT should not be made until the ELCHK had been heard in this matter.¹⁴²

Concerning contacts with other Christian churches in Thailand the information in the source material is scarce even if, on several occasions it is established that the relationships between the Lutheran Mission and other churches and missions in Thailand were good. On the personal level there were many contacts, but the formal cooperation seem to have been more limited. At least within the frames of the EFT, the Lutherans did have some contacts with other Christian denominations. Another forum for cooperation was the Thailand Church Growth Committee, where the LMT, just as most other church denominations in Thailand, was represented. Particularly during the first years of the Lutheran mission in Thailand, the missionaries had to cooperate with other church denominations around concrete projects in different sectors due to the limited resources of the LMT, for instance in the recruitment of local coworkers, mass media work, diaconal work, and theological education. As the

¹⁴² AFELM 117 Letter from Salli Lamponen to Mirja Pesonen, September 4, 1979; AFELM I 78 Letter from Mirja Pesonen to Salli Lamponen, February 25, 1980; AFELM II 22 Poytakirja piispa John Vikstromin, laaket.lis. Juhani Lukkarin ja Aasiantyön sihteerin Paavo Kilven vierailusta Suomen Lahetyksseuran Thaimaantyoalalla 26.1-29.1.1982; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1982/LMT and EFT/CCT related matters; AFELM II 17 Meeting between Prof. Schaefer and the Constitution Committee, April 8, 1984; AMBT Conversation with Egil H. Eggen, February 17, 2003; AMBT Conversation with Eivind Hauglid, February 27, 2003; Limthongvirut 1983, 93.

number of partners of cooperation within the Lutheran Mission grew and the Lutheran activities in Thailand increased both in number and extent, there seem however not to have been enough time and energy for cooperation outside the Lutheran mission organisation. There were no problems in the relationships with other church denominations; the relationships simply did not grow deeper.¹⁴³

3.3 Lutheran activity before the establishment of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand

The original plan of the *Norwegian Missionary Society* (NMS) had been to start mission work in northeastern Thailand, but due to the political unrest in that area the NMS had to give up this thought, even before the first missionaries were sent to the country. Instead, the NMS decided to begin with building up a mission headquarter in Bangkok. This decision was influenced by the fact that in the mid-1970s, mission work was mainly pursued in the Thai countryside. Most mission organisations had their field representatives in the capital, but only a few of them were involved in direct mission. In addition, the capital was growing rapidly. Within the NMS, it was assumed that it would be easier to establish congregations in Bangkok as the people in the city were living in a comparatively small area. If the migrants from the countryside moved back home, Christianity would spread to different parts of the country with them.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ ANMS Thailand Agreement on Mission Cooperation in Thailand 1980, § V; AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1991/Five Years Plan 1991-1995 of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand; AMBT Conversation with Eivind Hauglid, February 27, 2003; Kristus kommer 1978, 100; Suomen Lahetysseuran III Viisivuotissuunnitelma 1981a, 11-12, 27.

¹⁴⁴ ANMS Arsmotet i NMS' Thailand 1977/Vart fremtidige engasjement i Thailand; ANMS Arsmotet for misjonsererna i Thailand 1978/Vart fremtidige engasjement i Thailand; AFELM Hia 29 Thaimaan tyon

The first Norwegian Lutheran missionaries to arrive in Thailand were qualified in the area of mission work as they all had experience from the NMS mission field in Hong Kong. Naturally, this affected the work in Thailand. The new missionaries started by investigating the religious and social situation in Bangkok. They came to the conclusion that the Lutheran mission ought to contribute to meeting the needs of the city by establishing a day nursery and a congregation close to the informal settlement in Klong Toey and a youth centre and a congregation preferably in the Din Daeng area. Two Lutheran church centres were accordingly opened in 1977. As the cooperation organisation, *Lutheran Mission in Thailand* (LMT), had not yet been established, the work was started in the name of the Norwegian Missionary Society. Close to the Klong Toey slum area *Klong Toey Church* and a day nursery were opened¹⁴⁵. The work planned for the Din Daeng area was never realised. Instead, the church centre *Peace Lutheran Church, Soi Amon* was established, partly to function as a youth centre as there were several schools in the neighbourhood. The Soi Amon area was mainly inhabited by wealthy people of Chinese origin. For the purchase of the premises for the day nursery at Klong Toey, the NMS received financial support from a Norwegian foundation, Strommes Minnesstiftelse, and a subscription started by the Stavanger Aftenblad newspaper.¹⁴⁶

lahettien kokous, April 8, 1980, 11§; Norsk Misjonstidende 17/1976, Sender NMS misjonserer til Bangkok allerede i host?; Norsk Misjonstidende 19/1976, To misjonserfamilier kalles til Thailand; Bergens tidende 6.9.1986, Storby-misjon i sterk vekst.

¹⁴⁵ The name of the church was changed to *Kluay Nam Thai* in 1983 as there already was a Chinese church with the name Klong Toey. In 1993 the name was changed once more, this time to *Immanuel Lutheran Church*.

¹⁴⁶ ANMS Arsmotet i NMS' Thailand 1977/Rapport fra Thailand feltet; ANMS Arsmotet i NMS' Thailand 1977/Vart fremtidige engasjement i Thailand; ANMS Arsmotet for misjonsererna i Thailand 1978/Arsmelding fra Thailandfeltet; ANMS Arsmotet for misjonsererna i

In order to get in touch with people living in the neighbourhood of the church centres tracts were distributed, house calls were made, open-air evangelism meetings were held as well as Sunday schools, Sunday services, youth meetings and bible teaching. From the very beginning, the congregations were the foundation of the Lutheran work in Thailand, but the missionaries wanted to help the people through Christian service as well. Through the Norwegian Church Aid, the NMS gave financial support to Christian social work at a camp for refugees from Laos.¹⁴⁷

The new Lutheran missionaries in Thailand took with them the models and methods of the work in Hong Kong, where at least Emil and EH Aarsheim had been involved in starting up several day nurseries and a youth centre.¹⁴⁸ Due to their past work in Hong Kong, the missionaries already spoke Chinese, although another dialect than the one spoken among the Chinese in Thailand. Consequently, it was natural for them to first seek out people of Chinese origin in the Thai capital. The first Lutheran congregations did not, however, attract the Chinese. The majority of the converts came from the lower

Thailand 1978/ Rapport fra kirkesentret i Soi Amon; AFELM II 17 Executive Committee of LMT, March 4, 1983, 27/83; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1983/Report from Kluay Nam Thai Church; AFELM II 45 A Short history and Overview of the Work of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand by Tapio Karjalainen; Norsk Misjonstidende 35/1976, sterk utfordring fra Bangkok; Norsk Misjonstidende 13/1977, Barna smiler i verdens verste slum.

¹⁴⁷ ANMS Arsruatet for misjonsererna i Thailand 1978/Rapport fra kirkesentret i Soi Amon; ANMS Arsruate for misjonserene i Thailand 1979/Rapport fra det evangeliska arbetet i Klong Toey; ANMS Arsruatet for misjonserene i Thailand 1979/ Rapport fra flyktingarbeidet i Nong Kai; ANMS Thailand FU-ruate, October 1, 1980, Sak 82/80; Limthongvirutn 1983, 52.

¹⁴⁸ AMBT Conversation with Eivind Hauglid, February 27, 2003; Norsk Misjonstidende 13/1977, Barna smiler i verdens verste slum; Limthongvirutn 1983, 52.

social classes of the Thai population in nearby villages and slums. According to the Thai Lutheran pastor Suk Prachayaporn, it was not a successful concept to try to create congregations with a mix of slum people, middle class people, and Chinese. Soon it was realised that the main target group of the work had to be the Thai population. Another fact that contributed to this change of focus was that it could not be expected of future missionaries that they spoke Chinese and therefore it was considered more natural to work among the Thai.¹⁴⁹

In 1979, when it became clear that also the *Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission* (FELM) would send missionaries to Bangkok, the NMS offered to transfer the Soi Amon church centre to FELM. The offer was due to shortage of both national coworkers and Norwegian missionaries, which made it impossible for the NMS to run both the day nursery and congregation in Klong Toey and the congregation in Soi Amon. The Home Board of FELM accepted the Norwegian offer and in the beginning of 1980 the NMS transferred the responsibility for the Soi Amon congregation to the Finns. At Soi Amon the Finnish missionaries together with Thai evangelist Vichien Navassin and his wife Ganjana continued the activities started by the Norwegians, i.e. Sunday services, English teaching, Sunday school, children meetings and youth evenings. They made home calls and arranged children and youth camps, street evangelism and film performances.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ AFELM II 45 A Short history and Overview of the Work of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand by Tapio Karjalainen; Prachayaporn 1998, 43.

¹⁵⁰ AFELM Hia 29 Thaimaan tyon lahettien kokous, September 29-30, 1979, 5§; ANMS Thailand FU-mote, October 3, 1979, Sak 1; ANMS Misjonsermotet for NMS i Thailand 1980/Aarsrapport fra Fredskirken, Soi Amon; AFELM I 17 Letter from Salli Lamponen to Mirja Pesonen, November 20, 1979; AFELM Hia 29 Thaimaan tyoalan yleiskertomus vuodelta 1980, 6-7; Finska Missionsallskapets arsbok 1979, 53; Finska

Opening work in Bangkok was part of a conscious strategy for FELM who aimed at concentrating on urban ministry and was particularly interested in the larger cities in Asia. Taking over the Soi Amon church centre was a well-considered decision. At the time, Bangkok had about six million inhabitants and the city was growing rapidly due to strong urbanisation. There were less than 0.5 per cent Christians and only 6,000 Protestant Christians. The city was a challenge for Christian missions and this made Bangkok seem like a meaningful place to work. In addition, FELM felt a strong responsibility to take over the church centre since the NMS might otherwise have to close the centre, due to lack of manpower.¹⁵¹

The Norwegian missionaries continued the work in the Kluay Nam Thai congregation. The work centred to a great extent around the day nursery that functioned in connection to the church. Even if the missionaries could notice a certain scepticism to direct evangelism, the social engagement brought about good contact with the people in the neighbourhood and provided opportunities to present the Christian gospel. In the congregation, weekly Sunday services were held, as well as groups for housewives, Bible study, groups for teaching English, sewing courses, and camps.¹⁵²

Missionssällskapets årsbok 1980, 48; Suomen Lahetyssanommat 13/1980, Työn alkua Soi Amonissa; Kristusglede - tjenersinn 1981, 35; Woie 1992, 338.

¹⁵¹ AFELM Hia 29 Thaimaan työn lahetienkokous, April 8, 1979, 11§; AFELM Hia 29 Thaimaan työn lahetien kokous, September 29-30, 1979, 5 §; AFELM I 17 Alustus SLS:n Thaimaan työn 5-vuotissuunnitelmaksi V. 1980-1985 by Salli Lamponen, May 5, 1980; AMBT Conversation with Seikku Paunonen, December 17, 2004.

¹⁵² ANMS General Assembly of LMT 1981/Report from the Lutheran Daynursery in Klong Toey; ANMS General Assembly of LMT 1981/ Report from the Klong Toey Lutheran Church; Suomen Lahetyssanommat 13/1979, Norjalais-suomalaisen lahetyksen alkutaival; Kristusglede - tjenersinn 1981, 34-35.

There were many challenges and difficulties facing the first missionaries. One major question was how to find Thai coworkers for the Lutheran work. To have national coworkers was crucial as they were familiar with the Thai people, the Thai way of thinking, Thai religion, and culture. In Thailand, the importance of having local employees seems to have been unusually important as the Thai coworkers of the NMS even advised the missionaries not to make house calls on their own or visit the informal settlements too often without a Thai colleague. In Thai society it was not appropriate to make house calls to people one did not know or had not had contact with earlier. Particularly in the slum areas, the people were suspicious of strangers and they could therefore find the missionaries' presence provocative. To find national coworkers was, on the other hand, not an easy task. The NMS was a Lutheran pioneer in Thailand; there was no Lutheran church, no Lutheran congregations, and naturally no Lutheran theological education either. The Lutheran mission had to cooperate with other church communions in Thailand and recruit its coworkers from their bible schools and theological institutes¹⁵³. All of the first Thai coworkers belonging to the NMS and the Lutheran Mission were recruited from other denominations and brought with them different conceptions of Christianity, different views of the church, and different traditions. In spite of cooperation with other church

¹⁵³ According to Jaakko Makela there was at the time a surplus of students of theology and therefore the theological institutions were willing to mediate coworkers to other Christian churches and organisations. The early Thai coworkers of the LMT consisted, above all, of young people with their roots in congregations belonging to the Church of Christ in Thailand in northern Thailand and had studied at the Bangkok Bible College and Seminary. Most of them came from the conservative/revivalist fraction that had become a minority within the Church of Christ. Another important group of coworkers consisted of young people with Chinese origin who had studied at the Bangkok Institute of Theology. Makela 2006, 87.

communions, the supply of national coworkers was limited. The Lutheran Mission in Thailand was also often short of missionaries. The mission field did not acquire new missionaries at a rate that would have made it possible to expand the work. At times the LMT had, in fact, problems to keep up the work it had already started.¹⁵⁴ The shortage of Thai pastors and evangelists was due to several reasons. The Christian community in Thailand was small. The ministers were low-paid and the theological institutes and bible schools did not attract enough students. It was not unusual for the churches in Thailand to lack ordained pastors and to be managed by elders.¹⁵⁵

Another difficulty for the first Lutheran missionaries was obtaining permanent residence permits and work permits. Only a few missionaries were granted these the first time they applied and applications were only allowed once a year. Many missionaries who had been serving in Thailand for several years still had to leave the country every third month in order to renew their tourist visas. Around 1980, the Thai Government adopted new visa regulations, which set a limit on expatriate workers and their activities. Each mission organisation was given a quota of missionaries that could be working in the country at any one time and there was talk

¹⁵⁴ ANMS Arsruatet i NMS' Thailand 1977/Studiestipend for lokale medarbeidere; ANMS Arsruatet for misjonsererna i Thailand 1978/Arsmelding fra Thailandfeltet; ANMS Arsruatet for misjonsererna i Thailand 1978/Sak nr 3 Nye misjoner; ANMS Arsmote for misjonserene i Thailand 1979/Arssrapport fra Thailandfeltet; AFELM I 17 Alustus SLS:N Thaimaan tyon 5-vuotissuunnitelmaksi V. 1980-1985 by Salli Lamponen, May 5, 1980; Kristus kommer 1978, 99; Norsk Misjonstidende 19-20/1978, Kyrkja i Thailand lid under personellmangel; Suomen Lahetyssanommat 13/1979, Norjalais-suomalaisen lahetyksen alkutaival; Kristus verdens hap 1983, 50-51.

¹⁵⁵ ANMS Misjonserruatet for NMS i Thailand 1980/Arsmelding fra Thailandfeltet.

about an annual reduction in the quota. Naturally, this worried the mission organisations, who feared that their remaining time in the country could be short. The Lutheran Mission saw this as a need to place an increased emphasis on training local leaders who could take over the work in case the missionaries had to leave the country. The visa situation was also one reason for the NMS not wanting to relinquish the thought of cooperation with the Church of Christ in Thailand. In case the Lutheran Mission in Thailand had to discontinue its work, the Church of Christ, as a national church, was considered more suitable to take responsibility for the Lutheran congregations, than the loosely structured Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand. In addition, the Church of Christ seems not to have had as great a visa problem as the Evangelical Fellowship who had many different member organisations,¹⁵⁶

Naturally, the missionaries pondered over the reasons for the increasingly strict regulations for the granting of residence and work permits. It was felt that the restrictions were aimed at private organisations involved in mission, relief and social welfare. Due to the political situation and the Communist activities in Southeast Asia, Thailand was concerned for its security. Opposition groups were watched carefully. Since the Thai Government was aware that money transfers had taken place from European labour organisations to political parties in Thailand, the Thai authorities were closely watching all

¹⁵⁶ ANMS Arsruatet i NMS' Thailand 1977/Vart fremtidige engasjement i Thailand; ANMS Arsruatet for misjonsererna i Thailand 1978/Arsmelding fra Thailandfeltet; AFELM II 22 Joint Meeting of the Executive Committee of the LMT and the Joint Board for Thailand, March 24, 1981; ANMS General Assembly for LMT 1981/Report from the chairman; ANMS General Assembly for LMT 1982/Report from the chairman; AFELM II 22 Letter from Charan Ratanabutra to the LMT, November 24, 1983; AFELM II 22 Letter from Christopher Woie to the members of the JBT, November 28, 1982; LNMS Nordbo & Harbakk 1976, 22-24.

foreign groups. There was also evidence that some religious groups in Thailand had been involved in politics. Furthermore, there was at the time a determination to replace foreigners in high positions in Thai society with national workers. Generally, it was felt that the aim of the new visa regulations was to develop a better control over the foreigners working in Thailand and to improve the security in the country in a situation where Thailand was fighting both domestic and foreign policy problems. The visa restrictions continued to be a problem for the LMT during most of the 1980s.¹⁵⁷

Many of the problems that the missionaries faced had to do with the Thais being suspicious of things that were foreign or unfamiliar. Christianity was seen as something foreign, something that the Thais did not need. When new church centres were opened, the Sunday services and other activities attracted, in the beginning, some Thai attendants, but when their curiosity of the foreigners and their religion had been satisfied, the missionaries and the Thai evangelists often had to hold service just for themselves. The first Thai Lutheran, Mrs. Bunruam Patanaa, was not baptised until in 1981. In addition, the development of the Lutheran mission in Thailand was restricted by the overall price level in Thailand, which was higher than the Lutherans had expected.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷ AFELM 117 Letter from Salli Lamponen to Seikku Paunonen, March 2, 1980; ANMS General Assembly for LMT 1981/Report from the chairman; AFELM II 22 Joint Meeting of the Executive Committee of the LMT and the Joint Board for Thailand, March 24, 1981; ANMS General Assembly for LMT 1982/Report from the chairman; ANMS Thailand utvida FU-m0te, March 30, 1985, Sak 4; AFELM I 66 Letter from Helge Breivik, Kjell Sandvik and Phongsak Limthongvirutn to the Executive Committee of the LMT, January 9, 1988.

¹⁵⁸ ANMS Arsmotet i NMS' Thailand 1977/Rapport fra Thailand feltet; ANMS Arsmotet for misjonsererna i Thailand 1978/Rapport fra kirkesenteret i Soi Amorn; ANMS Arsmotet for misjonsererna i Thailand

3.4 The purpose, organisation, and working methods of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand

As has been mentioned previously in this chapter, the *Norwegian Missionary Society* (NMS) and the *Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission* (FELM) stayed in contact with each other while planning their new mission enterprises in Thailand. As they were partners of cooperation in other mission fields and knew of each other's plan to expand the mission in Asia, it was natural to keep in touch. In addition, the partner of the NMS and FELM in Hong Kong, the *Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong*, showed interest in the mission in Thailand from the beginning. Both the NMS and FELM had experience from working in countries where the Lutherans were divided between several small, competing churches¹⁵⁹ and wanted to prevent this development from taking place in Thailand.¹⁶⁰

The NMS was the organisation that started the Lutheran mission work in Thailand in 1976, but from the very beginning, the NMS expressed a wish that other Lutheran churches and mission agencies would join the work in Thailand as well by sending funds or personnel. When FELM

1978/Vart fremtidige engagement i Thailand; ANMS Arsrruatet for misjonserene i Thailand 1979/Arsrapport fra Thailandfeltet; ANMS Arsrruatet for misjonserene i Thailand 1979/Rapport fra "Fredskyrkja" i Soi Amon; ANMS Arsrruatet for misjonserene i Thailand 1979/Rapport fra det Evangeliska arbeidet i Klong Toey; ANMS Misjonsermotet for NMS i Thailand 1980/Aarsrapport fra Fredskirken, Soi Amon; Norsk Misjonstidende 7/1977, Vi ma dele med disse.

¹⁵⁹ The NMS and FELM had experienced division among the Lutherans for instance Pesonen 1990; Jorgensen 1992a; Jorgensen 1992b; Strandens 1992.

100 AMBT Conversation with Henrik Smedjebacka, September 3, 1998; AMBT Conversation with Egil H. Eggen, February 17, 2003; Faithful to our calling 1981, 9; Limthongvirutn 1983, 53; Woie 1992, 329.

two years later sent its first missionaries to Thailand, the NMS and FELM started to consider how their cooperation could be organised. The idea of establishing a joint Lutheran umbrella organisation to plan and coordinate the Lutheran mission in Thailand was expressed at an early stage. Moreover, the actual situation in Thailand forced the NMS and FELM to examine the work and their cooperation. The first two Lutheran congregations had been established in 1977, but there seem not to have been any clear aim for the work or plan for the congregations. Some documents put forward the opinion that the Lutheran congregations ought to be integrated in the Church of Christ in Thailand. Others maintain that an autonomous Lutheran church had to be established to link together the congregations. That other Lutheran churches in Asia preferred the work in Thailand to be clearly Lutheran was already pointed out in August 1979 at a consultation regarding the cooperation between the NMS and FELM. Therefore, if the Lutheran mission in Thailand wanted support from the Lutheran World Federation, the aim of the work had to be the establishment of an autonomous Lutheran church. The Lutheran work in Thailand lacked a plan and a structure and a prompt decision concerning the organisation of the Lutheran mission was needed. In addition, the fact that FELM missionaries were compelled to officially work in the name of the NMS contributed to speeding up the process of organising the cooperation between the two.¹ⁿ

When Henrik Smedjebacka, the then Secretary for International Matters of FELM, and Mirja Pesonen, the FELM secretary for work in Asia, visited Bangkok in April 1979 a

161 ANMS Arsruatet i NMS' Thailand 1977/Sak nr. 2; ANMS Arsruatet for misjonsererna i Thailand 1979/Sak nr 1; AFELM I 17 Consultation regarding the Agreement on Cooperation between the Norwegian Missionary Society and the Finnish Missionary Society, August 7, 1979, 2; AMBT Conversation with Henrik Smedjebacka, September 3, 1998; AMBT Conversation with Egil H. Eggen, February 17, 2003.

proposal for an agreement between FELM and the NMS was prepared by a group of six Norwegian missionaries, two Finnish missionaries as well as Smedjebacka and Pesonen. The task was a challenge. The group had limited experience of working in a Thai context. None of the missionaries had previously taken part in drafting an agreement on mission cooperation. Only Smedjebacka and Pesonen were familiar with different types of collaboration agreements. Naturally, the limited experiences of the group influenced the nature and the content of the agreement proposal. A difficult question for the group was the character of the agreement, and whether the agreement should only deal with practical guidelines or if it should also settle the confessional basis and the aim of the work. In this case, the group chose a middle course where the agreement was more than a set of guidelines, but still not a complete constitution. Later the proposal for an agreement on mission cooperation was discussed at a meeting between the NMS and FELM in Helsinki, Finland. At this meeting, FELM was strongly of the opinion that a detailed agreement was needed since the cooperation situation was new to the missionaries. The Norwegian representative, Mission Secretary Odd Bondevik, would have been content with an agreement with fewer details. At this meeting, the possibility of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand joining the CCT was still mentioned. It was decided that the LMT should wait and see and investigate once more whether there were other kinds of membership in the CCT than full integration. Some minor changes were made to the agreement, but in December 1979-January 1980, the *Agreement on Mission Cooperation in Thailand* was approved of by the Home Boards of the NMS and FELM. The agreement was to take effect from the beginning of 1980 and the work of the NMS and FELM in Thailand was to be organised under the umbrella organisation *Lutheran Mission in Thailand* (LMT). The intention was that the agreement should

be in force until an autonomous Lutheran church had been established in Thailand.¹⁶²

According to the Agreement on Mission Cooperation in Thailand the main areas of cooperation within the LMT were to be: *"1) Long range planning of the total work, including the search for new geographical places as well as for new methods and approaches in the spreading of the Gospel. 2) Recruiting and training of national workers. 3) Evaluating the need of and extending the call for expatriate workers. 4) Preparing of guidelines, rules and regulations for national workers, for the establishment of local congregations and for a united Lutheran Church. 5) Sharing of financial responsibilities for the work of the LMT."* However, each member organisation of the LMT also had the following individual rights: *"1) To preserve its own identity as a mission agency or church, and to keep its tradition with regard to salaries, housing, children's education, terms of service, etc. for its missionaries. 2) To make use of its traditional field organization as far as it seems to be helpful for the work and not to conflict with this agreement. 3) To take responsibility for certain projects and activities which are included in a long range plan or otherwise are accepted by the appropriate authorities of the LMT."*¹⁶³ The members of the LMT had thus an extensive right of self-determination in questions concerning their own organisation and policies. However, questions that concerned the Lutheran mission work in Thailand were to be dealt with jointly within the framework of the LMT. Concerning the economy of the

¹⁶² AFELM Hia 29 Thaimaan työn lahetienkokous, April 8, 1979, 8 §; AFELM I 17 Consultation regarding the Agreement on Cooperation between the Norwegian Missionary Society and the Finnish Missionary Society, August 7, 1979; AFELM Hia 29 Thaimaan työn lahetienkokous, January 18-20, 1980, 4 §; ANMS Misjonsermotet for NMS i Thailand 1980/Arsmelding fra Thailandfeltet; AMBT Conversation with Henrik Smedjebacka, September 3, 1998; AMBT Conversation with Eivind Hauglid, February 27, 2003; Woie 1992, 338.

¹⁶³ ANMS Thailand Agreement on Mission Cooperation in Thailand 1980, § VI, § VII.

LMT, the NMS, and FELM this functioned according to a principle that each of them should contribute the same amount of money annually. The Asian churches that joined the LMT later, were not able to contribute financially to the same extent, but from the beginning the LMT stressed that the partners of the LMT were equal even though their financial and/or missionary support might differ.¹⁶⁴

According to Henrik Smedjebacka, the Agreement on Mission Cooperation in Thailand had largely the same function as a church constitution and resembled in many ways the constitutions of some young churches in Africa and Asia. As the LMT was not a church, the agreement could still not be called a church constitution. The LMT had, nevertheless, in principal the same structure, activities, and responsibilities as a church and worked more or less as a church until 1994 when an autonomous Thai Lutheran church was established. During the years of preparing the establishment of the Lutheran Church in Thailand, the LMT was the prototype of the future church. Many of the members of the Lutheran congregations in Thailand simply did not know any other 'church' than the LMT. For them the LMT was the church that established congregations, engaged employees, prepared budgets, and planned the work. In Smedjebacka's opinion the constitutional character of the agreement also made it hard for the missionaries in Thailand to understand the nature of the agreement. The leaders of the Home Boards repeatedly had to explain the function and authority of the agreement to new missionaries who had not taken part in the preparation of the document.¹⁶⁵ The LMT's similarity with a church also led to

¹⁶⁴ AFELM II 22 Joint Meeting of the Home-boards of the Finnish Mission Society and the Norwegian Missionary Society, October 17, 1980; AFELM II 22 Letter from Egil H. Eggen to Christopher Woie, November 21, 1983.

¹⁶⁵ AFELM II 22 Letter from Seikku Paunonen to Christopher Woie, October 25, 1983; AMBT Conversation with Henrik Smedjebacka,

misunderstandings outside the Lutheran Mission. In November 1980 *Mission Notes*, the newsletter of the Department of Church Cooperation of the Lutheran World Federation, reported that the first Lutheran Church in Thailand had been established by the NMS, FELM and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong. In fact, it took fourteen more years for this to come true.¹⁶⁶

Special attention should be drawn to at least four points in the Agreement on Mission Cooperation in Thailand. Firstly, the Lutheran mission in Thailand was to be a joint Lutheran undertaking. This meant that the LMT tried to append all the Lutheran churches and missions that planned to start work in Thailand within its organisation. Secondly, the aim of the work was to *"bring Christ's Gospel through proclamation and service, to the peoples in Thailand, and to establish local congregations which shall be united in one Lutheran church."* In the agreement, a strong emphasis was already placed on church planting and Christian service. According to the agreement, the purpose of the work was that an autonomous church was established. Church planting, Christian service and the establishment of a Lutheran church became the guiding principles of the work. Thirdly, the work was to be built on the Bible, the Creed of the Apostles, the unaltered Augsburg Confession, and Luther's Small Catechism. The basis and identity of the work was clearly Lutheran. According to Henrik Smedjebacka, the founders of the LMT felt that particularly in contact with Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam it was important to stress the Lutheran concept of salvation and grace as a gift from God. For followers of Asian religions it was not easy to grasp the concept of grace and the founders of the LMT considered that Lutheranism, with its special accentuation of grace, had much to contribute to Christianity

September 3,1998.

¹⁶⁶ Mission Notes 3/1980, First Lutheran Church in Thailand.

in Thailand and elsewhere in Asia¹⁶⁷. Fourthly, the doors to the LMT were left open for new members to join later on. New members could be accepted into the LMT if they approved of the conditions laid down in the Agreement on Mission Cooperation and were accepted by the General Assembly of the LMT after the Home Boards had been consulted.¹⁶⁸

The decision to make it possible for missions and churches to join the LMT later on, was influenced by the discussions within the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) at the time. At the General Assembly of the LWF in 1977, it had been settled that "*each local church and congregation should see itself as responsible for fulfilling the mission task in its own area*". The stressing of the churches' responsibility for mission work in their own region was one of the answers of the LWF to the question about the relationship and distribution of responsibility between young and old churches.¹⁶⁹

Immediately before the writing of the Agreement on Mission Cooperation in Thailand, the LWF held a consultation on mission cooperation in Asia. The *Consultation on Global Partnership* took place in March 1979, in Manila in the Philippines. In the report from the consultation, it is stated that *there is no Lutheran Church as such in Thailand although the Norwegian Missionary Society is working in Bangkok and the Lutheran Hour is Broadcasted. The Norwegian Missionary Society*

¹⁶⁷ According to Kosuke Koyama this view was not very unique as most church communions considered that their church in particular had a special contribution to the churches in Asia. Kosuke 1999,144-145.

¹⁶⁸ ANMS Thailand Agreement on Mission Cooperation in Thailand 1980, §11-V; AMBT Conversation with Henrik Smedjebacka, September 3, 1998; Suomen Lahetyksseuran III viisivuotissuunnitelma 1981a, 7; Smedjebacka 1990, 49-51.

¹⁶⁹ Daressalaam 1977, 101-102; Lindqvist 1982, 166-167; From Dar es Salaam to Budapest 1977-1984 1984, 87-89; Budapest 1984 "In Christ - Hope for the World" 1985,189-190.

would be happy to participate in a common Lutheran project whilst the Finnish Missionary Society also is very interested. The Lutheran Church of America is supporting several workers within the structure of the Church of Christ in Thailand." After this a recommendation was given that "churches and agencies interested in the development of Lutheran mission in Thailand should convene a meeting and report the results of this meeting to all interested parties." This meeting occurred immediately after when the Department for Church Cooperation of the LWF met in Singapore. Henrik Smedjebacka recalls how he, at this meeting, made inquiries about the interest of other Lutheran churches and mission agencies to take up mission work in Thailand. It appeared that no other organisations than the NMS and FELM were prepared to commence mission work in Thailand at that stage, but several Asian churches might consider becoming involved in mission work in Thailand later on. This led the NMS and FELM to - when the agreement was written directly after - leave the door open for other churches and organisations to join the Lutheran work in Thailand later on. As a consequence, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong joined the LMT in 1982, the *Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore* in 1988, and the *Kinki Evangelical Lutheran Church* in 1995¹⁷⁰. A full membership meant that the partner organisation was prepared to support the work of the LMT with both funds and personnel, but most of the new members had already financially supported the work of the LMT before becoming a member. According to Smedjebacka, it was unique that an organisation like the LMT left its door open for more members to join the work later on.¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ The Lutheran Church of Australia did not join the LMT until in 1999 and is therefore outside the framework of this investigation.

¹⁷¹ AHS Consultation on Global Partnership in Mission in Asia 1979, 14; ANMS Thailand Agreement on Mission Cooperation in Thailand 1980, IV; AFELM II 24 Memorandum from Joint Meeting between Homeboard Leaders, the Executive Committee of LMT and the Visiting Delegation from KELC, July 22, 1989; AMBT Conversation with Henrik

The Agreement on Mission Cooperation clearly expresses that the main purpose of the work of the LMT was to establish local congregations that were to be united in a Lutheran church. Everyone within the LMT did not, however, interpret the wording of the agreement in this way. Based upon interviews with some of the first Lutheran missionaries in Thailand, Thai pastor Paul Pongsak Limthongvirutn claimed in his master's thesis that the name Lutheran Mission in Thailand did not mean that the LMT was going to establish a new denominational church in Thailand, but that the Lutherans were simply pursuing mission work in Thailand. According to Limthongvirutn, the establishment of a Lutheran Church in Thailand would bring denominationalism to Thailand and further divide the Christian community and its witness to the Thai people, for whom unity was a national characteristic¹⁷². Limthongvirutn hinted that the agreement accepted in 1980 had been altered by the Home Boards of the NMS and FELM and that it did not represent the plans and the wishes of the first missionaries. The missionaries wanted to focus on mission work, while the agreement put a strong emphasis on the establishment of a Lutheran church. When the agreement was amended in 1983, part of the committee appointed to review the agreement proposed that the word "Lutheran" should be omitted from the sentence "to establish

Smedjebacka, September 3, 1998; Suomen Lahetyssanommat 10/1980, Thaimaasta uusi tyoala; Scherer 1982, 212-214; From Dar es Salaam to Budapest 1984, 104. For more details on the members of the LMT see section 3.5 *Partners of cooperation within the Lutheran Mission in Thailand*.

¹⁷² The Philippine Lutheran Theologian Jose Fuliga (Fuliga 1980, 192) also declared that the emphasizing of and competition between different Christian denominations is something that does not have any relevance in the Asian culture and context, but is harmful to the work and life of young Asian churches. German Theologian Hans-Werner Gensichen (Gensichen 1969) on the other hand writes in his article *Can Lutherans Cross Frontiers?* about the reluctance of Lutherans to participate in church unions or union churches or involve themselves in cooperation across denominational borders.

local congregations which shall be united in one Lutheran church". The argument for this was that the word, Lutheran, caused misunderstandings, and was often understood as something different from or in addition to the Bible. There might have been other motives for this suggestion as well, but the proposal was never accepted.¹⁷³

As Paul Pongsak Limthongvirutn had his roots in the Church of Christ, it is reasonable to assume that for him an integration of the LMT in the CCT would have been natural¹⁷⁴. For the leaders of the member organisations of the LMT, the clear wording of the agreement concerning the purpose of the work was a way to justify the establishment of Lutheran congregations and a Lutheran Church in Thailand. The leaders also referred to the meeting of the Lutheran World Federation in Manila in 1979, and stressed that it was the vision of the federation and many Asian Lutheran churches that an autonomous Lutheran church should be established in

¹⁷³ ANMS General Assembly for the LMT 1983/Motions and Topics for discussion; Limthongvirutn 1983, 59-60, 92-97.

¹⁷⁴ The CCT seems to have had strong bonds with the ecumenic East Asia Christian Conference (after 1973 Christian Conference of Asia) which had its headquarters in the same building in Bangkok. In the 1960s, one of the messages of the East Asia Christian Conference was that confessional organisations should reconsider their position as their confessional loyalties could create difficulties in the life of the young churches. The confessional organisations were not asked to give up their theological heritage, but it was hoped that they would decrease their emphasis of confessionalism and free their theological insights to the ecumenical church. Traces of this thinking can be seen in the argumentation of Paul Pongsak Limthongvirutn. Kim 1980, 163-170; Kosuke 1999, 147-149; Christian Conference of Asia. Available at <<http://www.cca.org.hk/home1.htm>>. Accessed September 18, 2009.

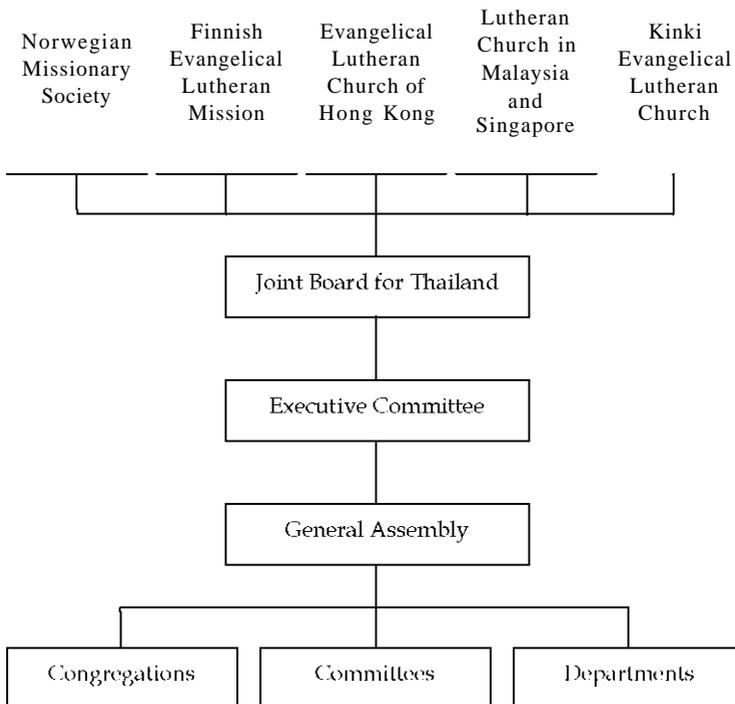
Thailand¹⁷⁵.¹⁷⁶ In addition, it can be noticed that the member organisations' general acceptance of the three selves formula¹⁷⁷ reinforced the understanding that the goal of the mission was the establishment of an indigenous Lutheran church.

¹⁷⁵ This corresponded well with the discussions within the LWF. At the LWF's assembly in 1947 in Lund, Sweden, it had already been proposed that a national Lutheran church, including all Lutheran churches in the area, should be developed in each country/area. Since then the LWF had continued to strongly endorse the principle that there should be only one united Lutheran church in each country. From Federation to Mission 1997, 151.

¹⁷⁶ AFELM I 17 Consultation regarding the Agreement on Cooperation between the Norwegian Missionary Society and the Finnish Missionary Society, August 7, 1979; AFELM 117 Letter from Seikku Paunonen to Salli Lamponen, March 12, 1982; AFELM I 65 Minutes from the General Assembly of the LMT 1987/Plans for the Lutheran Institute of the Theological Education; Limthongvirutn 1983, 59, 92.

¹⁷⁷ Since the mid-19th century it had been the aim of Protestant missions to create self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating churches. For more information on the three selves formula see for instance Beyerhaus 1956, 31-56.

Figure 1 The organisation chart of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand¹⁷⁸



Source: *Policies and Procedures of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand*

From the foundation of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand in 1980, until the establishment of the Lutheran Church in Thailand in 1994 the LMT consisted of the following members: the Norwegian Missionary Society, the Finnish Evangelical

¹⁷⁸ In the figure, both the founding organisations as well as the churches that joined the LMT in 1995 at the latest, are included. From the early 1990s the Lutheran Church of Australia also had cooperation with the LMT, but as it did not joined the Lutheran mission until in 1998 it is not dealt with in this chart.

Lutheran Mission, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong, and the Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore. The Kinki Evangelical Lutheran Church from Japan did not officially join the LMT until in 1995, i.e. after the establishment of the Lutheran Church in Thailand, but from the late 1980s there was cooperation between the LMT and the Japanese church.

The member organisations of the LMT had equal rights and obligations, but since only the NMS and FELM had missionaries working in Thailand from the very beginning, the members' possibilities to influence the actual work varied. The *Joint Board for Thailand* was a link between the Home Boards of the member organisations and the field organisation of the LMT and consisted of representatives of the Home Boards. The Annual Meeting of the Joint Board was to be held in Thailand in connection with the General Assembly of the LMT. Even if the field organisation of the LMT ran the everyday work of the Lutheran mission in Thailand, the Joint Board was responsible for the more important issues, such as deciding on the budget and the development of the work. The field organisation of the LMT consisted of the General Assembly, the Executive Committee, including the chairman of the LMT, and functional committees that were appointed as need arose. The *General Assembly* consisted of all the missionaries working in Thailand for one of the partners of the LMT and of national employees invited by the Executive Committee. Voting members were the missionaries who had served for at least one year in the Thailand mission field. The General Assembly met at least once a year. A central task was to elect the members of the Executive Committee as well as of the functional committees. The General Assembly was also to decide upon guidelines, rules, and regulations for national workers and upon the establishment of local congregations, to consider long-range plans for the total work, to make recommendations for the annual budgets, and to decide on

the placement of expatriate as well as national employees. The *Executive Committee* consisted of the missionary in charge of each partner organisation of the LMT as well as of two to four other members with substitutes. The Executive Committee was to be convened by the chairman as often as the need arose, and its responsibility was the supervision of the work of the LMT and for the implementation of the assignments given by the General Assembly. The Executive Committee could also take initiatives and make recommendations to the General Assembly regarding the work of the LMT. The concrete work was to be performed through the congregations, departments, and committees of the LMT.¹⁷⁹

The Agreement on Mission Cooperation was reviewed several times, the first time at the General Assembly of the LMT in 1983. Minor amendments of a technical character were made in order to maintain the continuity and improve the management of the LMT despite the varying missionary situation, particularly during times when members of the Executive Committee were on furlough. Measures were taken in order to maintain the balance in representation between the member organisations of the LMT in the Executive Committee and to secure the cultural knowledge of the missionaries in leading positions. As the agreement had the nature of a constitution, it was desirable that the amendments were as few as possible. If there were difficulties in interpreting or implementing the agreement, the LMT wrote a set of guidelines rather than making amendments to the agreement.¹⁸⁰ As the revisions did not bring about any major

¹⁷⁹ ANMS Thailand Agreement on Mission Cooperation in Thailand 1980, VIII; AFELM II 22 Guidelines Joint board for Thailand; ANMS Thailand The Organization of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand. For more detailed information about the Agreement on Mission Cooperation in Thailand see *Appendix 2*.

¹⁸⁰ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1983/Reviewing the Agreement on Mission Co-operation in Thailand; AFELM II 22 Letter from Seikku

changes, in this investigation I will refer to the first signed version of the agreement.

The Lutheran Mission in Thailand was a child of its age. Whilst earlier models of mission cooperation had, in the main, been bilateral, the new type of mission cooperation was complex and often included several partners of cooperation. The aim of most Protestant mission agencies at the time was to create self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating churches. This was also the goal for the Lutheran Mission in Thailand and an autonomous Lutheran church was already delineated as the aim of the work in the Agreement on Mission Cooperation. At least for FELM, this was a customary course of action. If there was a Lutheran church in the country, FELM tried to enter into cooperation with this church, if not, it aimed at establishing an autonomous Lutheran church. This emphasis on Lutheranism was probably influenced by the endeavour at that time of the LWF and the Lutheran churches to develop their mission theology and mission cooperation as well as to unite the Lutheran churches and create one Lutheran church in each country.¹⁸¹

3.5 Partners of cooperation within the Lutheran Mission in Thailand

At a meeting in Helsinki in 1979, concerning the agreement on mission cooperation in Thailand, it was mentioned that several Asian Lutheran churches were already interested in taking up mission work in Thailand. At this meeting, two of

Paunonen to Christopher Woie, October 25, 1983; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1984/Reviewing the Agreement on Mission Co-operation in Thailand.

¹⁸¹ AFELM Cbb 89 Johtokunnan kokous, April 9, 1976, 93 § Suomen Lahetyssseuran Viisivuotissuunnitelma vuosiksi 1976-1980, 1; Scherer 1982, 188-190.

the churches were mentioned by name, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong and the Lutheran Church in Singapore. A Japanese Lutheran church was spoken about in more general terms. In time, all three churches joined the *Lutheran Mission in Thailand* (LMT), but it took 15 years before the last one signed the *Agreement on Mission Cooperation in Thailand*.¹⁸²

The partners of cooperation within the LMT were of different kinds. As a rough outline, they can be divided in two groups, old Nordic Lutheran missionary societies, and young Asian Lutheran churches that were the result of Western mission enterprises. The Norwegian Missionary Society and the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission belonged to the first group, while the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong, the Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore and the Kinki Evangelical Lutheran Church were members of the latter group.

The *Norwegian Missionary Society* (NMS) was established in 1842. It was the oldest Lutheran mission organisation in Norway as well as the oldest of the members of the LMT. The NMS was the result of a long period of increasing Norwegian interest for mission work. The incentive for the establishment of the NMS had come from the Haugian revival¹⁸³,

¹⁸² AFELM I 17 Consultation regarding the Agreement on Cooperation between the Norwegian Missionary Society and the Finnish Missionary Society, August 7, 1979, 4,

¹⁸³ The Haugian revival was a pietistic movement that started in the late 18th century in eastern Norway, but spread over the whole country. It was at its height during the 19th century and led to a strong lay movement within the Church of Norway. Later many of the adherents joined Det Norske Lutherske Indremisjonsselskap (today Normisjon). For more information on the revival and its frontal figure Hans Nielsen Hauge, see for instance Welle 1948, 149-192 and Aarflot 1969.

Moravianism¹⁸⁴, and foreign missionary societies. Despite the fact that the NMS was formally an independent organisation, it had, from the beginning, close connections to the Lutheran state church, the Church of Norway. Many clergymen were elected members of the board of the NMS and the male missionaries of the NMS were ordained as mission pastors and allowed to preach within the Church of Norway.¹⁸⁵

Eventually, other Lutheran mission agencies were also established in Norway, but the entire foreign mission effort of the Church of Norway was still, in the 1990s, carried out by independent organisations.¹⁸⁶ The NMS stressed that it was part of the state church, that it cooperated with the local congregations of the church, and saw itself as an implement for the Church of Norway to realize its mission responsibility. From its employees the NMS required that they taught in agreement with the Bible and the confession of the Church of Norway. Theologically the NMS was, however, more conservative than the Church of Norway in general.¹⁸⁷ The practical work of the NMS was led by a Secretary General and an Administrative Leader. The General Assembly, the highest decisive body of the NMS, gathered every third year and decided on any amendments to the statutes, the opening of new mission fields, and the establishment of new mission

¹⁸⁴ The Moravian Church was a Protestant denomination with its roots in the 15th century Hussite reformation and the 18th century Pietist movement. The Moravians were known for their extensive mission and the Moravian church has congregations all over the world. For more information, see for instance *Encyclopedia of Religion* 1987, 106-108.

¹⁸⁵ Westman 1948, 228-230; *Fakta om Det Norske Misjonsselskap* 1968, 9-12, 20; Uglem 1979, 34-79; *Faithful to our calling* 1981, 1, 8-9; Franzen 1986, 75-80; Jorgensen 1992c, 15, 17-29; Jorgensen 1994, 7-13.

¹⁸⁶ *Hovedlinjer i Det Norske Misjonsselskaps misjonssyn og misjonsstrategi* 1972, 5-6; Bloch-Hoell 1978, 219; Uglem 1979, 120-198; Franzen 1986, 63.

¹⁸⁷ Bloch-Hoell 1978, 220-221; *Faithful to our Calling* 1981, 8-9; Jorgensen 1994, 24; *Grunnregler og vedtekter for Det Norske Misjonsselskap* 1996, 3.

districts in Norway. In addition, the General Assembly elected the Landsstyret, which met approximately four times a year and had the final authority in matters not under the jurisdiction of the General Assembly. The representatives for the General Assembly were elected from among the members of local mission guilds, which supported the work of the NMS.¹⁸⁸

According to the basic principles of the NMS, its task was to work for the spreading of the kingdom of God among all peoples by training, sending, and supporting mission workers and by maintaining necessary domestic work. The NMS was to focus, in particular, on bringing the word of God to new places and new national groups.¹⁸⁹ In 1844, South Africa became the first mission field of the NMS. In 1867, work was begun on the island of Madagascar and in 1902, the first mission field in Asia was opened in the Hunan province in China. After the closing of China to foreign missions, work was started in Hong Kong and Taiwan in 1949 and in Japan in 1951. Later the NMS extended its mission work to Tanzania, Ethiopia, and Brazil as well.¹⁹⁰

In 1980, the NMS had 256 missionaries divided between ten countries.¹⁹¹ By the end of 1992, the number of mission

¹⁸⁸ Fakta om Det Norske Misjonsselskap 1968, 20; Bloch-Hoell 1978, 220-224; Faithful to our calling 1981, 8; Franzen 1986, 80; Misjonstidende 10/1994, Dette er Det Norske Misjonsselskap; Grunnregler og vedtekter for Det Norske Misjonsselskap 1996, 3-5.

¹⁸⁹ Fakta om Det Norske Misjonsselskap 1968, 18; Bloch-Hoell 1978, 219-220; Faithful to our calling 1981, 1-3.

¹⁹⁰ Fakta 0111 Det Norske Misjonsselskap 1968, 12-18; Eggen 1992, 495-497; Jorgensen 1992b, 231-234; Jorgensen 1992c, 29-35, 39-43, 101-105; Strandenaes 1992, 184-185.

¹⁹¹ Ord sorn lever 1980, 81-84. The figure comes from the year book 1980 of the NMS. An exact number of missionaries and a figure that is comparable with the statistics from other mission agencies is, however, difficult to get as the organisations counted their missionaries differently

workers had decreased to 217, but the NMS work now included 16 countries. The majority of the missionaries were stationed in Africa. In most of the countries, indigenous churches had emerged as a result of the work, but in a few countries the work had only just started. The NMS took part in the establishment of several autonomous churches, among which were two of the other members of the LMT, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong, and the Kinki Evangelical Lutheran Church in Japan.¹⁹²

In the 1970s, when extending the mission to Southeast Asia became a topical question, the NMS emphasised the importance of mission cooperation with young churches and the establishment new autonomous churches. The mission had to continue searching for people that had not yet heard the Christian Gospel and to be constantly on the move to new areas and new people. The NMS wanted to put as many missionaries as possible into direct evangelism, but since education, diaconal and social work were considered to play an important role in church planting, also this kind of service was offered. In the early 1980s, the NMS defined those people that had not been reached, the urban ministry, work among Muslims, and Christian education as its greatest challenges.¹⁹³ The NMS was ready to cooperate with churches, mission agencies, and interchurch movements with Lutheran and evangelical foundations. Cooperation across confessional boundaries was possible, on condition that it was based on valid theological premises and as long as the Bible was the

due to furloughs, language studies, marital status etc.

¹⁹² Misjonstidende 10/1993, Dette er Det Norske Misjonsselskap; Misjonstidende 10/1993, Landsstyrets trearsmelding 1990-1992; Misjonstidende 10/1994, Dette er Det Norske Misjonsselskap.

¹⁹³ Fakta om Det Norske Misjonsselskap 1968, 18, 24; Hovedlinjene i Det Norske Misjonsselskaps misjonssyn og misjonsstrategi 1972, 6-7, 10; Instruks for Det Norske Misjonsselskaps misjonserer 1980, § 2, § 5; Faithful to our calling 1981, 2-5; Vi vil videre 1986, 6-7.

guiding principle of the cooperation. The NMS, however, wanted to stress the strengths of the Lutheran doctrine and hoped that other churches would accept the particular characteristics of Lutheranism.¹⁹⁴

The *Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission* (FELM)¹⁹⁵ was founded in 1859, 17 years after the NMS, when the pietistic revival movements of the early 19th century gave rise to an increasing interest in mission work and a wish that also the Lutheran church in Finland would get involved in foreign missions. According to its statutes, FELM was established in order to spread the Gospel among peoples, who were not yet Christian, according to the Gospel of Christ and the Lutheran confession.¹⁹⁶ FELM was the first mission organisation to be established in Finland, but with time other mission agencies also emerged. In 1976, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland set up an Office for Global Mission¹⁹⁷, but it has not started any mission activities abroad of its own. Instead, it has entrusted the mission task to seven independent mission organisations. FELM has been considered one of the mission organisations of the Finnish Lutheran church since 1954, but it was not until 1968 that the church established the standards for attaining this position. If the number of missionaries and

¹⁹⁴ Hovedlinjer i Det Norske Misjonsselskaps misjonssyn og misjonsstrategi 1972, 8-9; Instruks for Det Norske Misjonsselskaps misjonsreiser 1980, § 4; Faithful to our calling 1981, 4-5, 9-10.

¹⁹⁵ Up until 1985 the English name of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission was the Finnish Missionary Society. Throughout this investigation the society is nevertheless called the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission in order to avoid misunderstanding. AFELM Cbb 106 Johtokunnan kokous, December 11, 1984, § 185.

¹⁹⁶ Remes 1976, 7-33, 93-101, 113-119, 167-217; Into Many Nations 1981, 1-2; Remes 1993, 7-14.

¹⁹⁷ A successor to the mission negotiation delegation established by the Lutheran Church in Finland in 1955.

the volume of turnover are used as criterions, FELM has always been the largest Lutheran mission agency in Finland.¹⁹⁸

In the 1980s and 1990s, the domestic work of FELM was based on the local congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. The main support for FELM came from the Lutheran congregations, to which 85 percent of the population still belonged in the mid-1990s, and from private donors. In addition, FELM received financial support for its development program (' from the Department of International Development Cooperation of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. Since 1984, all congregations of the Lutheran church have been invited to send delegates to the Annual Assembly of FELM, which elects the members of the Governing Board. The chairman of the board has, as a rule, been one of the bishops of the Lutheran Church of Finland. The work of FELM is led by a director.¹⁹⁹

The first mission field of FELM was opened in 1869 when nine missionaries were sent out to work in South West Africa in a region inhabited by the Owambo people in what is today called Namibia. For 30 years FELM committed itself entirely to the work in Ovamboland. Not until in 1901, was a second mission field opened in Hunan, China. The third focus of FELM was among the Jewish people. The first activities were started among Jews living in Finland and Europe. Later FELM moved to work among Jews returning to the area that was then designated as Palestine. FELM carried out its purpose by gathering economic support for the work and sending missionaries who were engaged in preaching the Gospel, health care, education, and other types of service.²⁰⁰ In 1980, at

¹⁹⁸ Suomen Lahetysseuran III viisivuotissuunnitelma 1981a, 13-15.

¹⁹⁹ AFELM Cbb 106 Johtokunnan kokous, September 24, 1984, § 113, Liite nro 6/1; Finska Missionsällskapetets årsbok 1995, 6, 8; Heino 1997, 24-25.

²⁰⁰ Westman 1948, 42-43; Peltola 1958, 28-44; Suomen Lahetysseuran III

the time for the establishment of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand, FELM was involved in mission work in 18 countries. The total number of missionaries was 172.²⁰¹ During the 1980s, FELM experienced a rapid growth in the number of missionaries. At its peak, around 1990, FELM had more than 400 missionaries. In 1994, FELM had still 336 missionaries working in 21 countries in Africa, Asia, Oceania, the Middle East, South America, and Europe.²⁰²

Commencing work in Thailand was in line with the strategy of FELM. In The Five Year Plan 1981-1985, it was decided that FELM should gradually move the main focus of its work from Africa to Asia so that by 1985 more than half of the expatriate employees would be working in Asia. Mission work in big cities was to be increased and by the end of the period one fourth of the missionaries were expected to be involved in urban ministry in Asia and Africa. The work was to be concentrated on places where Christ was not yet known or the number of Christians was low. The concrete aim of the mission was that new churches would emerge or that the local churches would be strengthened in their struggle towards self-reliance. FELM had already been involved in the foundation of several autonomous churches in Africa and Asia.²⁰³ Despite the plans to move the focus of the work to Asia, no more than about 35 percent of the FELM missionaries were working in Asia in 1993. The missionaries were stationed in Hongkong, Taiwan, Pakistan, Nepal, Thailand, and Singapore.²⁰⁴

viisivuotissuunnitelma 1981a, 9-10; Into Many Nations 1981, 3-8; Peltola 1989,184-187; Saari-lahti 2002, 22-36.

²⁰¹ Finska Missionssällskapets årsbok 1981, 57-58.

²⁰² Smedjebacka 1990, 75; Finska Missionssällskapets årsbok 1995, 6,185-191.

²⁰³ Suomen Lahetysseuran III viisivuotissuunnitelma 1981a, 16-17, 21, 24-25; Smedjebacka 1990, 49-50.

²⁰⁴ Finska Missionssällskapets årsbok 1995,185-191.

As regards cooperation with other church denominations, FELM wanted to stress the cooperation with Lutheran churches and organisations. FELM recognised the fact that modern mission work required cooperation with other churches as well, but the conditions for such cooperation was that it would not lead to conflicts with the confession of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Finland. The connections to the Lausanne Movement were considered important, as it was the best forum, at the time, for discussions about mission strategy. The mission cooperation with local churches was to be guided by the principle of equal partnership.²⁰⁵

While both the NMS and FELM were one of many mission agencies within the Lutheran church in each country, the Asian members of the LMT were themselves autonomous Lutheran churches, even if some of their congregations were more involved in mission work than others. The Asian members of the LMT were all the result Western mission work and had been established during a ten-year period from 1954 to 1963.

The emergence of the *Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong* (ELCHK) took place in connection with the closing of mainland China to Christian mission work in the late 1940s. The British Crown Colony, Hong Kong, received crowds of mission workers and Chinese Christians who were forced to leave China. Most of the missionaries only passed through Hong Kong, but eight Nordic and American Lutheran mission agencies left some personnel in the Crown Colony. These missionaries were to observe the situation in China and

²⁰⁵ Suomen Lahetyssseuran III viisivuotissuunnitelma 1981a, 11-12, 22-23, 27; Smedjebacka 1990, 37-40, 65-67; Finska Missionsssällskapets årsbok 1995, 6, 8.

maintain mission activity in the area until the work in China could be resumed.²⁰⁶

The Lutheran presence in Hong Kong was strengthened by the Lutheran Theological Seminary,²⁰⁷ which had already moved from mainland China to Hong Kong in 1948. More or less unplanned mission work started in the British Crown Colony as the Lutheran missionaries in Hong Kong and the graduates from the Lutheran Theological Seminary began to work among refugees and immigrants from mainland-China. After only a few years the Lutheran work in Hong Kong had grown to such proportions that it became necessary to organise the work by founding a Lutheran church. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong was established in 1954 and in 1957 a complete constitution for the church was adopted.²⁰⁸ In the late 1990s, the ELCHK was the largest Lutheran church body in Hong Kong with 54 congregations and more than 12,000 members.²⁰⁹

In 1977, the ELCHK took the first steps towards becoming involved in foreign mission work when three of its largest self-supporting congregations set up local mission associations and a mission committee was established to function as kind of a mission agency for the church. The

²⁰⁶ The Church Doth stand 1958,17; Strandenes 1992,182-183.

²⁰⁷ The Lutheran Seminary had been founded in 1913 in Shekow in the Hubei province by American, Finnish, and Norwegian churches and mission agencies and had been located at several places in China before the removal to Hong Kong. For more information about the seminary, see for instance Carlberg 1958 and Ijas 2002.

²⁰⁸ Carlberg 1958, 106-109, 135, 163-176; The Church Doth stand 1958, 1, 31-32; Jarva 1983, 11-13, 16; Eggen 1992, 379-480; Strandenes 1992, 186, 189, 201, 222; Granberg 2000, 46; Ijas 2002, 443-445,471-472.

²⁰⁹ Strandenes 1992, 201; Granberg 2000, 46; The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong. Available at <www.elchk.org.hk/english/english.htm>. Accessed September 18, 2009.

mission committee hoped that, in time, all the congregations of the ELCHK would start supporting the mission work. In order to become a member of the mission committee, the congregations had to be self-supporting, have their own local mission association, and be willing to support the mission projects of the ELCHK with a certain amount of money annually. The driving force behind the foundation of the mission committee was a wish to reach people of Chinese origin with the Christian gospel. The first project of the mission committee was to support Lutheran work among Chinese living in Toronto, Canada.²¹⁰

The contacts between the ELCHK and the LMT seem to have been derived from the fact that both the NMS and FELM were involved in mission work in Hong Kong and partners of cooperation of the ELCHK. The NMS and FELM encouraged the ELCHK to become involved in foreign mission work and asked it to consider joining the Lutheran mission in Thailand.²¹¹ Already at the first General Assembly of the LMT in September 1980, the relations between the LMT and the ELCHK were discussed. In June 1982, the ELCHK signed the Agreement on Mission Cooperation in Thailand and formally became a full member of the LMT. It was agreed that the ELCHK at this stage would only be able to support the work financially. However, as soon as suitable missionary candidates could be found, the church declared that it would be ready to send personnel to Thailand. However, sending Chinese missionaries to Thailand in the early 1980s might have met with obstacles as the relationship between the Thai government and the Chinese in Thailand was tense due to the political unrest in Southeast Asia. Therefore, support from the

²¹⁰ Limthongvirutn 1983, 68; Misjonstidende 10/1991, Hong Kong: Kirke med friskt misjonsmot.

²¹¹ AMBT Conversation with Egil H. Eggen, February 17, 2003; Misjonstidende 10/1991, Hong Kong: Kirke med friskt misjonsmot.

ELCHK was given to covering scholarships and salaries for Thai coworkers as well as expenses for parish and mass media work.²¹²

Despite not having any missionary in Thailand for many years, the ELCHK took active part in the management of the LMT by sending representatives to the General Assembly of the LMT and to the meetings of the Joint Board for Thailand. The ELCHK also sent teams of coworkers and students from the Lutheran Theological Seminary on regular visits to Thailand. Despite these measures, the involvement in the concrete mission work was restricted due to the ELCHK not having any resident missionary in Thailand. This was a slight disappointment for the Nordic members of the LMT, who considered that the ELCHK as an Asian Lutheran church would have had much to contribute to the mission in Thailand. The first ELCHK missionary, Chan Wai Ling, or Anita Chan as she was called among her fellow missionaries, was not sent to Thailand until in 1988.²¹³ The ELCHK's

²¹² ANMS Thailand Letter from John c. M. Tse to Nils Peder Kjetsaa, February 26,1980; AFELM Hia 29 Thaimaan tyon hallintokunnan kokous, March 21, 1980, 3 §; AFELM Hia 29 Meeting with the Lutheran Mission in Thailand and Rev. Andrew Hsiao, ELCHK, June 16, 1980; AFELM II 22 Joint Meeting of the Executive Committee of the LMT and the Joint Board for Thailand" March 24, 1981; Finska Missionssällskapets arsbok 1980, 47-48; Suomen Lahetyssanommat 13/1981, Bangkokissa kavi mieluisia vieraita; Misjonstidende 10/1991, Hong Kong: Kirke med friskt misjonsmot; Woie 1992, 339.

²¹³ AFELM I 66 Letter from Christopher Woie to John C.M. Tse and Andrew Hsiao, August 8, 1987; ANMS Det Norske Misjonsselskaps Misjonsermote i Thailand 1987/Arsmelding fra tillitsmannen; AFELM I 66 Letter from Christopher Woie to Chan Wai Ling, December 23, 1987; AMBT Conversation with Henrik Smedjebacka, September 3, 1998; Suomen Lahetyssanommat 13/1981, Bangkokissa kavi mieluisia vieraita; LMT Newsletter September 1986, From the Acting Chairman; Misjonstidende 10/1991, Hong Kong: Kirke med friskt misjonsmot; Woie 1992,339.

mission committee nevertheless considered the mission in Thailand very important for the identity and vitality of the church. In addition to the work in Thailand, the ELCHK supported work among overseas Chinese and gave financial support to several mission agencies.²¹⁴

The origin of the *Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore* (LCMS) is also to be found in the closing of mainland China to mission work as well as in the communist activities in Southeast Asia that contributed to the increase of Lutheran interest in the area. As a consequence of this increasing interest, the United Lutheran Church of America²¹⁵ decided in 1953 to begin mission work among the Chinese community in Malaysia. In 1963, the work led to the formation of the Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore since present-day Malaysia and Singapore were linked in one political unit at the time. The church headquarters were in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. In 1965, Malaysia and Singapore were already divided into two separate states, but the LCMS continued as one until 1998, when the Lutheran Church in Singapore was separated from the Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore.²¹⁶ In 2002, the Lutheran Church in Malaysia had around 7,000 members distributed in 34 congregations, while

²¹⁴ Misjonstidende 10/1991, Hong Kong: Kirke med friskt misjonsmot; Granberg 2000, 47.

²¹⁵ The United Lutheran Church of America was one of the predecessors of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

²¹⁶ A Dictionary of Asian Christianity 2001, 512-514; Lutheran Church in Singapore. Available at <www.lutheran.org.sg>. Accessed September 18, 2009; The story of the Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore. Available at <www.lcms.org.my/index.php/content/view/27/6/>. Accessed September 18, 2009; Mission History. Lutheran Church in Singapore. Available at <www.elca.org/Who-We-Are/Our-Three-Expressions/Churchwide-Organization/Global-Mission/Where-We-Work/Asia/Singapore/Mission-History.aspx>. Accessed September 18, 2009.

the Lutheran Church in Singapore had seven congregations and about 3,000 members.²¹⁷

Early in 1983, Delbert E. Anderson, Secretary for East Asia of the Lutheran Church in America, wrote to Mission Secretary Egil H. Eggen of the NMS, and Asia Secretary Seikku Paunonen of FELM, stating that even if the LCMS had thus far been mainly involved in reaching new people in Malaysia and Singapore, the church had already, for several years, been looking for an opportunity to participate in an overseas mission outreach programme. The LCMS had investigated mission prospects in the Philippines, but that it had come to nothing. Now the church was interested in exploring the possibilities of mission work in Thailand. Through his letter Anderson wanted to establish contact between Bishop Peter Foong of the LCMS, Seikku Paunonen and Egil H. Eggen. Anderson, Eggen, and Paunonen knew each other from mission cooperation in Hong Kong and China.²¹⁸

As a consequence of the letter, the then chairman of the LMT, Christopher Woie, sent a copy of the Agreement of Mission Cooperation in Thailand to Bishop Foong. When the Chairman of the Joint Board for Thailand, Seikku Paunonen, in January 1984 was planning a trip to Southeast Asia he asked Bishop Foong if a meeting was possible. Paunonen's intention was to enquire whether the LCMS was still interested in the Lutheran mission in Thailand and how they

²¹⁷ Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore. Available at <www.lutheranworld.org/Directory/ASI/LuthCchinMalaysiaSingapore-EN.html>. Accessed at September 18, 2009; Lutheran Church in Singapore. Available at <www.lutheranworld.org/Directory/ASI/LuthCchinSingapore-EN.html>. Accessed at September 18, 2009.

²¹⁸ AFELM II 22 Letter from Delbert E. Anderson to Egil H. Eggen and Seikku Paunonen, February 16, 1983; AFELM II 17 Letter from Egil H. Eggen to Jaakko Makela, March 3, 1983; ANMS Thailand Letter from Jaakko Makela to Daniel Chong, June 18, 1986.

could proceed with this question.²¹⁹ As a result of these contacts, a delegation from the LCMS led by Bishop Foong visited Bangkok in March 1984, and participated in the General Assembly of LMT. Two years later the new bishop of the LCMS, Daniel Chong, was a guest at the General Assembly. In addition to involvement in mission work in Thailand, possibilities for joint work among Thais living in Singapore and Malaysia were explored. In 1987, at the 19th Biennial Convention of the LCMS, the church took the formal decision to join the LMT and at the General Assembly of the LMT in 1988, the LCMS was formally accepted as a member of the LMT.²²⁰ The first missionaries of the LCMS to Thailand were Reverend Rickson Leong and his wife Tan Pei Pei who started working in Thailand in 1994.²²¹

A possible cooperation with the *Kinki Evangelical Lutheran Church* (KELC) in Japan was topical from the very beginning of the Lutheran mission to Thailand. In 1977, Assistant Mission Secretary Anund Nordbo wrote in the Norsk Misjonstidende magazine, that discussions about a possible mission cooperation in Thailand had been started with the KELC. The Lutheran work in Thailand needed more workers

²¹⁹ AFELM I 64 Letter from Seikku Paunonen to Peter Foong, January 24, 1984.

²²⁰ AFELM I 63 Minutes of the General Assembly of the LMT, Bangkok, March 26-30, 1984/Lutheran Church of Malaysia and Singapore; AFELM I 66 Letter from Egil H. Eggen to Daniel Chong, February 10, 1986; AFELM I 66 Letter from Daniel Chong to Egil H. Eggen, September 8, 1987; ANMS Thailand Letter from Daniel Chong to Jaakko Makela, September 16, 1986; AFELM I 66 Letter from Seikku Paunonen to Daniel Chong, September 11, 1987; ALMT General Assembly of the LMT 1988/Accepting the Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore as the 4th member of the LMT; Asia Lutheran News 3/1988, Joint Lutheran Mission in Thailand accepts new partner, ordains Thai pastors; Makela 1991,3.1; Woie 1992, 340.

²²¹ Misjonstidende 12/1994, Misjon fra Malaysia.

and the Japanese church had been asked to consider sending missionaries to the country.²²²

The KELC was the result of the work of two Norwegian missionary societies who sent their first missionaries to Japan in the early 1950s. From the start, the societies talked about developing their cooperation and becoming more of a unit. This was realised in 1961 when the Kinki Evangelical Lutheran Church was established by the NMS and the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church of Norway. According to their plans, the foundation of the KELC was the first step on the way to unification with the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church, however, after the negotiations broke down, the KELC continued as an autonomous church. In the mid-1990s, the KELC had approximately 2,500 members.²²³

According to an agreement between the KELC and the founding missionary societies, the work of expansion principally belonged to the missions. Despite this, mission awareness seems to have developed at an early stage within the congregations of the KELC. Not long after the establishment of the church, the notion of mission work outside the borders of Japan was initiated.²²⁴ One of the first mission projects of the KELC was to buy some radios that were sent to Africa in order to enable the Africans to hear the

²²² Norsk Misjonstidende 9/1977, Thailand - en veldig utfordring til kristen misjon!; Woie 1992,334.

²²³ LNMS Constitution and By-laws of Kinki Evangelical Lutheran Church (with special agreement) as adopted November 3, 1961; AFELM II 24 Joint Meeting between Homeboard Leaders, the Executive Committee of LMT and the Visiting Delegation from KELC, July 22,1989; Fakta om Det Norske Misjonsselskap 1969, 156; Tillbakeblikk for fremtiden 1992, 49; Jorgensen 1992a, 226-231; Jorgensen 1992b, 252-255, 267.

²²⁴ LNMS Constitution and By-laws of the Kinki Evangelical Lutheran Church (with special agreement) as adopted in November 3, 1961; Tillbakeblikk for fremtiden 1992, 55; Jorgensen 1992b, 264.

Christian gospel on the radio. In 1969, the KELC sent its first missionary to work among people of Japanese origin living in Brasil. After a reconnoitring tour to Hong Kong, the KELC started, in 1979, to support an orphanage run by the ELCHK. Later the ELCHK's work among elderly people received financial support as well as some other objects in Asia.²²⁵

The contacts between the LMT and the KELC were maintained for many years and visits were exchanged between the two. In 1989, the contacts seem to have entered a new stage. Discussions about a formal cooperation were started and the KELC began to financially support the media work of the LMT. Despite this, the KELC did not sign the Agreement on Mission Cooperation in Thailand until in 1995. The contacts between the KELC and the LMT had been encouraged by the ELCHK and the NMS who had close connections to both organisations. In addition, the Lutheran World Federation seems to have helped to encouraged the contacts between the KELC and the LMT.²²⁷

²²⁵ AMBT Conversation with Egil H. Eggen, February 17, 2003; Misjonstidende 10/1991, Liten hendelse med store perspektiver; Tillbakeblikk for fremtiden 1992, 55-56; Jorgensen 1992b, 264; Pettersen 1992,376.377;

²²⁶ ANMS Thailand Letter from Christopher Woie to Paul . Roland, November 21, 1988; AFELM II 24 Memorandum from Joint Meeting between Homeboard Leaders, the Executive Committee of the LMT and the Visiting Delegation from the KELC, July 22, 1989; AFELM I 67 Letter from Christopher Woie to Kohji Sugioka, January 20, 1989; AFELM I 67 Letter from Egil H. Eggen to Kohji Sugioka, September 6, 1989; AFELM I 77 Missionary Conference of the LMT 1995/Chairperson's Address; AFELM I 77 Telefax from Jorgen Korsvik to LMT, April 7, 1995; AFELM I 77 Joint Board for Thailand, April 24, 1995, 4/95; AFELM I 77 Memorandum from Meeting between the LMT and the KELC, June 14, 1995.

²²⁷ AFELM II 24 Joint Meeting between Homeboard Leaders, the Executive Committee of LMT and the Visiting Delegation from KELC, July 22, 1989; AMBT Conversation with Egil H. Eggen, February 17, 2003; AMBT Conversation with Eivind Hauglid, February 27, 2003.

When the KELC joined the LMT in 1995, the Lutheran Church in Thailand had already been established and thus the new church had also to approve of the KELC joining the work in Thailand. By giving its approval, the church consented to receiving missionaries and other kinds of support from the KELC, according to the same conditions as the other members of the LMT.²²⁸

It does not seem to have been a coincidence that it was these Asian churches (mentioned above) that joined the Lutheran mission in Thailand. At the assemblies of the Lutheran World Federation in 1977 and 1984, it had been underlined that the local Lutheran churches were responsible for mission work in their own area and if joint mission actions were planned in a region where no local church existed, the Lutheran churches from the neighbouring areas were to be involved. In consequence, the NMS and FELM wanted to find Asian partners for their joint mission in Thailand. Since the countries closest to Thailand did not have Lutheran churches or could not be considered due to political reasons, it was natural for the NMS and FELM to search for partners among the Asian churches they already had cooperation with or with church leaders they knew from international connections.²²⁹ Even if the multicultural milieu of the LMT required cooperation and flexibility from its coworkers, the missionaries seem in general to have been content with their international work environment. Although, they often regretted that there never was enough time to really learn to know the cultures of fellow missionaries. For the Nordic missionary societies, it seems to have been encouraging to have young Asian Lutheran churches as partners in the mission work and within the LMT

²²⁸ ALMT Church Council of the ELCT, April 18, 1995, 52/95; Woie 1998, 24.

²²⁹ Budapest 1984 "In Christ - Hope for the World" 1985, 189-191.

it was commonly expressed desire that the cooperation with Asian churches should increase.²³⁰

In addition to the members of the LMT, the Lutheran Mission also had other Lutheran partners of cooperation, partners that did not join the LMT until several years after the establishment of the Lutheran Church in Thailand and partners that the LMT failed to integrate in its organisation. The first contacts between the *Lutheran Church of Australia* and the LMT took place in the early 1990s. At this time, a group called Lutheran Woman of Australia decided to financially support the work of the LMT for a period of three years, beginning in 1991. The support was mainly used for the Lutheran Institute of Theological Education and material production. When this project was finished, the Australian church continued to support the work, for instance, by granting scholarships to Thai Lutherans. By 1994, the Lutheran Church of Australia had already expressed interest in becoming a member of the LMT, but the church did not apply for membership until in 1998.²³¹

²³⁰ Suomen Lahetyssanommat 13/1980, Ovet avoinna hedelmälliseen työhön; Kirkkomme lahetys 1/1994, Lahetyksestä kirkoksi; Misjonstidende 19/1995, Fruktbart flerkulturelt fellesskap.

²³¹ AFELM I 67 Letter from R. . Gerhardy to Paavo Kilpi, August 22, 1989; ANMS Thailand Letter from R. . Gerhardy to Markku Ala-Uotila, April 4, 1990; AFELM I 68 Meeting between Representatives of the LCA and the LMT, November 19, 1990; AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1991/Chairman's Report 1990; AFELM I 68 Letter from Markku Ala-Uotila to Seikku Paunonen, September 6, 1993; AFELM 8.2.7.2./3. Neuvottelumatka Thaimaahan 18-26.4.1994, report by Seikku Paunonen.; AMBT Conversation with Maija and Jaakko Makela, May 28, 1997; AFELM I 77 Letter from Ulf Metzner to Sompong Hanpradit, September 2, 1998; AFELM I 77 E-mail from Seikku Paunonen to Ulf Metzner, September 30, 1998; AFELM I 77 Letter form Ulf Metzner to Seikku Paunonen, October 15,1998; AFELM I 77 Joint Board for Thailand Annual Meeting, April 19-20,1999, 04/99.

Even though the LMT would have preferred that all Lutheran actors in the mission field in Thailand were eventually to become members of the Lutheran Mission, it did not succeed in this endeavour. The first contacts between the *Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod*, an American church established in 1847 by European immigrants, and the LMT took place in the early 1980s. According to the leaders of the Missouri Synod, its interest in Thailand was awakened in 1968, at a time when the government and army of the United States were deeply involved in Southeast Asia. In the 1980s, the question about mission in Thailand was raised again by people who took an interest in the country and/or lacked a Lutheran fellowship there.²³²

When the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod contacted the Department for Religious Affairs of the Thai government in order to acquire permission to work in the country, the authorities recommended that this church establish contact with the already existing Lutheran Mission in Thailand. Many years of negotiations on different levels followed. The LMT, was basically for cooperation and appreciated the long experience of the Missouri Synod in overseas mission as well as its emphasis on theological training and Christian education. By including the Missouri Synod in its organisation, the LMT wanted to achieve its aim of establishing one united Lutheran Church in Thailand and prevent the emergence of a competing Lutheran church. The Missouri Synod, on the other hand, stressed that it would not start a separate ministry in Thailand if the planned cooperation with the LMT came to nothing. There were,

²³² ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1982/Appendix 2 Memorandum from meeting 18.03.82 between representatives from the Missouri Synod and the Lutheran Mission in Thailand; AFELM I 64 Meeting between Louis Y. Nau and the Executive Committee of the LMT, June 1, 1984; Meyer 1963, 3-10.

however, several theological issues that had to be solved before a level of cooperation could be established. The matters to be discussed were, for instance, the authority of the Scriptures, altar and pulpit fellowship, and ministry. Furthermore, there was the question of female missionaries as the Missouri Synod not only refused to ordain women, but wanted to restrict their role as leaders, evangelists, and missionaries. From the sources, it appears as if the mission leaders of the synod were eager to start cooperation with the LMT while the synod's church officials were more concerned with theological orthodoxy. The negotiations seem to have led to an agreement that the divergences in theology were so substantial that a full membership of the Missouri Synod in the LMT was not possible for the time being, but there was enough agreement for a working relationship.²³³

The Missouri Synod proposed a series of areas where cooperation was possible, for instance work among certain ethnic groups and refugees, work in new areas in Bangkok and northeastern Thailand, mass media work and theological education. As an answer, the LMT presented in 1985 a proposal for a Working Agreement between the Lutheran Mission and the synod. It was suggested that the LMT and the Missouri Synod cooperate on specific projects such as literature production and setting up a theological library. The Missouri Synod did not accept the proposed agreement. It had

²³³ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1982/Possible cooperation with the Missouri Synod; AFELM II 17 Memorandum from discussions concerning proposed mission cooperation in Thailand between LMT and LCMS, May 26-27, 1982; AFELM II 22 Letter from Samuel H. Nafzger to Edward A. Westcott, February 24, 1983; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1983/Outline of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod Co-operation Issue; AFELM I 64 Letter from Henrik Smedjebacka to Christopher Woie, May 21, 1984; AFELM I 64 Meeting between Dr. Louis Nau and the Executive Committee of the LMT, June 1, 1984; AFELM II 17 Consultation on LMT-related Matters, July 16, 1984; Meyer 1963, 10-14.

hoped to be more deeply involved in the Lutheran work in Thailand, to be able to influence the work and participate in building up the Lutheran church in the country. The leaders of the Missouri Synod felt that it had been reduced to a mere contributor of funds. It intended not to cease the existing cooperation with the LMT, i.e. literature production and financial support for certain projects, but according to the synod no agreement was needed for this kind of cooperation. Despite the difficult negotiations between the LMT and the Missouri Synod, the synod continued to support the work of the LMT also after the proposal for a Working Agreement. Support was given to buy church premises for Lutheran congregations in Bangkok, for the radio ministry of the LMT as well as to produce and translate Luther⁷ Large Catechism and Small Catechism and the Augsburg Confession into Thai.²³⁴

Despite the Missouri Synod's assertion that it would not start any mission work of its own in Thailand, in 1986, the LMT was informed that the synod had sent two missionaries to work among the Karen people on the border between

²³⁴ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1982/Appendix 1 Preliminary discussion topics; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1983/Outline of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod Co-operation Issue; AFELM I 64 Letter from Henrik Smedjebacka to Christopher Woie, May 21, 1984; AFELM I 64 Meeting between Dr. Louis Nau and the Executive Committee of LMT, June 1, 1984; AFELM I 78 Letter from Henrik Smedjebacka to Salli Lamponen, July 19, 1984; AFELM I 64 Letter from Egil H. Eggen to Louis Y. Nau, August 9, 1984; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1985/Working Agreement between the Lutheran Mission in Thailand and the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod; AFELM I 64 Meeting with Dr. Henry Rowold, LC-MS, September 24-25, 1985; AFELM I 66 Letter from Jaakko Makela to the Board for Mission Services of the LC-MS, January 2, 1986; AFELM I 66 Letter from Edward A. Westcott to Egil H. Eggen, January 7 1986; AFELM I 66 Letter from Egil H. Eggen to Jaakko Makela, January 21, 1986; AFELM I 66 Consultation on LMT-related Matters, October 7, 1986.

Thailand and Burma. According to the synod's Asia Secretary, Louis Y. Nau, this ministry was not to compete with the work of the LMT and if congregations were established as a result of the work, the congregations could be offered the possibility to join the Lutheran Mission.²³⁵ In February 1988, the Missouri Synod nevertheless decided to establish a legal presence in Thailand and request membership in the *Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand* (EFT). The Missouri Synod justified its decision with the unproductive and lengthy negotiations with the LMT and the possibility of the synod to pursue mission work among Karen refugees in Thailand. The LMT was asked to endorse the synod's membership in the EFT, but the LMT declined as it was considered contrary to its wish to have only one Lutheran Church in Thailand. In fact, a membership in the EFT was not even possible at the time as the fellowship did not accept any new foreign organisations as members.²³⁶ The work of the Missouri Synod in Thailand was pursued under the name *Concordia Gospel Ministry*. In 1994, the Concordia Gospel Ministry had seven missionaries in Thailand. At this time, their work was focussed on radio ministry, running a day care centre for children and a home for former prostitutes. In addition, the Concordia Gospel Ministry had opened a centre in Bangkok and had tried to start cell groups in the city.²³⁷

²³⁵ AFELM I 66 Letter from Louis Y. Nau to Jaakko Makela, February 17, 1986; AFELM I 66 Letter from Jaakko Makela to Egil H. Eggen, March 1, 1986; AFELM I 66 Meeting with Dr. Nau, the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, March, 10, 1986.

²³⁶ AFELM II 42 Letter from Edward A. Westcott to Egil H. Eggen, February 22, 1988; AFELM II 42 Executive Committee of the LMT, February 25, 1988, 22/88, Appendix statement of Relationship; ANMS Thailand Letter from Christopher Woie to the members of JBT, March 25, 1988; AFELM II 42 Executive Committee of the LMT, May 26, 1988, 72/88; AFELM I 66 Letter from Christopher Woie to Dennis Denow, August 5, 1988; Reporter 7/1988, BFMS passes resolution to establish official LCMS presence in Thailand.

²³⁷ AFELM I 66 The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod; AFELM I 68 Fax

Summary

In this chapter, I have investigated the background of the Lutheran mission cooperation in Thailand and the shaping of the mission in the initial stage. The Lutheran mission in Thailand was a result of contemporary political development and missiological discussions. For the member organisations of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand (LMT) becoming involved in mission cooperation in Thailand was not coincidental, but in line with their mission strategy and long-range plans. They knew each other from other mission undertakings or had come in contact through the Lutheran World Federation. The work was initiated by the NMS, but one by one the other members of the LMT joined in. A difficult question was the relation to the Christian organisations officially recognised by the Thai Government and whether the Lutheran Mission should aim at establishing an autonomous Lutheran Church in Thailand or integrate the Lutheran congregations in the national church, the Church of Christ in Thailand. Through the foundation of the LMT, the Lutheran ministry in Thailand was strengthened. The work gained a clearer structure and better planning, and the activities started by the NMS and FELM were taken over by the Lutheran Mission.

from Eivind Hauglid to Thomas Schaeffer, September 19, 1994; The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in Thailand. Available at <www.lcms.org/pages/internal.asp?NavID=5835>. Accessed September 18, 2009.

4. FIELDS OF ACTION OF THE LUTHERAN MISSION IN THAILAND

The sphere of activity of the *Lutheran Mission in Thailand* (LMT) was extensive. Since there were no Lutheran church and no Lutheran congregations that the LMT could have cooperated with in Thailand, the Lutheran Mission assumed many tasks and activities that traditionally were carried out by pioneering missions until there was an autonomous church that could take over the work. The outer framework for the activities of the LMT were fixed in the *Agreement on Mission Cooperation in Thailand* and specified in The Five Year Plans of the Lutheran Mission. The LMT initiated and ministered to its own congregations, it had an all-round diaconal work and theological training for both laymen, and future evangelists and pastors; it employed national workers and decided on the expansion and development of the work as well as drew up long term plans and strategies for the mission. All these activities were managed by the LMT until the establishment of the Lutheran Church in Thailand, when the Thai Lutherans took over responsibility for the work commenced by the Lutheran Mission.

In this chapter, I will study the forms of activities that the LMT chose to concentrate on, and examine how the different activities of the LMT emerged and how the work developed.

4.1 Evangelism and church planting in Bangkok

The *Agreement on Mission Cooperation in Thailand* from 1980 had already established that the main purpose of the *Lutheran Mission in Thailand* (LMT) was to "*bring Christ's Gospel through proclamation and service, to the peoples in Thailand, and to establish local congregations which shall be united in one Lutheran*

Church".²³⁸ This was not one purpose among several, but the main point of the agreement. It reflected the view of the founders of the LMT, the *Norwegian Missionary Society* (NMS) and the *Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission* (FELM), who each individually stressed the importance of evangelism, church planting and parish work in the mission field²³⁹. The local congregations were to constitute the foundation of the LMT and the future church and the work of the LMT was guided by a deliberate strategy to concentrate on evangelism and church planting.²⁴⁰

The first congregations of the LMT were all established in Bangkok and a clear pattern can be discerned for the planting of new congregations in the Thai capital. In other parts of the country slightly different methods were used. The object of the church planting in Bangkok was to start local congregations for people living in the surrounding areas. The hope was that the congregations would become deeply rooted in the local community and acquire a natural place in the life of the

238 ANMS Thailand Agreement on Mission Cooperation in Thailand 1980, § 3.

²³⁹ The term 'evangelism' refers in this investigation to activities that explicitly aimed at the spreading of the Christian Gospel within one's own country. With the term 'parish work' the basic tasks of a congregation are intended, such as services and meetings, Christian teaching, ceremonies, pastoral care and administration. The term 'church planting' has been given different meanings in different contexts, but in this connection it principally refers to the establishment of local congregations. For more information on church planting see for instance *Church Planting Commitment* by Hakan Granberg (Granberg 2000) and *Planting and Growing Urban Churches* edited by Harvey M. Conn (Conn 1997).

²⁴⁰ Hovedlinjene i Det Norske Misjonsselskaps misjonssyn og misjonsstrategi 1972, 6-7; Instruks for Det Norske Misjonsselskaps misjonserer 1980, § 2; Faithful to our Calling 1981, 2-3; Suomen Lahetyssseuran III viisivuotissuunnitelma 1981a, 6-8; Smedjebacka 1990, 45-50.

people. The establishing of new congregations was led by teams consisting of at least one full-time Thai evangelist and one missionary. Each team was to prepare the opening of a new church centre²⁴¹ and later the team became responsible for the work at the centre.²⁴² The first assignment of each church planting team was to find a convenient location for a new church centre. Two guiding principles were followed in the search for suitable locations. Firstly, the LMT tried to respect the work of other Christian bodies and looked for areas without permanent Christian work. Secondly, the LMT searched for local sub-centres. The ideal was a well-defined and populous area with natural boundaries. In its attempt to work in areas with no permanent Christian presence, the LMT reflected the view of its founders, the NMS and FELM, who both emphasised that church planting should mainly take place in areas that did not yet have a Christian community. As soon as the Executive Committee of the LMT had approved an area as the location for a new church centre, the church planting team rented premises for the centre and regular Sunday services began. The team started to make the presence of the church known by distributing tracts, introduction

241 Within the LMT the term 'church centre' was used for local mission centres that had not yet been formally organised as congregations. The working methods and activities of the church centres varied in order to get in touch with as many people as possible. At times the term church centre was also used as a synonym for 'congregation', particularly when speaking of the church building.

242 ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1983/Report from Chairman; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1983/Reviewing the 5 year plan; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1985/Report from the chairman; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1987/Report from Chairman; AFELM I 66 Five Years Plan for the Lutheran Mission in Thailand 1986-1990, 7; Norsk Misjonstidende 7/1978, Hans rike kommer - i Thailand; Misjonstidende 13/1985, Teamarbeid og diakoni for Elise i Bangkok; Kusawadee 1989,18-19; Makela 1991, 3.2.1.

letters, and contact cards to people living in the neighbourhood and by arranging open air film shows.²⁴³

According to *The Five Year Plan of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand 1981-1985*, the vision of the LMT was that the congregations would become "*places of praying, sharing the word of God and the sacraments*". The church centres were designed to be places for Christian service, offering help to people living in the neighbourhood. The intention was that the work should expand from the church centres to nearby areas through cell groups and house congregations. Through these the Christian gospel was to be brought directly into the everyday life of people and thus a more lasting impact could be attained. This strategy, however, proved hard to realise. In general, the work was largely concentrated on the church centres. House meetings were held in some homes, but they did not develop into regular cell groups or house congregations. The reasons were many. Most of the Thai members of the Lutheran congregations still had a too limited understanding of the Bible and Christianity to be prepared to lead a cell group or a house congregation. Many of the parish members were young and not mature enough to take responsibility for a cell group or a house congregation. Neither were some of the Thais keen on opening up their homes for this kind of activity and many of the parish members were migrants from other provinces with non-permanent living arrangements in Bangkok. In addition, the hierarchy and leader centring in Thai society and Thai

²⁴³ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1983/Reviewing the 5 year plan; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1987/Report from Chairman; Pa apen kanal 1982, 48; Makela 1991, 3.2.1., 3.2.2., 3.2.3.

Christianity did not encourage this parish model.²⁴⁴ The establishment of local congregations for people living in the neighbourhood was also made difficult by the parish members' unwillingness to be restricted by geographical boundaries. If the members moved away from the area of the congregation, they often travelled long journeys to be able to participate in the activities of their old congregation instead of transferring to another congregation. Moreover, many of the relatives and friends that the parish members brought with them to the congregation lived in areas far away from the church centre.²⁴⁵

The main target groups of the outreach programme of the LMT were families and adults. The LMT did not want to contribute to dividing families by converting only individual family members. It was believed that if the whole family converted at the same time it would be easier for the new Christians to handle the social pressure from the surrounding Buddhist society. In reality, it was much easier to reach children and young people than adults and families. A survey made in 1986, by the then chairman of the LMT, Jaakko Makela, showed that more than half of the people baptised within the Lutheran Mission during 1985-1986 were single and belonged to the age group 16-30 years. The few extended families that had been baptised were in the main living

²⁴⁴ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1981/Five Years Plan of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand 1981-1985; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1983/Reviewing the 5 year plan; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1985/Long Range Plan 1986-1988; AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan tyoalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1991, 21.

²⁴⁵ AFELM I 65 General Assembly of the LMT 1988/Chairman's Report; FELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1990/Chairman's Report; AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan tyoalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1990, 5-6; AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan tyoalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1991, 14-15; Suomen Lahetyssanommat 13/1981, Uuden tyon alkua Ladphraolla; Misjonstidende 6/1996, 20 ar i Thailand.

outside of Bangkok. The trend that young people and students responded more readily to the Christian Gospel than older individuals was not representative only of the Lutheran congregations, but occurred within other Christian denominations in Thailand as well.²⁴⁶ Social contacts were nevertheless vital for conversion in the Lutheran congregations in Thailand. Outreach programmes using friendship was in general the most effective method. Thais have a high threshold level for new contexts and visiting a new situation was difficult unless they knew someone there from before. In Thai society, the best bearer of the Gospel was a Thai Christian who invited family and friends to the congregation. In accordance with this, the above-mentioned survey also demonstrated that a majority of the people baptised in 1985-1986 were relatives and friends of parish members. Furthermore, investigations from other church denominations in Thailand have confirmed these results.²⁴⁷

The congregations of the LMT grew mainly through children being born to parish members and conversion growth. The vast majority of the parish members were converts to Christianity and baptised by a Lutheran congregation or children of Christian parents. As the LMT wanted to respect the work of other Christian denominations, it was, in general, not active in registering people who wanted to transfer from another church. Those who did transfer from other denominations were in general persons who had lost contact

²⁴⁶ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1983/Report from Chairman; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1985/Report from the Chairman; AFELM I 65 Churchworkers seminar of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand, January 14, 1987; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1987/Chairman's Report; Hill 1982, 72-73; Finska Missionsssällskapets årsbok 1983, 43; Hiebert & Hiebert Meneses 1995, 236.

²⁴⁷ AFELM I 65 Churchworkers seminar of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand, January 14, 1987; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1987/Chairman's Report; Smith 1977, 168-171; Kosonen 1989, 68.

with their former congregation, but resumed going to services when they came in contact with a congregation of the Lutheran Mission. Some people preferred going to a Lutheran congregation simply because it was close to their home.²⁴⁸ When asked about their conversion, many of the Thai Lutherans related that it had been the unselfish love of the Christians, and the loving atmosphere in the congregation that awoke their interest in Christianity. The determining argument for conversion had in many cases been an experience that Jesus could overcome evil powers. Some of the converts also spoke about having been possessed by spirits, but being released by the power of Jesus. That experiences of the Christian God being more powerful than local spirits can be a determining factor for conversion to Christianity has also been showed by other investigations.²⁴⁹

According to the Finnish missionary Tapio Karjalainen, the LMT did not intend to work among any specific social group of the Thai population. The intention of the Lutheran congregations was simply to work among people living in a particular neighbourhood, and incorporate members from different social classes. This opinion has been contradicted by Thai coworker Monrudee Kusawadee who has maintained that it was more or less agreed within the LMT to concentrate

²⁴⁸ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1985/Report from the chairman; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1987/Statistics 1 Membership of the congregations per year; Suomen Lahetyssanommat 13/1981, Uuden tyon alkua Ladphraolla; Luthersk Kirketidende 2/2003, Sondagsteksten.

²⁴⁹ AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1994/Chairperson's Report; Suomen Lahetyssanommat 4/1984, Thailaista kirkkoa rakennetaan; Smith 1977, 162-163, 174-175; Hughes 1984, 327-331; Keyes 1993, 271-272; Suomen Lahetyssanommat 4/1994, Thaimaalainen luterilainen kirkko syntyy buddhalaisen yhteison keskelle; Mission 4/2002, Andens vind blaser vart den vill; Helle 2002, 43. For a general presentation of religious conversion, different types of conversion and conversion motifs, see for instance Rambo 1993.

on the middle class since this would make it possible for the Lutheran congregations to become self-reliant sooner. This was particularly important at the beginning of the Lutheran mission in Thailand, when the LMT feared that the time of mission would be short due to the political instability. These seemingly conflicting statements might however simply show that different congregations aimed their work at different groups of society depending, for instance, on the environment of the church centre and on the parish member's social background. The wish of the LMT was, in any case, to contribute to bridging the rift between the classes. The custom of trying to mix people from different social classes was not, however, problem-free and led to certain groups - usually the most prosperous and the most deprived - not feeling comfortable in the congregations. Nevertheless, in 1984, the LMT reported that so far it had mainly reached middle class people. Later this seems to have altered and the social structure of the Lutheran congregations was clearly affected by the fact that the lower classes generally responded better to the Gospel than the middle class. According to the Joint Board minutes from 1992, the majority of the Thai Lutherans were "*outcasts of the society or out of the main stream of society*". Most of the parish members came from poor conditions, only a few of them were wealthy, and none came from the middle classes.²⁵⁰

²⁵⁰ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1980/Report from the long-range planning committee; AFELM II 22 Poytakirja piispa John Vikstromin, laaket.lis. Juhani Lukkarin ja Aasiatyon sihteerin Paavo Kilven vierailusta Suomen Lahetyssseuran Thaimaan tyoalalla 26.1-29.1.1982; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1984/Vision and strategy for our Joint Lutheran Ministry in Thailand; AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1989/Chairman's Report; AFELM II 24 Joint Board for Thailand, November 11-14,1992, Item 9; AFELM II 45 A Short history and Overview of the Work of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand by Tapio Karjalainen; AFELM General Assembly of the LMT 1989/Chairman's Report; Bergens Tidende 6.9.1986, Storby-misjon i sterk vekst; McGavran 1970,198; Kusawadee 1989, 20.

A quite clear pattern of church growth can be discerned in the Lutheran congregations. The first conversions and baptisms were usually recorded within one year from the opening of a new church centre. During the first years, the congregation often grew fast, if the growth was counted in number of baptised members. However, when the congregation reached fifty or sixty members the growth usually stagnated and in some congregations the membership started to decrease. Within the LMT, it was considered that this was due to the congregations not succeeding in organising their members into smaller groups for fellowship, prayer, and Bible study. When the congregations grew without having a well thought-out structure and organisation they were not able to take care of all their members. Neither were they able to follow up all their contacts to people interested in Christianity. Moreover, the social pressure from the surrounding Buddhist society became too hard to bear for several Thai Lutherans. Both missionaries and Thai parish workers often stated that the back door of the congregations seemed much wider than the front door.²⁵¹ The problem with self-limiting congregations was not an issue for the Lutheran congregations in Thailand alone, but an international phenomenon. Literature on congregation size and size transition is well aware of the problematic zone at 50-70 active parish members, which constitutes the transition from a congregation that functions more or less like a family to a congregation with a more complicated structure.²⁵²

²⁵¹ AFELM I 66 Five Years Plan for the Lutheran Mission in Thailand 1986-1990, 7; AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan tyoalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1987, 7; AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan tyoalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1989, 8; AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1991/Chairman's Report; AFELM I 81 Minutes from the General Assembly of the LMT 1991, 5-6; AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan tyoalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1990, 6; Makela 1991, 3.2.6.

²⁵² McGavran 1970, 114-117; 260-295; Wagner 1990, 125-142; Mann 1998, 1-28.

The sources from the LMT and its partner organisations contain no explicit information on the origin of the mission philosophy of the LMT nor are the reasons for the choice of evangelism strategies and church planting methods stated. Generally, it can be observed that the LMT was affected by methods and thoughts of several well-known missiologists of the 20th century and by contemporary discussions about world missions. Consequently, the methods and strategies of the LMT were quite commonly used by churches and mission agencies at the time. The work of the LMT was also influenced by other churches and mission agencies in Thailand as well as by Thai church leaders. According to the Finnish missionaries Maija and Jaakko Makela, Wan Petchsongkram's book *Talk in the Shade of the Bo Tree* was studied among the Lutheran missionaries on purpose to obtain knowledge on how to present the Christian gospel in a Buddhist surroundings. For instance, in order to form an idea of what mission methods could be useful in the Thai context, Alex G. Smith's books *Strategy to Multiply Rural Churches* and *Siamese Gold - A History of Church Growth in Thailand* as well as *Bangkok: An Urban Area* by Ronald C. Hill were examined. The Lutheran missionaries also became personally acquainted with the work of some missionaries in Thailand, such as Jim Gustafson with his roots in the Covenant Church of America and Jeff Case of the Overseas Missionary Fellowship. From the Baptist mission in Thailand the principles of a neighbourhood approach was borrowed. At least the Finnish missionaries also had contact with the Finnish Pentecostal mission and studied their way of ministering to the Thais. In addition, the LMT is likely to have been influenced by the church planting and church growth in South Korea as some of the missionaries and Thai coworkers of the LMT participated in study tours to South Korea during the early years of the Lutheran mission in Thailand.²⁵³

²⁵³ AFELM Hia 29 Thaimaan työn hallintokunnan kokous, March 7, 1980, 5 §; AFELM II 22 Report from Church Growth study Tour in Korea 21.8-

The difficulties in establishing local congregations forced the LMT to consider other methods of church planting as well. The idea of having a mother church with daughter churches had already been presented in the second five years plan of the LMT with the proposal that when a congregation had become fully self-reliant it should be encouraged to start daughter-churches. The possibility of setting up an evangelisation team to support the work of the Lutheran congregations and handle the church planting was particularly discussed in the early 1990s. The LMT also considered uniting several old congregations. In this way rental, charges could be reduced and it was hoped that the greater number of parishioners would attract new people to the congregation. Even if the LMT had noticed that the cooperation between Thai parish workers was not always easy, it still thought that it would benefit the parish work if the staff was larger and the coworkers could get support from each other.²⁵⁴ A radical proposal put forward was that the LMT should unite all its congregations into one central church for about 1,000 people and have small meeting places for cell groups all over the city. The Sunday service would be held in

3.9.1981, visiting the Lutheran church in Korea 4-6.9.1981 and Hong Kong 6-9.9.1981 by Jaakko Makela; AMBT Conversation with Maija and Jaakko Makela, November 26, 2006; Wagner 1990, 60-74. For information on contemporary mission thinking and church planting methods see for instance Donald A. McGavran *Understanding Church Growth* and John R. . stott *Christian Mission in the Modern World* as well as Paul G. Hiebert and Eloise Hiebert Meneses *Incarnational Ministry and Planting and Growing Urban Churches* edited by Harvie M. Conn, other useful works are James A. Scherer ... *that the Gospel may be sincerely preached throughout the world and Let the Earth Hear His Voice: International Congress on World Evangelization, Lausanne, Switzerland* edited by J. D. Douglas.

²⁵⁴ AFELM I 66 Five Years Plan for the Lutheran Mission in Thailand 1986-1990, 7; AFELM II 24 Executive Committee of the LMT, August 1, 1991, 93-94/91, Appendix Evangelistic Team Bangkok; AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan tyoalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1991, 15; AFELM Cbb 120 Johtokunnan kokous, December 13,1991, §143 Matkakertomukset.

the central church, while the cell groups would meet during weekdays. It was known that Thais received great encouragement from gathering together in a mass of hundreds or thousands of people and therefore the LMT considered the central church model a possible strategy.²⁵⁵

According to Seikku Paunonen, one of the leaders of the foreign work of FELM during the 1980s and 1990s, the methods used for the Lutheran church planting in Bangkok were not very well chosen. They were somewhat shiftless and outmoded and the types of congregations established were rather more suitable for the countryside than for the capital area. Paunonen's view regarding the church planting methods used during the 1980s and 1990s is shared by many advocates of urban ministry, who considered the methods developed in rural contexts unsuitable for an urban environment. Due to the diversity of life in the capital, it might have been an advantage to the LMT to have varied its church planting methods more and to have established different types of congregations for different kinds of communities.²⁵⁶

Three different phases can be discerned in the Lutheran church planting in Bangkok. The first two church centres were opened by Norwegian missionaries in 1977 and named *Klong Toey* (Immanuel Lutheran Church since 1993) and *Peace Lutheran Church, Soi Amon*. Starting the first Lutheran congregations was pioneer work, as the LMT had not then been established. The Norwegians started from nothing and began building-up a congregation network that later would

255 AFELM I 67 Proposal for Investment and Church Work strategy Plan for LMT by Ad hoc Committee for Investments, November 11, 1990; Kim 1980,138-140; Komin 1990,191-197; Chareonwongsak 1997, 214.

256 AMBT Conversation with Seikku Paunonen, December 17, 2004; Conn 1987,15-18; Hiebert & Hiebert Meneses 1995, 257, 325-329.

constitute the foundation of the Lutheran Church in Thailand.²⁵⁷

After the first two church centres had been opened in 1977, new congregations were not planted until after the establishment of the LMT. This was mainly due to a shortage of personnel. For its own part, the LMT started church planting in January 1981 when a church centre called *Lad Phrao Church* was opened on Lad Phrao Road in the Bangkapi district. In Lad Phrao, the church planting method based on neighbourhood approach was used for the first time. The experiences from Lad Phrao showed that many Thais were interested in Christianity, but it was hard to create permanent contacts and taking the step towards having a personal Christian conviction took a long time.²⁵⁸

After 1981, the church planting of the LMT became frenetic. Six new congregations were started between 1982 and 1988, i.e. a new church centre was opened almost every year. The *Samroong Lutheran Church*, opened in September 1982, in a little trade centre southeast of Bangkok. The work in Samroong resembled the activities of the first Lutheran congregations, but for the Sunday service a format of a slightly different nature was tried out. The team endeavored to make these informal gatherings and afterwards the participants

²⁵⁷ ANMS Arsruatet i NMS' Thailand 1977/Rapport fra Thailand feltet; ANMS Arsruatet for misjonserene i Thailand 1979,19-20; AFELM Hia 29 Thaimaan tyoalan yleiskertomus vuodelta 1980, 6-7; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1983/Report from Kluay Nam Thai Church; AFELM II 17 Executive Committee of the LMT, March 4, 1983, 27/83; Finska Missionssällskapetets årsbok 1980, 48; Kristusglede - tjenersinn 1981, 35.

²⁵⁸ ANMS General Assembly for the LMT 1981/Report from Lad Phrao; ANMS General Assembly for the LMT 1982/Report from the Ladphrao Church; Suomen Lahetyssanommat 13/1981, Uuden työn alkua Ladphraolla; Makela 1991, 3.2.

prepared a meal together. In this way the team hoped to develop the services in a direction that would appeal to the Thais.²⁵⁹ The Hua Mark area was chosen for the fifth church centre of the LMT as the area was growing rapidly and a lot of people were moving into the district, and since many of the new residents had not yet rooted themselves they were curious about their new neighbourhood. The church planting team felt that initially the people in Hua Mark were more interested in Christianity than Thais generally. In April 1984, the first Sunday service was held in *Grace Lutheran Church, Hua Mark*.²⁶⁰ The planning for a sixth congregation in Bangkok started the same year and in April 1985, a flat was rented for the *Huay Khwang Church*. At first, this church centre was designed to function as a sister church to Lad Phrao, since they were located in the same district and the personnel resources of the LMT were strained. Due to the distance between Lad Phrao and Huay Kwang (about 7 kilometres), and the development of the work in the church centers, the LMT decided nevertheless to use the same church planting model as earlier.²⁶¹ Huay Khwang Church had barely opened before the planning for still one church centre began. In November 1985, work was started in the quickly expanding Laksi area and the new church centre was called *Laksi Lutheran Church*. The working method mostly used in Laksi was home calls to listeners of Christian radio programmes and people

²⁵⁹ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1983/Report from Samroong; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1984/Report from Samroong Church; Norsk Misjonstidende 1/1983, Positiv start i nytt område; Finska Missionssällskapets årsbok 1982, 43.

² ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1984/Report from New Work Bangkok; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1985/Report from Grace Lutheran Church.

²⁶¹ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1985/Report from New work in Huay Kwaang area; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1986/Report from Huay Khwang Lutheran Church.

that the team had become acquainted with.²⁶² That same year another team started to investigate the possibility of opening the eighth church centre in Bangkok. Bang Khun Thian area was chosen for the new centre. This expanding area had 250,000 inhabitants, most of them factory workers from northeastern Thailand. Despite its large population, the area had only one (non-Lutheran) church. In January 1986, a flat was rented as the gathering place for *Bang Khun Thian Church* and activities were started. In 1989, the name of the centre changed to *Phasee Charoen Good News Church* as the congregation had moved to new premises in the Phasee Charoen area.²⁶³

The last congregation to be established during the years of intensive Lutheran church planting in Bangkok was planned for the Rangsit area. Rangsit was a centre for trade and industry with several vocational schools and universities, but there was no Christian church in the area. The team rented a house and the work started before Christmas 1987. After the work had begun, it turned out that the Pentecostal Movement was also establishing itself in the area. Following its guiding principle of respecting the work being carried out by other denominations, the LMT decided to refrain from working in the area of the Pentecostal congregation. In Don Muang, close to the airport, the LMT found an area with 50,000 inhabitants and no permanent Christian work, and here a church centre was opened in 1988 named the *Don Muang Lutheran Church*.²⁶⁴

²⁶² ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1986/Report from Laksi Church; Misjonstidende 15/1986, -En Venn fikk meg med til kirken.

²⁶³ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1986/Report from the new work in Bang Khun Thian area; AFELM II 24 Executive Committee of the LMT, August 24, 1989, 134/89.

²⁶⁴ AFELM I 66 Letter from Christopher Woie to the members of the JBT, December 18, 1987; AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan tyoalan yleiskertomus vuodelta 1987, 8-9; AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan tyoalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1988, 6.

The 1980s was thus a period of intensive church planting for the LMT. The expansion seems, to a great extent, to have been based on the missionary manpower available and new church centres were started as far as personnel resources allowed. Whenever there was enough manpower, new church planting teams were appointed. There were several reasons for the church planting zeal of the LMT. Firstly, the challenges for Christian mission were enormous in Thailand. Secondly, the political situation in Southeast Asia gave the impression that it was uncertain how long it would be possible to pursue Christian mission work in Thailand; the visa restrictions for mission agencies working in Thailand indicated that the Lutheran mission in Thailand could be short-lived. Therefore, LMT wanted to intensify its work as long as it was possible. Thirdly, the arrival of new missionaries to Thailand required more working places to be created.²⁶⁵

By 1983, the Lutheran missionaries in Thailand were already expressing worries about the intensive church planting. They feared that the rapid expansion might lead to the Lutheran Mission not having enough time to focus on building up the Lutheran Church in Thailand and the result might be a church dominated by foreigners. Thorough planning, Christian teaching and finding indigenous expressions for the life of the church were seen as a means of creating a strong foundation and identity for the future church. In The Five Year Plan 1986-1990 of the LMT, it was stressed that special care should be taken to enable the congregations not only to grow in size but also in maturity. The LMT was to try to reduce the number of missionaries working in each congregation and give more responsibility to the Thai leaders. In 1986, three of the eight congregations in Bangkok had a Thai evangelists appointed as

²⁶⁵ ANMS General Assembly for the LMT 1981/New work; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1983/Reviewing the 5 year plan.

the person in charge.²⁶⁶ In the five year plan it was assumed that no new church centres would open in 1986-1987 due to lack of manpower, but from 1988 onwards one new congregation was to be established each year. At the General Assembly in 1989, the LMT decided nevertheless to slow down the church planting for a while and focus on the qualitative growth of the congregations. The tendency of church growth stagnating when the congregations reached around fifty members had to be prevented and the resources had to be concentrated on supporting existing congregations. Furthermore, it was expected that the number of missionaries would decrease towards the end of the 1980s due to furloughs and that the construction of a new central office for the LMT would require a lot of effort and a redistribution of the available manpower.²⁶⁷

It was now that the LMT started to try out other methods of church planting as well. In 1991, an evangelisation team was established. The task of the team was to start up new congregations and preaching places in Bangkok and support existing congregations in their outreach programme. The evangelisation team model, however, seemed not to have attained the intended results as by 1992 it was decided that the team should concentrate on establishing a new church centre after all. The LMT also planned to unite three congregations,

²⁶⁶ AFELM II 22 Memorandum from the meeting with Ms. M. Pesonen, head of the FMS missionary training, and the members of EC, October 13, 1983, §1; AFELM I 66 Five Years Plan for the Lutheran Mission in Thailand 1986-1990, 7; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1987/Report from Chairman.

²⁶⁷ AFELM I 66 Five Years Plan for the Lutheran Mission in Thailand 1986-1990, 5; AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan työalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1987; AFELM II 42 Executive Committee of the LMT, November 24, 1988, 141/88; AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan työalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1989; AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1991/Chairman's Report; Makela 1991, 3.5.

Lad Phrao, Huay Khwang, and Laksi, into one congregation. The proposal for uniting the congregations came from the congregations themselves. Their intention was to make the administration more effective, to unite the economical resources in order to afford larger and more suitable premises, and to gather the personnel resources so that the new united congregation would be able to serve parish members of all ages. In March 1992, the Executive Committee of the LMT decided that the Lad Phrao and Huay Khwang congregations be united under the temporary name Lad Phrao Church. According to the plan, the Laksi congregation was to join these two after a while. However, in July 1992, Laksi announced that it wanted to withdraw from the plans of a united congregation as it had found new members who wanted to take responsibility for the congregation. The original plan for a united congregation was based on a model with three congregations. When one of them withdrew, the whole plan was abandoned, but the Lad Phrao and Huay Khwang congregations continued formally together. According to the then resident representative of FELM, Tapio Karjalainen, this was not a good solution. The members of Huay Khwang never adapted to the Lad Phrao congregation and the distribution of work and responsibility between the evangelists of the two congregations was complicated. In the end, the merger of the congregations meant that one congregation, Huay Khwang, was discontinued.²⁶⁸

268 AFELM II 17 Letter from Jaakko Makela to Pauli Rantanen, January 9, 1991; AFELM I 68 Letter from Kjell Sandvik to Seikku Paunonen, August 1, 1991; AFELM II 24 Executive Committee of the LMT, August 1, 1991, 93-94/91, Appendix Evangelistic Team Bangkok; AFELM I 68 Joint Meeting between JBT, EC and TLC, November 5, 1991, Appendix The Merging of Churches; AFELM II 24 Executive Committee of the LMT, March 19, 1992, 31/92; AFELM II 24 Executive Committee of the LMT, July 23, 1992, 91/92; AFELM II 24 Executive Committee of the LMT, August 27, 1992, 103/92; AFELM II 24 Executive Committee of the LMT, November 26, 1992, 134/92; AFELM 8.2.7.4./1. Thaimaan tyoalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1992, 10.

After the LMT in 1989 had decided to slow down the church planting, no new church centres were opened until in 1993 when the last two congregations of the LMT were established. When the new central office building of the LMT and the future Thai Lutheran church stood ready in 1991, the LMT opened a preaching place in connection with the central office. The preaching place was organised as a congregation in 1993 and named *Lutheran Church Sukhumvit 50*. In 1993, another congregation was also established in central Bangkok. The congregation was simply named *Church 11*, since it was the eleventh congregation of the LMT in the Thai capital.²⁶⁹

*Table 1 The membership in the congregations of the LMT 1982-1993*²⁷⁰

CONGREGATION	EST.	1982	1984	1986	1988	1990	1992	1993
Peace Lutheran Church, Soi Amon	1977	12	34	51	63	36	45	54
Immanuel Lutheran Church	1977	9	19	31	58	56	61	65

²⁶⁹ AFELM II 24 Executive Committee of the LMT, March 19, 1992, 34/92; AFELM 8.2.7.4./1. Thaimaan työalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1993, 8; Finska Missionsällskapetets årsbok 1994, 95.

²⁷⁰ The years of comparison have been chosen in order to give a picture of the development of parish membership within the LMT. The first congregations were established in 1977, but as the first baptisms were not recorded until in 1981, 1982 is the first year of comparison. During the intensive period of church planting in the 1980s, parish membership is examined every second year during until 1992. The year 1993 shows the number of parish members just before the establishment of the Lutheran Church in Thailand. The statistics are given for the last day of each year. In order to make comparison easier, the congregations in northeastern Thailand and Singapore are also included in the table. These congregations are more thoroughly dealt with in chapter 5. If the name of a congregation changed during the period of investigation, the name that was valid at the end of 1993 is used.

Lad Phrao Church	1981	8	20	52	50	46	93	89
Samroong Church	1982		10	14	37	49	63	57
Grace Lutheran Church, Hua Mark	1984		2	7	17	24	36	42
Huay Khwang Lutheran Church	1985			9	20	26	-	-
Laksi Church	1985			14	50	52	47	53
Phasee Charoen Good News Church	1986			15	46	57	56	65
Don Muang Church	1988				8	21	28	28
Lutheran Church Sukhumvit 50	1993						2	13
Church 11	1993							2
Ubon Good News Church	1985			3	41	51	73	74
Ubon Provincial Team	1986				37	76	138	191
Phibun Church, Ubon	1988				0	34	76	99
Si Khiu Church, Khorat	1991					22	34	41
Thai Good News Center, Singapore	1988				0	23	90	115
TOTAL		29	85	196	427	573	842	988

Sources: *The General Assembly of the LMT 1983-1994/Report from the Chairman*²⁷¹

The table clearly indicates the tendency that has already been pointed out, i.e. that the growth of parish membership tended

²⁷¹ The way of registering parish members varied within the LMT, particularly during the early years of Lutheran mission. In different sources different numbers are given and the way of counting the members varied from one congregation to another and from year to year. For the sake of consistency the table is based on statistics given by the chairman of the LMT in the annual reports to the General Assembly.

to stagnate or even decrease when the number of members in a congregation reached fifty or sixty. The table also shows that the growth - if measured in numbers of baptised parish members - was comparatively faster in the congregations in northeastern Thailand and Singapore than in Bangkok. The reason why there are no figures on membership in the Huay Khwang Church for 1993 is that the congregation in 1992 was united with Lad Phrao Church. This also explains the fast growth of membership in the Lad Phrao congregation during this period.

Table 2 The membership in the congregations of the LMT according to sex and number of child members 1986-1992 (M=men, =women, C=children)²⁷²

CONGREGATION	1986			1990			1992		
	M		C	M		C	M		C
Peace Lutheran Church, Soi Amon	21	23	7	11	16	9	14	22	9
Immanuel Lutheran Church	7	15	9	16	19	21	17	23	21
Lad Phrao Church	12	32	8	12	29	5	31	51	11
Samroong Church	7	5	2	17	19	13	17	36	10
Grace Lutheran Church, Hua Mark	4	3	-	7	13	4	12	18	6
Huay Khwang Lutheran Church	3	6	-	12	13	1	-	-	-
Laksi Church	7	7	-	22	26	4	13	23	11

²⁷² In order to give an overview of the membership in the Lutheran congregations according to sex and number of child members, three years of comparison from *Table 1 The membership in the congregations of the LMT 1982-1993* have been chosen for closer investigation. Unfortunately, the membership statistics from the congregations of the LMT do not contain any detailed information about the age structure of the members.

Phasee Charoen Good News Church	9	6	-	20	22	15	19	19	18
Don Muang Church				6	9	6	7	11	10
Lutheran Church Sukhumvit 50							-	2	-
Church 11									
Ubon Good News Church	2	1	-	12	23	16	14	32	27
Ubon Provincial Team				18	21	37	42	40	56
Phibun Church, Ubon				14	7	2	16	32	28
Si Khiu Church, Khorat				5	8	9	8	17	9
Thai Good News Center, Singapore				14	7	2	65	22	3
Total membership per section	67	93	36	179	242	152	275	348	219
TOTAL PER YEAR	196			573			842		

Sources: The General Assembly of the LMT 1987-1993/Report from the Chairman

On the whole, women were in the majority in the Lutheran congregations in Thailand. Only the Thai Good News Center in Singapore had an obvious surplus of male members as the center worked mainly among Thai male migrant workers. During the first years after the establishment of a new congregation, the division between male and female parish members was generally more equal. Ultimately, however, the female parish members appear to have been more persistent and it seems to have been easier for the congregations to find new female members as the division between the sexes became increasingly more uneven the older the congregation grew. According to the former bishop of the Lutheran Church in Thailand, Banjob Kusawadee, and missionaries Jaakko and Maija Makela of the FELM, there could be several reasons for the unequal division between the sexes. The fact that there

were more male members in the Lutheran congregations in the beginning might have been due to the Thai men traditionally having more power to decide, take risks and try out new things. However, when the congregations had consolidated their position, the traditional forms for Thai religious life emerged. In everyday life, it was the responsibility of the Thai women to maintain the religious practises of the family, for instance, by giving alms to the poor and food to monks and by visiting the temple. The surplus of women might also have been influenced by the fact that a majority of the Lutheran missionaries in Thailand were women and that it was easier for women to approach each Other.²⁷³

The percentage of child members depended primarily on the age structure and social structure of the congregation. In parishes with few families and many students, the number of children was naturally low, while the congregations in the countryside had more child members since, to a larger extent, the missionaries had been able to reach whole families. Both the Immanuel Lutheran Church and Phasee Charoen Good News Church ran a day nursery in connection with the church on the premises, therefore the number of children was higher than in other congregations in Bangkok.

By the end of 1993, the LMT had, overall, fourteen congregations in Bangkok and northeastern Thailand. Together the congregations had slightly less than 1,000 baptised members, about half of these members lived outside of Bangkok. Most of the places of worship were small and several of them were situated in town houses, which in comparison to the surrounding Buddhist temples seemed

²⁷³ AMBT Telephone conversation with Jaakko Makela, June 8, 2009. The proportion of male and female missionaries within the Lutheran Mission in Thailand appears from appendixes 5-7 of this research.

quite plain. About 20 adult participants plus children attended the service of an average Lutheran congregation in Bangkok each Sunday. In the countryside, the number of participants was a little higher. In 1994, all the congregations of the LMT were transferred to the newly established Lutheran Church in Thailand. Congregations started after the establishment of the church were from their initial formation incorporated in the church.²⁷⁴

Since the Agreement on Mission Cooperation had already established that the local congregations were to make up the foundation of the LMT and the future Lutheran Church in Thailand, the Lutheran mission work in Thailand was, to a great extent, focussed on evangelism. In fact, the first ten years of Lutheran mission work concentrated almost exclusively on church planting and parish work. If there were other activities, they were mainly started with an evangelistic motive or in order to support parish work. This development abated at the end of the 1980s when the LMT began to pay more attention to the qualitative growth of the congregations and in the 1990s the church planting was more restrained and thought-out.

In spite of the attempts of the LMT to find a church planting method and parish model that would fit into the context of the Thai capital, the Lutheran missionaries did not come to any final solution on what evangelism strategies to use and how to organise the congregations in a fruitful and healthy way. Despite the problems of the Lutheran congregations in Bangkok, the periodical *Urban Mission* in 1994 still used the church planting of the LMT and the Lutheran Church in

²⁷⁴ LM T News March 1994, General News; Misjonstidende 2/1996, stor apenhet for evangeliet; Prachayaporn 1998, 67; Helle 2002, 52-53; Suomen Lahetyssanommat 11/2002, Kirkolla kuluu koko paiva.

Thailand as an example of one of the few successful Christian working methods in Bangkok.²⁷⁵

4.2 Diaconal work in Bangkok

From the very beginning of Lutheran mission in Thailand there was discussion concerning becoming engaged in diaconal work. All the first missionaries had previously worked in Hong Kong, where both the *Norwegian Missionary Society* (NMS) and the *Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission* (FELM) had devoted themselves to various diaconal undertakings. Upon the missionaries' arrival in Thailand, it was natural for them to try to find convenient forms to express Christian love by performing deeds in Thai society as well.

Both the NMS and FELM emphasised the importance of Christian service in the mission field and consequently diaconia was also included in the *Agreement on Mission Cooperation in Thailand*. According to the agreement, Christian service was to be an essential part of the work of the *Lutheran Mission in Thailand* (LMT). In paragraph III Purpose, it was stated that "*The main purpose of the LMT shall be to bring Christ's Gospel through proclamation and service, to the peoples in Thailand...*".¹⁷⁶

The LMT found explanations for its interest in diaconal work in the Bible. It was pointed out that a strong social emphasis was found both in the Old Testament, and the New Testament. The Old Testament prophets fought injustice and

²⁷⁵ Urban Mission 1/1994, Bangkok: A Profile of Urban Evangelism.

²⁷⁶ ANMS Thailand Agreement on Mission Cooperation in Thailand, § 3; Troskap mot kallet 1981, 4-5; Suomen Lahetyseuran III Viisivuotissuunnitelma 1981a, 9-10; Smedjebacka 1990, 45-47; Makela 1991,3.6.4.

exploitation and this line continued in the New Testament. Jesus helped people rejected by society and the first congregation in Jerusalem elected deacons to take care of anyone affected by social justice. When Jesus in the Gospel of Luke chapters 9 and 10 sent out his disciples - the twelve as well as the seventy-two - he gave them a double task; to preach the Gospel and to heal the sick. According to the LMT, this double task - proclamation and service - was still valid for the Christian church.²⁷⁷

The first diaconal project of the Lutheran mission was a day nursery in connection with the Immanuel congregation on the outskirts of the informal settlement in Klong Toey. The first Norwegian Lutheran missionaries had arrived in Thailand in 1976 and already by the following year, a day nursery was opened. The official name of the day nursery was the *Kluay Nam Thai Church's Daynursery*, but in everyday language it was called the Banana-tree Day-nursery. There were several reasons for the missionaries to start a day nursery without much planning. In Hong Kong, the NMS had successfully used day nurseries as a mean to meet the needs in society and as a tool in the outreach programme. The social disparities and injustice in Thai society were obvious and children living in informal settlements were particularly vulnerable. In addition to helping children from marginalised families, the missionaries hoped that through the day nursery they would come in contact with other family members as well and have a possibility of reaching them with the Christian gospel.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁷ ANMS General Assembly of LMT 1983/Deaconia and Proclaiming the Gospel; ALMT Policy and Guidelines of the Lutheran Diakonia Ministry 1992,1.

²⁷⁸ ANMS Misjonserruatet for NMS i Thailand 1980/Rapport fra Daghjemmet i Klong Toey; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1981/Report from the Lutheran Daynursery in Klong Toey; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1982/Report from the Lutheran Daynursery, Klong Toey; AFELM II 24 Executive Committee of the LMT, March 19,1992, 32/92

The original target group of the day nursery was children from the informal settlement in Klong Toey, but after some time it appeared that the majority of the pupils came from middle class families. There were various reasons for this. After the establishment of the day nursery, the character of its surroundings had changed due to a government-implemented redevelopment of the area and the closest residential area had become inhabited by middle class families. The LMT also realised that it was difficult to mix slum children with children from other areas and that the day nursery had reached a standard that probably was too expensive for poor families. In addition, the families in Klong Toey seemingly saw no point in sending their children to the day nursery. The LMT decided to continue as before, but by reducing the school fees the LMT succeeded, to some extent, in increasing the percentage of day nursery pupils from the informal settlement.²⁷⁹ The number of children in the day nursery varied, but was mostly around 90.²⁸⁰ In 1989, the first Thai manager of the day nursery was appointed and in 1992, the responsibility for the nursery was transferred to the Immanuel congregation.²⁸¹

Sewing courses were another kind of social work tested during the early years of Lutheran mission work in Thailand. The first missionaries felt that there was an obvious need for

Appendix Guidelines for the Kluay Nam Thai Church's Day Nursery; Norsk Misjonstidende 34/1980, *stell godt med barnet*.

²⁷⁹ ANMS Arsmote for misjonserene i Thailand 1979/Rapport fra Daghemmet i Klong Toey; ANMS General Assembly of LMT 1983/Report from Lutheran Daynursery, Klong Toey; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1984/Report from the Day Nursery.

²⁸⁰ The number of children in the day nursery is given in the annual reports from the Kluay Nam Thai day nursery to the General Assembly of the LMT 1981-1993; Misjonstidende 8/2006, *Medmenneske i Bangkok*.

²⁸¹ ANMS Thailand Guidelines for the Kluay Nam Thai Church's Daynursery; AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan tyoalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1989, 8; AFELM 8.2.7.4./1. Thaimaan tyoalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1994,12-13; Finska Missionssällskapets årsbok 1993, 86.

vocational training among the lower social classes, especially among women. Accordingly, the LMT started in the early 1980s sewing courses in the Immanuel and Soi Amon congregations. The idea of the project was that a professional dressmaker would teach uneducated women a skill through which they could support themselves. The sewing courses were held for many years but concurrent with the increase in industrialisation, the interest for the courses diminished. In the new situation, courses that would have given competency for industrial work would have been needed. The sewing courses were discontinued at the end of 1989.²⁸²

The LMT set up its own diaconal committee in 1983 in order to improve and increase the diaconal work. The task of the committee was to study the social challenges in Thailand and make a survey of the help already offered by private or public institutions and authorities. The committee was also to teach diaconia to the employees and members of the Lutheran congregations and encourage the congregations to start up small-scale diaconal projects.²⁸³

Over the years, Christian social work in Thailand had mainly been performed through institutions functioning independently from the congregations, such as hospitals and schools. The LMT did not, however, want to found institutions

²⁸² ANMS Referat fra misjonserruatet for NMS i Thailand 1980/Rapport fra Klong Toey kirke; AFELM II 17 Executive Committee of the LMT, April 14, 1983, 47/83; AFELM II 17 Executive Committee of the LMT, March 7, 1985, 43/85; AFELM II 24 Executive Committee of the LMT, December 21, 1989, 176/89; AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan tyoalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1989, 11; Misjonstidende 16/1980, Buddhisme og kristendom.

²⁸³ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1983/Diaconia and Proclaiming the Gospel; ANMS General Assembly of LMT 1986/Report from the Diaconia Committee; ALMT Policy and Guidelines of the Lutheran Diakonia Ministry 1992,1.

that required much manpower or any significant amount of financial support because they could easily become a burden on small and poor Lutheran congregations as well as the future Lutheran church. Instead, the LMT wanted to concentrate on developing such forms of Christian service that could be performed within the framework of the possibilities of the small Lutheran local congregations. The LMT hoped that the congregations would start to recognise the needs in Thai society and their own surroundings and that Christian service would become a natural part of the activities of the congregations. The parish projects could, for instance, concern the fighting of poverty, ill health, drug abuse, low education, and family problems.²⁸⁴

The diaconal projects started by the Lutheran congregations did not always succeed as satisfactory as hoped. Weaknesses were found in both the budgeting and planning of the ministry. Some congregations were not mature enough for the responsibility of managing a diaconal project; others were not capable of carrying the financial responsibility for their project. Moreover, there were certain groups, such as prostitutes, drug addicts, and slum dwellers, that required a specialised ministry and special training for the persons involved in the work. The problems led to discussions on how the LMT could improve its diaconal work. Despite the former strategy of the LMT to concentrate on parish-based diaconia, a common diaconia department for the Lutheran congregations, *Lutheran Diakonia Ministry*, was established in 1987 with financial help from abroad. The diaconal work of the LMT was to be performed through two independent units, one in

²⁸⁴ AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1989/The Lutheran Deaconia Ministry; Budapest 1984 "In Christ - Hope for the World" 1985, 101; Hengellinen kuukausilehti 10/1990, Naky Kristuksen maasta; Makela 1991, 3.6.4.; Misjonstidende 5/1992, Mor-barn i Bangkok; Suomen Lahetyssanommat 3/1993, Itsenainen kirkko 1994?; Alanne 2001, 30-36.

Bangkok and one in Ubon Ratchathani in northeastern Thailand. In 1991, a board was founded to coordinate the work of the two units.²⁸⁵

According to the *Policy and Guidelines of the Lutheran Diakonia Ministry*, the task of the Diakonia Department was principally to encourage and support the Lutheran congregations in their Christian service through teaching and producing material about Christian service, collecting information on the social situation in Thailand, and being somewhat of a databank concerning diaconal work. As the diaconal projects of the Lutheran congregations in general were small-scale it was hard to measure the results, but the Diakonia Department still stressed the importance of the diakonia performed by the local congregations. However, according to the guidelines, the Diakonia Department was also allowed to initiate diaconal projects of its own. The department chiefly commit itself to projects that were too large or too costly for the local congregations, but the aim was to also connect these projects to a congregation. The overall aim of the Diakonia Department was to encourage the future Thai Lutheran church to become "*a loving, caring and just community*" that proclaimed the Christian gospel by "*showing love and serving others*".²⁸⁶

²⁸⁵ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1987/Establishing the Deaconea Department; ALMT Policy and Guidelines of the Lutheran Diakonia Ministry 1992, 1, 4, 6; Suomen Lahetyssanomat 3/1993, Itsenainen kirkko 1994?; Alaraie 2001, 37-40.

²⁸⁶ AFELM II 24 Executive Committee of the LMT, October 25, 1990, §118/90 Appendix Deaconia Projects through Congregations; AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1991/Lutheran Deaconia Ministry Bangkok, Annual Report 1990; ALMT Policy and Guidelines of the Lutheran Diakonia Ministry 1992, 1, 3-5; AMBT Interview with Anneli Konni, June 24, 1997; Misjonstidende 10/1991, Evangeliet i ord og gjerning.

The LMT was to select its diaconal projects in order to reach the poorest and most neglected people in Thai society. Voiceless and powerless groups such as women, children, the sick and the disabled were to be prioritised and supported through education, health care and vocational training. The diaconal projects were divided into social service and health care projects. The majority of the projects were in the social service sector and the health care projects were mainly found in the Ubon Ratchathani province in northeastern Thailand. The work aimed at individuals as well as groups, at parish members as well as non-Christians. The help was to be given in a holistic way and the projects had to provide for both spiritual and material needs. The people seeking help were to be given aid to help themselves.²⁸⁷

When the Lutheran Diakonia Ministry was established in 1987, the diaconal work of the LMT was given more permanent forms and greater resources. The new department devoted much reflection on what kind of diaconal projects it should get involved in. The decision was made when the attention of the LMT, from several different quarters, was drawn to the problem of unmarried pregnant women, who either wanted to hide or had been abandoned by their family and the father to be, when they learnt about the pregnancy. According to the Finnish missionary Anneli Konni, former manager of the Diakonia Ministry, this was felt as a request from God to start working towards improving the situation of unmarried pregnant women. The *Home of Grace* (in Thai *Bam Phrakhun*) opened in December 1987, with the intention of helping pregnant women without sustenance and support. The women could stay at the home during their pregnancy and for a certain time after giving birth. At the Home of Grace, they received guidance and teaching on how to take care of

²⁸⁷ ALMT Policy and Guidelines of the Lutheran Diakonia Ministry 1992, 1, 5; AMBT Interview with Anneli Konni, June 24, 1997.

themselves and their children after they had left the home. In some cases, the women still chose to give away their children for adoption or to place them in a temporary foster-home. New clients came in contact with the Home of Grace through congregations, health stations, hospitals, women's organisations and an adoption centre. The Home of Grace was run according to Christian principles and together with the staff the clients participated in the activities of the Lutheran congregation closest to the home.²⁸⁸

After the work at the Home of Grace had been started, the LMT also initiated other diaconal projects. Since the beginning of Lutheran mission in Thailand, the capital area had been expanding rapidly. In the early 1990s, a Christian engineer working at a building site in the capital noticed that the children of the construction workers played at the building site all day risking both their own and the workers lives. Since the engineer was a member of a Lutheran congregation and the LMT had experience of running a day nursery, the LMT was asked to start a day nursery for the children of the construction workers. The LMT, for its part, considered it important that the children had a place to stay during the days and that they were given basic training in reading, writing and socialising in a group. In addition, the LMT wanted an opportunity to get into contact with the construction workers

²⁸⁸ ALMT General Assembly 1988/Report from the Deaconia Ministry; Bangkok; AFELM I 81 General Assembly of LMT 1991/Lutheran Deaconia Ministry Bangkok Annual Report 1990; AFELM 8.2.7.4./1. Thaimaan tyoalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1993, 14-15; AMBT Interview with Anneli Konni, June 24, 1997; Misjonstidende 11/1988, Ein lagnad mellom tusener; Suomen Lahetyssanommat 3/1991, Diakoniatyon juonena on yhden ihmisen elama; Asia Lutheran News 4/1992, Thai Mission Builds Home for Women, Children at Risk; Misjonstidende 5/1992, Mor-barn i Bangkok; Misjonstidende 4/1995, Sang gir nytt hap for enslige modre; Arkki 02/2003, Perhearvot hukassa Bangkokissa; Konni 2008, 8-11, 22-30, 32-37, 55-57, 69-72, 84-87.

constituted of an isolated group moving from one building site to another. In June 1991, *Ruamjai Day Nursery* was opened in a house near the building site. The day nursery had room for around 30 children 3 to 7 years of age.²⁸⁹ The day nursery was closed in April 1993. The building project was ready and the number of pupils had decreased. As a replacement, the LMT opened a day nursery that was attached to the Phasee Charoen church. The people living in the area of the congregation were poor and the children were often left without care and supervision while the parents were working. The new day nursery opened in July 1993. The parents expressed joy for this new service and according to the missionaries, they did not object to their children being taught Christianity. After the move the day nursery had room for about 40 children.²⁹⁰

Children were also the focus of the *Family Development Project* of the LMT. Through the family development work, the Diakonia Ministry supported individuals and families of small means. The aim was to improve the living conditions of the families and particularly to ameliorate the prospects of the children. Support was given for school expenses and vocational training as well as for expenses due to illness. The emphasis was on a scholarship programme for compulsory-

^ AFELM II 24 Executive Committee of the LMT, November 29, 1990, 140/90; AFELM II 24 Executive Committee of the LMT, January 24, 1991, 01/91, Appendix Project Document; AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan työalueen vuosikertomus vuodelta 1991; AFELM 8.2.7.4./1. Thaimaan työalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1992, 11-12; Komin 1989, 52; Suomen Lahetyssanomien 2/1992, Pienet pois rakennusteiltä; Misjonstidende 5/1992, Barn av Bangkoks nomader.

²⁹⁰ AFELM 8.2.7.4./1. Thaimaan työalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1993, 12-13; ALMT General Assembly of the LMT 1993/Report about "Ruamjai" Day Care Center; AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1994/Chairperson's Report; AMBT Interview with Anneli Konni, June 24, 1997; Mission 7-8/1993, Bangkok-barn fick nytt daghem; Finska Missionssällskapets årsbok 1994, 94.

school pupils. This commenced with the LMT desire to help children leaving the Kluay Nam Thai day nursery to go to comprehensive school. The scholarship programme was introduced in March 1990 in cooperation with the congregations of the LMT. The local congregations could apply to the Diakonia Department for scholarships for gifted children from their area. The scholarship programme covered expenses for school fees, school uniforms, and school books. The LMT was careful that only families with real needs were benefited by scholarship and thorough investigations of the families' economic situation were carried out. The size of the scholarship varied depending on the economic situation of the family, but also the study results of the child affected the amount of the scholarship. As a general rule, a child could get a scholarship for twelve years, i.e. until the child had passed compulsory school and upper secondary school. The scholarship programme supported children both in Bangkok, and north-eastern Thailand.²⁹¹

Prison ministry was pursued by the LMT on several occasions. In the early 1980s, the Finnish missionaries started to visit two Finnish citizens imprisoned in the Lard Yao prison in Bangkok. The missionaries also made contacts with other foreign prisoners as well as some Thais. The LMT had not planned to start prison work, but as several of the inmates seemed interested in Christianity, the missionaries began to visit the prison regularly. In addition to obtaining Christian teaching, the prisoners were helped with social and practical matters. In the late 1980s, new prison work was initiated when

²⁹¹ ANMS Thailand Project Idea by Lutheran Deaconia Ministry, Bangkok, Scholarship for School Children; AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1991/Lutheran Deaconia Ministry Bangkok Annual Report 1990; AFELM 8.2.7.4./1. Thaimaan työalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1992, 12; AMBT Interview with Klaedkao Caanpaan, June 24, 1997; Suomen Lahetyssanommat 8/2003; Kummi tuuppaa kohti parempaa elamaa.

the employees of the LMT Media Office, via their radio programmes, developed contacts with up to 400 prisoners who were interested in receiving Christian teaching. Even though the prison ministry had started with missionaries visiting foreigners, Thai citizens became the main target group of the work. In the Agreement on Mission Cooperation, it was stated that the purpose of the work of the LMT was to reach the Thai population with the Christian gospel. Accordingly, foreigners could not be the main focus of the work. The legitimacy of the prison ministry was also questioned by some of the missionaries, as it did not directly contribute to the church planting aim of the LMT. In addition to the prison work in Bangkok, the LMT coworkers in Ubon Ratchathani also visited prisons holding Bible studies and teaching English. The diaconal work in Ubon is more thoroughly dealt with in chapter 5.1.²⁹²

When alarming reports about the spread of HIV and Aids in Thailand began to appear around 1987, the Diakonia Department decided to carefully follow the development. Due to the extensive sex industry, HIV/Aids was regarded a real threat to the country. As the reports of the HIV and Aids situation became more and more dismal, the LMT agreed in 1992 to start *Aids work* in Bangkok and an Aids centre was opened. The aim was to educate the church workers and parish members of the LMT about HIV and Aids, to cooperate with organisations working with HIV and Aids matters, and to support the Hiv-infected and the Aids-patients in different

²⁹² AFELM II 17 Executive Committee of the LMT, December 6, 1984, 166/84; AFELM II 17 Executive Committee of the LMT, March 21, 1985, 48/85; AFELM II 24 Executive Committee of the LMT, September 19, 1991, 105/91; AFELM II 24 Executive Committee of the LMT, October 24, 1991, 121/91, Appendix Prison Ministry; Suomen Lahetyssanommat 4/1987, Vankilatyö Ubonissa; Mission 11/1987, Guds ord behövs i fängelset; Backman 1998, 63-65, 69, 76-78, 91.

ways.²⁹³ From the sources, it appears as if the LMT wanted to work among both male and female HIV-infected, but the sources contain no profound discussion about the disparate situations and needs of the sexes. In practice there was, in the beginning, a focus on male clients. A temporary home for male HIV-infected was opened that was linked to the Aids centre, but already after one year, the home was discontinued. The home had become too costly to maintain, it required too much time from the employees and a staff with special qualifications. The plan had been to open a home for the HIV-infected, but the clients that came to the home were too sick to be taken care of in a home like this. In 1994, the AIDS work was reshaped. The AIDS centre was converted to an office that collected facts and gave information about HIV and AIDS to individuals, schools, and congregations, coordinated the AIDS ministry of the LMT, and cooperated with governmental and non-governmental organisations involved in Aids work. The object was to try to oppose people infected with HIV from being despised and deserted by their families and society due to unreasonable fear of the disease. The AIDS centre continued to support the HIV-infected and their families. Particularly, it wanted to help the HIV-infected to find new means of providing for themselves and their families in case they lost their jobs due to the disease.²⁹⁴

²⁹³ AFELM II 24 Joint Board for Thailand Meeting, November 5, 1991; AFELM 8.2.7.4./1. Thaimaan työalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1992, 13; AFELM II 24 Executive Committee of the LMT, February 20, 1992, 22/92; AFELM II 24 Executive Committee of the LMT, December 17, 1992, 152/92; Misjonstidende 10/1993, Kirke i startropa; Konni 2008, 65-69.

²⁹⁴ AFELM 8.2.7.4./1. Thaimaan työalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1993, 15-16; AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1993/Report about AIDS Project; AMBT Interview with Buathip Kitwit, June 24, 1997; Mission 11/1993, Aids dodar allt oftare i Thailand; Misjonstidende 21/1993, AIDS-syke trenger venner og nserhet; Sittirai & Williams 1995, 8-9; Suomen Lahetyssanommat 4/2003, Thaimaassa kirkko taistelee aidsia vastaan draaman keinoin.

Among the member organisations of the LMT, it was mainly the NMS and FELM that supported the diaconal work. For its development cooperation projects the LMT obtained financial support through special fund raising campaigns in Finland and Norway and from the Finnish and Norwegian governments who channelled their aid through FELM and the NMS. For each diaconal project, the Diakonia Department was also expected to mobilise and use local and national resources to finance at least part of the expenses.²⁹⁵ The cooperation with the local authorities was an urgent issue for the LMT. But the lively cooperation between the Diakonia Department and the authorities, particularly in the Ubon Ratchathani province, also caused discussion as to what extent a mission agency should involve itself in work that was actually the responsibility of the local authorities. Within the LMT, the cooperation with the Thai authorities also led to fear that the contact between the diaconal projects and the local congregations would become too weak and it endorsed the efforts of the LMT to connect each social project to a congregation.²⁹⁶

The initiative in starting new diaconal projects was often taken by the missionaries. To interest Thai Christians in diaconal work was not always easy, although the Diakonia Department had some devoted Thai coworkers. In Thai society, with its strong Buddhist influence, there was a common opinion that people were given what they deserved. If a person was poor

²⁹⁵ AFELM Cbb 117 Johtokunnan kokous, February 26, 1990, §5 Matkakertomukset Liite 3; ALMT Policy and Guidelines of the Lutheran Diakonia Ministry 1992, 4; AFELM I 68 Letter from Markku Ala-Uotila to Egil H. Eggen, December 21, 1993; Misjonstidende 14/1996, Immanuel far vitjing; Konni 2008, 141, 144-145.

²⁹⁶ AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1989/The Lutheran Deakonia Ministry; AFELM II 24 Joint Board in Thailand Meeting, November 5, 1991; ALMT Policy and Guidelines of the Lutheran Diakonia Ministry 1992, 4-5.

or had problems, it was probably a consequence of bad deeds in a previous life. If a person was rich and successful, it was due to good deeds in a former lifetime. People were not considered equals. Everyone was to help him- or herself and not to rely on others. In addition, the Buddhist ideal of detachment led to the Thais not generally being willing to become personally involved in helping people. This way of thinking and feeling was deeply rooted in the Thais and it often remained even after a person had become Christian. Moreover, most Thai Christians considered diaconal work secondary to evangelism and parish work. Diaconal work acquired its main value as a tool that could be used in outreach programmes. Since the diaconal projects required considerable financial support - money that the Thai Lutherans did not have, but that the LMT could get from abroad - it was hard to make the Thais take responsibility for the projects. In order to increase the Thai Lutherans' interest in diaconal work, the Diakonia Department cooperated with the Lutheran Institute of Theological Education in arranging courses and teaching about the importance of diaconia.²⁹⁷ When the Lutheran Church in Thailand was founded in 1994, the responsibility for the diaconal work was taken over by the church.

4.3 The formation of the Lutheran theological education

A natural consequence of there being no Lutheran church and no Lutheran congregations in Thailand at the time of the

²⁹⁷ AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1991/Annual Report of the Lutheran Deaconia Ministry, Bangkok; ALMT Policy and Guidelines of the Lutheran Diakonia Ministry 1992, 2, 4; AMBT Interview with Seikku Paunonen, December 17, 2004; AMBT Interview with Anneli Konni, September 1, 2005; Grether 1960, 455-458; Kim 1980, 140-141; Mission 11/1987, Karlek som spranger granser; Suwanbubha 1994, 38-41, 68-69, 108-110; Wajanathawornchai 2002, 29.

commencement of the Lutheran mission, there was no institution giving Lutheran theological training either. There were, however, close to twenty educational institutions of other Christian denominations offering Bible teaching and theological training. In the *Agreement on Mission Cooperation in Thailand* nothing was explicitly said about theological education, but it was agreed that the member organisations of the *Lutheran Mission in Thailand* (LMT) were to cooperate in the "*recruiting and training of national workers*". It was assumed that the Thai coworkers of the LMT would need training, but the agreement did not specify how the training was to function.²⁹⁸

The possibility of the LMT initiating its own theological education was already under discussion, in 1980, at the first General Assembly; the new strict visa regulations having made it urgent to train Thai coworkers that could lead the Lutheran work if the missionaries were forced to leave the country. The LMT did not, however, at this point feel a need to establish a separate Lutheran theological education and it was agreed that the LMT should cooperate with the existing theological institutions. The LMT recognised that problems due to differing theological standpoints might be faced in the cooperation with theological schools of other denominations, but at least for the time being the LMT did not have the resources to open its own theological education establishment.²⁹⁹ With regard to the basic training of Thai workers, the LMT was, in the first place, to cooperate with the

²⁹⁸ ANMS Thailand Agreement on Mission Cooperation in Thailand 1980, § VI.

²⁹⁹ ANMS *Arsruatet for misjonserene i Thailand* 1978, 5; ANMS General Assembly for the LMT 1980/Education and recruiting of Thai coworkers; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1981/Five Years Plan of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand 1981-1985, 2; *Kristusglede - tjenersinn* 1981, 35.

interdenominational *Bangkok Bible College*³⁰⁰, the Presbyterian *Bangkok Institute of Theology*³⁰¹ and *Payap College*³⁰² in Chiang Mai. These schools were chosen as their theology was closest to the Lutheran doctrine. They also had a relatively high theological standard. If need for advanced studies arose, priority was to be given to the *Lutheran Theological Seminary in Hong Kong* and the interdenominational *Singapore Trinity Theological College*.³⁰³ Despite its decision not to start a separate Lutheran education establishment, the LMT considered it important to have well-educated national workers that could become leaders of a future autonomous Lutheran church. Academic standards were also stressed in order to provide the workers with the self-confidence and courage needed to feel comfortable when approaching highly educated people.³⁰⁴

³⁰⁰ Bangkok Bible College had been founded in 1971 by the Overseas Missionary Fellowship, the Christian and Missionary Alliance and some Thai Christian groups. ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1980/Bangkok Bible College; Bangkok Bible College 1981, 14-15; Makela 2000,160.

³⁰¹ Bangkok Institute of Theology had been established in 1941 by Chinese Presbyterian Christians and was affiliated to the Church of Christ in Thailand. Its present name the institute got in 1971. Blanford 1977, 55-57; Bangkok Institute of Theology. Available at <www.theology.ac.th/bit>. Accessed September 18, 2009.

³⁰² Payap College was established in 1974 by the Church of Christ in Thailand, but the roots of its theological education were in the Thailand Theological Seminary founded in 1888. Payap University at <www.ic.payap.ac.th>. Accessed September 18, 2009.

³⁰³ ANMS General Assembly for the LMT 1980/Education and recruiting of Thai coworkers; AFELM Hia 29 Joint Meeting of the Home-boards of the Finnish Mission Society and the Norwegian Missionary Society, October 17, 1980; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1981/Five Years Plan of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand 1981-1985, 6.

³⁰⁴ AFELM Hia 29 Meeting with LMT and representatives from FMS's Homeboard, June 28, 1980; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1981/Five Years Plan of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand 1981-1985, 2; Norsk Misjonstidende 8/1979, Glimt fra Klong Toey.

Due to the lack of a Lutheran church and a Lutheran theological educational establishment in Thailand, the LMT recruited all its first national workers from the theological institutions of other churches and also trained its future employees in these institutions. At an early stage it was clearly felt within the LMT that the workers who came from other denominations - usually from Baptist and the Reformed churches - were in need of further training. They particularly needed more instruction on the Lutheran doctrine and its distinctiveness in relation to the faith of other Christian denominations. It was considered a condition for the establishment of a Lutheran Church in Thailand that the national workers obtained a deeper insight into Lutheranism. Until the Thai parish workers had developed a Lutheran identity, it would be hard to plant the vision that they were building their own Thai Lutheran church.³⁰⁵ In 1982, the LMT started a training programme that gave supplementary instruction, especially in the Lutheran faith. The training was arranged through monthly seminars for both missionaries and Thai coworkers. Soon courses for parish members and possible future employees were also started. The educational work of the LMT was managed by the *Theological Training Committee*.³⁰⁶

By 1984, the LMT had realised that a new solution had to be found regarding where and how the LMT recruited and

³⁰⁵ AFELM Hia 29 Training Program Committee, December 16, 1981; AFELM Hia 39 Memorandum from the LMT Consultation, December 9, 1983; Norsk Misjonstidende 16/1982, Ny femarsplan vedtatt; Kristus verdens hap 1983, 50-51.

³⁰⁶ ANMS General Assembly for the LMT 1982/Training of the Thai Coworkers of Lutheran Mission in Thailand; AFELM II 22 Letter from Helge Breivik to the members of the JBT, January 12, 1982; Norsk Misjonstidende 16/1982, Ny femarsplan vedtatt; Finska Missionssällskapets årsbok 1984, 42; Kusawadee 1989, 21-23; Makela 1991,3.6.3.

trained its workers. As it was, the Thai coworkers had their backgrounds in several different churches and their theology and identity was often more Reformed than Lutheran. According to Thai Pastor Paul Pongsak Limthongvirutn, most of the first Thai employees of the LMT refused to identify themselves as Lutherans and coworkers with their roots in the Church of Christ in Thailand kept in general their membership even after having been employed by the Lutheran Mission. The LMT had also become increasingly aware of how Lutheranism differed from the other Christian denominations in Thailand in its understanding of basic theological concepts such as 'law and gospel', 'sin and grace'. Within the LMT it was considered that if the problem was not dealt with at this stage, the future church would sooner or later enter into a severe identity crisis. A common working view and theology was needed and the founding of a Lutheran theological education was considered a solution to the problem. The former decision not to start a theological education was abandoned. The General Assembly in 1984 decided that the LMT should start planning its own basic theological training for future evangelists and begin preparing the establishment of a theological training centre. The responsibility for this task was given to the *Theological Education Department*, which had succeeded the Theological Training Committee as organiser of the LMT's theological training.³⁰⁷

As a first step towards having its own theological education, the LMT started, in 1985, a three-year educational programme. After three years of full-time studies in theology, the students would acquire a Diploma of Theology. The entrance

³⁰⁷ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1984/Theological Training; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1984/New LMT departments; AFELM II 17 Executive Committee of the LMT, May 24, 1984, 61/84; AFELM I 68 Letter from Seikku Paunonen to Salli Lamponen, August 20, 1992; Limthongvirutn 1983, 87-88; Finska Missionssällskapets årsbok 1985,49-50.

requirements were kept quite high. As a rule, the applicants had to have completed M3, i.e. three years of secondary school, in order to be accepted onto the Diploma of Theology programme. For studies at the Bachelor of Theology level, M6 was required. In addition, all applicants had to be members of a Lutheran congregation and have basic knowledge of the Bible.³⁰⁸

In spite of the LMT now having its own basic theological training, the cooperation with the Bangkok Institute of Theology (BIT) continued. The full-time students studying for the Diploma of Theology within the LMT received part of their training at BIT and several of the Thai evangelists of the LMT studied for a bachelor's degree in theology at BIT. The evangelists had not always been motivated to participate in the further training offered by the LMT, as it did not give any formal competence, but they were interested in obtaining a Bachelor's degree. The LMT did not yet have the resources to instruct at this level, but since BIT could give training at a bachelor level, the LMT offered its evangelists the possibility to continue their studies at BIT. The cooperation between the LMT and BIT was called the *Integrated Programme*. Within the framework of the programme, BIT was willing to receive teachers from the LMT, preferably Thai, and the LMT was allowed to use the elective courses to give the Lutheran students complementary instruction in Lutheranism and related matters. However, BIT was not open to having a representative from the LMT on its board.³⁰⁹ The cooperation

³⁰⁸ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1985/Proposal of Guidelines for the Lutheran Institute of Theological Education; ALMT General Assembly of the LMT 1988/Guidelines of the Lutheran Institute of Theological Education.

³⁰⁹ AFELM II 17 Joint Meeting of the Lutheran Foundation in Thailand and the Executive Committee of the LMT, January 10, 1984; AFELM II 17 Executive Committee of the LMT, January 31, 1985, 21/85; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1985/Report of the Theological Education

with BIT also led to a change of name for the Theological Education Department. Within the LMT, it was considered that the Lutheran education required a more correct name due to the cooperation with BIT. In October 1984, the name was changed to *Lutheran Institute of Theological Education* (LITE).³¹⁰ In addition to the training of evangelists and the cooperation with BIT, the LMT continued to arrange discipleship training in order to equip the parish members with the means of taking active part in the parish work on a voluntary basis.³¹¹

Thus far, the LMT's decision to start its own theological education had gone largely according to plan, but when the representatives of the LMT approached the Thai Ministry of Education in order to find out how to proceed with the registration of the full-time education at LITE, problems started to amass. The LMT was told that no new theological schools could be registered. The only explanation given was that the Thai Government had changed its policy concerning theological schools ten years ago. Further investigations showed that during the last ten years no new theological schools had in fact been registered. The Thai Government's change of policy might have been connected to the authorities' general attempt, at the time, to increase control over religious

Department; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1986/Report from Theological Education Department.

³¹⁰ AFELM II 17 Executive Committee of the LMT, October 11, 1984, 136/84; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1986/Guidelines for the Lutheran Institute of Theological Education. The term 'institute' was chosen since it implied that LITE offered training for both laymen and full-time students, as well continuing education for evangelists and pastors. The much-used term 'seminary' was avoided as it was assumed that it gave the impression that LITE was only a faculty for full-time studies.

³¹¹ AFELM II 17 Consultation on LMT-related matters, July 16, 1984; AFELM II 17 Executive Committee of the LMT, January 31, 1985, 21/85; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1985/Report of the Theological Education Department.

denominations and foreign organisations in Thailand. Since the LMT was not sure of the reasons for the change of policy, it was decided that the Lutheran Mission should be careful in the matter and avoid doing anything that might irritate the Thai Government. Any incorrect action could have negative repercussions for the entire Christian community in Thailand.³¹²

In consequence, the LMT started to investigate other possibilities, such as, whether the LMT should forego the registering of its theological full-time education entirely and if non-registered schools worked illegally. Whether it would be possible for the LMT to register another type of theological education, such as a Bible school or a training centre, was also considered. The further investigations showed that training centres did not have the same status as theological schools. A training centre was considered an education within the church for the church's own needs and not an education for service in society. For this reason, theological training centres did not have to be registered as private schools in order to be legal. The problem was that training centres were not allowed to have full-time students, a curriculum, or a dormitory. LITE had all three. Therefore, at least at that time LITE could not be considered a training centre.³¹³

In order to progress in this matter, the Executive Committee of the LMT appointed in January 1987 a special committee to

³¹² AFELM II 42 Joint Meeting between Executive Committee of LMT and LITE, August 19, 1986; ANMS Thailand Meeting with Dr. Thanoo Swangsakdi, the Secretary-General of the Office of the Private Education Commission, Ministry of Education, February 4, 1987; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1987/Report from the Lutheran Institute of Theological Education.

³¹³ AFELM II 42 Joint Meeting between Executive Committee of LMT and LITE, August 19, 1986; AFELM II 42 Joint Meeting between EC and LITE, September 18, 1986.

prepare a proposal about full-time education at LITE. The committee could not, however, reach an agreement on how the problems with registering LITE should be solved. Particularly among the staff at LITE there were divergent opinions about the future of the full-time education. The problems with registering LITE led to two proposals for the organisation of the education. The first proposal was made by Paul Pongsak Limthongvirutn, Dean of Studies at LITE, and Kjell Sandvik, Vice-rector at LITE. The content of the proposal was that in case it was not possible to establish a theological school by legal means, then the theological full-time education at LITE should be integrated in BIT. The foreign mission agencies in Thailand had been under supervision by the Thai Government for a long time and nothing that could draw its attention to the LMT or wake its disapproval should be done. Limthongvirutn and Sandvik considered the question of legality of such fundamental importance that they were willing to give up the thought of the LMT having its own theological full-time education. According to their interpretation of the law, LITE was not legal in its present shape, as it was neither registered as a private school nor fulfilled the requirements of a training centre. According to Limthongvirutn and Sandvik, it would also be instructive for the students from LITE to study in the ecumenic milieu of BIT. In such an environment, the students would be forced to carefully consider their faith and the Lutheran doctrine, and this would help them to develop a stronger Lutheran identity.³¹⁴

³¹⁴ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1987/Plans for the Lutheran Institute of Theological Education & ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1987/Proposal for Full Time Training/Studies for LITE-LMT by Pongsak Limthongvirutn and Kjell Sandvik; AFELM I 66 Letter from Helge Breivik, Kjell Sandvik and Phongsak Limthongvirutn to the Executive Committee of the LMT, January 9,1988.

The second proposal was made by Tapio Karjalainen, Rector at LITE, and Tarja Saynevirta, Dean of Students at LITE. Karjalainen and Saynevirta saw two possibilities for the LMT to continue training its future coworkers. According to their interpretation of the law, a school did not have to register if it had less than eight students. LITE had always had less than eight full-time students and this number of students would be enough to provide the LMT's need for theological staff for several years ahead. As a consequence, Saynevirta and Karjalainen deemed that LITE could continue as before even if the education was not registered. Another solution would be if the LMT established a training centre for the training of future coworkers. In 1986, there were nearly twenty theological schools in Thailand, but only four of them were registered as private theological schools. The rest functioned as theological training centres. Despite this most of them had full-time students, a curriculum, and a dormitory and broke thus the rules for training centres. The Thai authorities had not taken action towards them and Saynevirta and Karjalainen considered that LITE could do the same as most theological institutions in Thailand. Officially LITE would maintain that it was a theological training centre, but in practice it could function as a theological full-time education. Saynevirta and Karjalainen wanted to keep to the decision that the LMT should have its own theological education. In their opinion a Lutheran full-time education at LITE would benefit the future church more than an integration of the education in BIT.³¹⁵ The proposals presented divergent opinions mainly on two points. The first was how the law about registering different kinds of educational institutions should be interpreted. The second was how the theological education should be formed in order to give the best training and be of the greatest help for the future Lutheran Church in Thailand.

³¹⁵ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1987/Proposal for Arranging Full Time Studies in the LITE by Tarja Saynevirta and Tapio Karjalainen.

The divided opinions about the future of the full-time education at LITE led to a deep conflict within the LMT. The relationship between the missionaries and the Thai coworkers as well as between the Finnish and Norwegian missionaries became strained. According to both, the former mission secretary of the NMS, Egil H. Eggen, and the former director of FELM, Henrik Smedjebacka, the Finnish missionaries agreed that the LMT needed its own theological full-time education. The Norwegians' opinions on how to proceed with the question of theological education differed. Among the Thai coworkers opinions were also divided, but mostly the Thais remained passive in the question. The third member of the LMT at the time, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong, seems to have supported the idea of the LMT having its own theological full-time education. According to Andrew Hsiao, President of the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Hong Kong, the real reason for the LMT to have its own theological training was that Lutheran theology, Lutheran training, and Lutheran tradition were needed within the LMT. The controversy about the form of the theological education was connected to the question of establishing a Lutheran Church in Thailand. At least the home leaders of the member organisations of the LMT felt that some of the people who were ready to give up the thought of the LMT having its own theological full-time education, were also, to some extent, those that questioned the aim of founding an autonomous Lutheran Church in Thailand. Just as they were ready to consider an integration of the Lutheran full-time education in BIT, they were also ready to consider an integration of the Lutheran congregations in the Church of Christ in Thailand. The people that supported the notion of the LMT having its own full-time theological education saw, on the other hand, Lutheran training as a basic condition for the establishment of a Lutheran Church in Thailand.³¹⁶

³¹⁶ AFELM Hia 29 Meeting with Lutheran Mission in Thailand and

The conflict reached its culmination at the General Assembly of the LMT in 1987 where the proposals for LITE were discussed. At the General Assembly, the Joint Board for Thailand - i.e. the coordination committee between the LMT and the Home Boards of the member organisations - also presented its own opinion on the question. The Joint Board reminded the General Assembly that according to the Agreement on Mission Cooperation in Thailand, the main purpose of the LMT was to establish an autonomous Lutheran church. Since the task of the LMT was to help this church to become self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating it was important that the LMT had its own Lutheran theological education. Then a third proposal was also made. The proposal, which was presented by Norwegian missionary Helge Breivik, was a compromise. The intention was to give the decision-making process more time and prevent hasty decisions. Finally, all three proposals were withdrawn. A working group was appointed to formulate a proposal for postponing the case. This proposal was unanimously accepted after some changes. According to the postponement proposal, the Executive Committee of the LMT together with the Thai Lutheran Committee was to prepare a proposition for a long-range plan for full-time studies within the LMT for the next

Rev. Andrew Hsiao, June 16, 1980; AFELM II 17 Memorandum of the Consultation on LMT-related matters, July 16, 1984; AFELM I 66 Letter from Jaakko Makela to the members of the JBT, February 27, 1987; ANMS Thailand Letter from Christopher Woie to Egil H. Eggen, March 2, 1987; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1987/Plans for the Lutheran Institute of Theological Education; AFELM I 66 Letter from Seikku Paunonen to the members of the JBT, May 11, 1987; AFELM I 66 Meeting between Dr Andrew Hsiao and the Executive Committee, October 7, 1987; AFELM Cbb 114 Johtokunnan kokous, September 26, 1988, § 97 Matkakertomukset Liite 4; ANMS Thailand Letter from Seikku Paunonen to Christopher Woie, December 27, 1988; ACHAA Interview with Henrik Smedjebacka, November 10, 1992; AMBT Conversation with Egil H. Eggen, February 17, 2003; Kirkkomme lahetys 1/1994, Lahetyksesta kirkoksi; Makela 2006, 91.

General Assembly. The Agreement on Mission Cooperation was to constitute the foundation of the long-range plan and the following principles should be kept in mind: "*The main part of the theological training of the LMT should remain in LMT's own hands and nothing illegal should be done.*" The word 'main' caused much discussion and several delegates wanted to change it to 'basic'. It was considered that the word 'main' implied that most of the training should be arranged by the LMT, while 'basic' meant that also other arrangements could come in question. When a vote was taken the term 'main' got 14 votes and 'basic' 12 votes with two delegates abstaining from voting and one absent. In addition, the proposal suggested that the theological full-time education at LITE be postponed for one year and that no new students should be accepted before the final decision about the future of LITE had been made. The four students that at the time were attending the three-year training programme for evangelists were asked to choose whether they wanted to continue at LITE or transfer to BIT. As a consequence one student transferred to BIT, the other remained at LITE.³¹⁷

Further investigations concerning the establishment of theological schools in Thailand showed a new possibility for the LMT to legally establish full-time theological education. During discussions with the *Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand* (EFT) it was discovered that as the LMT was a member of the EFT, the theological full-time education within LITE could be registered under the EFT. Other theological schools in Thailand were members of the EFT as well and a membership in the EFT would be the easiest way for the LMT, by legal

317 ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1987/Plans for the Lutheran Institute of Theological Education; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1987/Proposal for postponing the decision concerning the fulltime studies in LMT; AFELM II 42 Extraordinary Meeting of the Executive Committee of the LMT, May 13, 1987, §1-2; AMBT Conversation with Jaakko Makela, July 8, 1997.

means, to establish its own theological full-time education. Within the LMT there were nevertheless still individuals who questioned the correctness of the information given by the EFT and doubted the legality of this solution.³¹⁸

At the General Assembly in 1988, the long-term plan for LITE was finally approved and it was decided that the LMT should establish a training centre for full-time studies. Even though there was still uncertainty whether or not the full-time theological education would become legal through a registration with the EFT, it was felt that the information given by the EFT had to be trusted. It was also discussed whether the LMT having its own theological full-time education was the right use of manpower and money at this stage or if the decision should have been left to the future church. The leaders of the mission agencies especially, stressed that all efforts put on Lutheran theological training at this point would benefit the future church. The theological full-time education at LITE was thus to continue. LITE was to function under the LMT, but be registered as a member of the EFT. The teaching was planned to commence in June 1988, when the new school term began. The long tussle about the future of LITE was at an end and cooperation within the LMT started to improve.³¹⁹

318 AFELM II 42 Meeting with the EFT-chairman, November 25, 1987; AFELM II 42 Joint Meeting between EC and LITE faculty, December 1, 1987; AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan työalan yleiskertomus vuodelta 1987, 7; AFELM I 66 Letter from Helge Breivik, Kjell Sandvik and Phongsak Limthongvirutn to the Executive Committee of the LMT, January 9, 1988; AFELM I 66 Letter from Charan Ratanabutra to the Executive Committee of the LMT, received February 8, 1988.

319 AFELM I 66 Letter from Helge Breivik, Kjell Sandvik and Phongsak Limthongvirutn to the Executive Committee of the LMT, January 9, 1988; ALMT General Assembly of the LMT 1988/Long Range Planning of Full Time Theological Training in LMT & Reviewing the LITE guidelines; AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan työalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1988, 6; Makela 2006, 92-93.

In 1988, the attempts to register LITE under the EFT began, but the process was discontinued at an early stage" A misunderstanding had apparently occurred between the EFT and the LMT. The EFT no longer registered foreign organisations and in order to be considered an indigenous organisation LITE would have to be at least 60 percent self-supported. A requirement that LITE did not fulfil. As an alternative, the LMT asked the EFT to give the LITE a letter of guarantee that could be shown in contacts with Thai authorities in case an official recognition of LITE was required. The EFT had granted this kind of guarantee letters to other theological education establishments as well, and LITE was in this sense not an exceptional case.³²⁰

After the General Assembly in 1988 had agreed on the future of the full-time education at LITE, a restructuring of the theological education took place. According to the new guidelines, LITE should rest on the same theological and ideological foundation as the LMT. It should support and serve the LMT in its work to proclaim the Christian gospel to the peoples in Thailand and in the preparations for the establishment of an autonomous Lutheran church. The organisation was simplified. The former division in two departments, LITE Faculty and Material Production, was abandoned. Instead, a joint administrative committee called LITE Meeting was set up. The committee was the only decision-making body at LITE and responsible for all the functions of the institute. LITE was to offer training programmes for both full-time and part-time students and there should also be courses for laymen. For training at

³²⁰ AFELM I 66 Letter from Christopher Woie to Charan Ratanbutra, May 23, 1988; AFELM II 24 Lutheran Bible Centre staff Meeting, May 9, 1989, 39/89; AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1990/Report from Lutheran Institute of Theological Education.

Bachelor or higher levels, the LMT was still to cooperate with theological schools in Thailand and elsewhere in Asia.³²¹

The training at LITE was planned in close cooperation with the Lutheran congregations. In 1990 LITE had four main fields of action. These were the training of laymen, training for full-time service within the LMT; advanced studies for coworkers, and material production. For the parish members a discipleship training programme was held in order to equip them to live as Christians in a Buddhist environment and accept responsibilities within the congregations. The teaching was partly given in the local congregations and partly together with the full-time students at LITE. The studies lasted for several years and after passing 20 credits, the students received a *Certificate of Discipleship Training*. For parish members who wanted to work in the congregation on a voluntary basis or Thai coworkers without theological training LITE arranged a study programme leading to a *Certificate of Church Ministry*. The programme was equivalent to one year of full-time studies (40 credits), but it could also be studied part-time during several years. Students aiming at full-time ministry within the LMT attended a three-year training programme resulting in a *Diploma of Theology* degree. In addition, LITE also supported the teaching given in the local congregations, for instance catechism classes and baptismal teaching. The advanced training was aimed at the full-time

³²¹ ANMS General assembly of the LMT 1987/Report from the Lutheran Institute of Theological Education; AFELM II 42 Executive Committee of the LMT, September 29, 1988, 99/88; ANMS Thailand Guidelines for the Lutheran Institute of Theological Education 1988, 1-2; AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan työalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1988, 6, 10; AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan työalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1989, 10; AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1990/Report from Lutheran Institute of Theological Education; Makela 1991, 3.6.3.

parish workers within the LMT and arranged through seminars, workshops etc.³²²

An important part of the work at LITE was the production of material. Christian literature and material was hard to find in Thailand and Lutheran literature in Thai was almost non-existent. The material produced consisted in the main of Lutheran theological works and material needed for the teaching at LITE and in evangelism. Of the Lutheran books of confession at least the Augsburg Confession, Martin Luther's Small Catechism and Martin Luther's Large Catechism were translated and published in Thai. The material production at LITE was from 1986 on also responsible for publishing the LMT News Letter that appeared every second (later every third) month in Thai and English; a task that was inherited from the Information Committee of the LMT.³²³

The year 1991 was particularly important for LITE. New training programmes were inaugurated and the work expanded geographically. At the request of students and evangelists, it became possible to study for a *Bachelor of*

³²² AFELM II 24 Executive Committee of the LMT, March 15, 1990, 25/90, Appendix Certificate of Discipleshiptraining; AFELM II 24 LITE Meeting, June 26, 1990, 67/90; AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan tyoalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1990, 7; ALMT Guidelines. The Lutheran Institute of Theological Education 1992; Makela 1991, 3.6.3; Hengellinen kuukausilehti 7/1992, Luterilaista teologia Thaimaassa; LMT News March 1994, News from LITE.

³²³ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1983/Reviewing the 5 year plan; ANMS Thailand Erfaring fra media-arbeidet i Thailand, misjonsprest Christopher Woie, September 4, 1984; AFELM II 42 Executive Committee of LMT, October 16, 1986, 150/86; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1987/Report from the Lutheran Institute of Theological Education; Finska Missionssällskapets årsbok 1986, 48; Mission 2/1988, Den Augsburgska bekännelsen översatt till thai; Kusawadee 1989, 41-47; Makela 1991, 3.6.3; Hengellinen kuukausilehti 7/1992, Luterilaista teologia Thaimaassa.

Theology degree at LITE. Most of the parish workers of the LMT had still been educated by non-Lutheran theological institutions and bible schools. Through the Bachelor programme, the LMT wanted to give its employees a thorough training in Lutheranism. In addition, the LMT wanted to raise the education level among its national workers before the establishment of the Lutheran church. The studies were carried out as intensive studies for one week every month. This arrangement was chosen in order to make it possible for the students to continue working while studying. In 1991, the LMT also decided to start training courses for church musicians. The intention was to provide every congregation with a member that could accompany the hymns in the Sunday service. In addition to learning to play the piano and guitar, every student at LITE also received instruction in playing a Thai folk music instrument. Traditional Thai dance was taught in order to give the students tools to present the Christian gospel in a way that would fit the Thai context. In 1991, LITE also began to offer theological education in Ubon Ratchathani in order to support the work that the LMT had started in the province in 1985.³²⁴ The structure of LITE obtained by 1991 remained practically unchanged until the establishment of the Lutheran Church in Thailand in 1994. The responsibility for LITE was then taken over by the church, but the structure of the institute was retained.³²⁵

³²⁴ AFELM II 24 Lutheran Institute of Theological Education, March 26, 1991, 33/91; AFELM II 24 Executive Committee of the LMT, May 2, 1991, 56/91; AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan työalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1991, 20-21; Hengellinen kuukausilehti 7/1992, Luterilaista teologia Thaimaassa; LMT News March 1994, News from LITE; Misjonstidende 9-10/1995, Thailand - hogdepunkt i året som ligg bak; Mission 7/2003, "Vi måste presentera Jesus på ett asiatiskt sätt".

³²⁵ ALMT Guidelines. The Lutheran Institute of Theological Education 1992; AFELM II 48 Executive Committee of the LMT, January 20, 1994, Appendix study Programmes; Misjonstidende 8/1997, Thai kirken trenger dyktige medarbeidere.

The teaching at LITE consisted of courses in theological subjects such as New Testament Greek, exegetics, church history, practical theology, dogmatics, theological ethics, hermeneutics, and comparative religion. A strong emphasis was put on more practical subjects that were supposed to help the students in their future work in the Lutheran congregations. Teaching, for instance, was given on church planting, church growth, administration, leadership, and contextual theology. In addition, subjects such as philosophy, sociology, Thai, and English were studied. The studies for the Diploma in Theology also included a year of practical training in one of the congregations of the LMT. Later this was reduced to 7.5 months. The training programmes at LITE presupposed that the students in the future would serve as evangelists or pastors in the LMT and the Lutheran Church in Thailand.³²⁶

The number of full-time students at LITE varied between three and nine, while the part-time students were about ten to fifteen in number. Annually, two or three new students were admitted. The teachers at LITE consisted in the main of missionaries, pastors, and evangelists from the LMT as well as of some Thai and foreign guest lecturers. From the teachers of theology the LMT required, as a rule, at least a Bachelor of Theology degree.³²⁷ The LMT tried to keep a comparatively high standard in the training at LITE. The Diploma and Bachelor programmes in theology offered by LITE have been accredited by the Asia Theological Association in 1994 and 1995 respectively. Before this acknowledgement was given to LITE, only two Bible Schools in Bangkok had programmes

³²⁶ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1987/Report from the Lutheran Institute of Theological Education; AFELM II 24 Lutheran Institute of Theological Education, April 25, 1991, 42/91; Misjonstidende 8/1997, *Thaikirken trenger dyktige medarbeidere*.

³²⁷ AFELM Hia 39 & Hia 45 *Thaimaan tyoalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1986-1994*.

accredited by the association. In 1988 LITE became a member of the Association of Theological Schools in Thailand.³²⁸

The first two students who had obtained their whole education at LITE received their Diploma in Theology degree in February 1988. These two belonged to the group of students who had been trained at LITE despite the uncertainty over the future of the Lutheran full-time education.³²⁹ Despite the low number of students at LITE, it was the vital nerve of the Lutheran work in Thailand. It provided the Thai Lutherans with a Lutheran identity and theology and guaranteed that the Lutheran Church in Thailand would not lack reliable and competent workers.

4.4 Radio ministry as a tool in the outreach programme

From the very beginning of Lutheran mission in Thailand, it was the wish of the missionaries to start mass media work, particularly literature evangelism and radio ministry. Christian mass media work was not a new phenomenon in Thailand. As broadcasting charges were reasonable and mass media had proved an effective tool for reaching large groups of people about the Christian gospel, it was also natural for the *Lutheran Mission in Thailand* (LMT) to consider this kind of work. The *Agreement on Mission Cooperation in Thailand* did not specifically mention mass media work, but mass media could be considered an aid in the overall task of the LMT to proclaim the Gospel to the people of Thailand. In the first five-year plan

³²⁸ AFELM 8.2.7.4./1. Thaimaan työalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1994, 14; AFELM 8.2.7.4./1. Thaimaan työalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1995, 9; AMBT Address by Jaakko Makela at Lutheran World Federation Pre-Assembly Youth Conference, Bangkok, June 30, 1997; Makela 1991, 3.6.3; Woie 1998, 26.

³²⁹ AFELM 45 Thaimaan työalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1988,10.

of the LMT, the *Five Years Plan of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand 1981-1985*, mass media work was, however, included. According to the plan, the LMT was to seek a partner of cooperation among the Christian mass media organisations in Thailand and participate by doing follow up work with listeners and producing radio programmes.³³⁰

One of the Christian organisations working with mass media in Thailand was the *Far East Broadcasting Company (FEBC)*³³¹. For several years, the FEBC had been responsible for the production and follow-up work of a programme called the *Lutheran Hour*³³². Since the LMT was the first Lutheran mission

³³⁰ ANMS Arsruatet i NMS' Thailand 1977/Felles luthersk litteratur og radioarbeid; ANMS Misjonserruatet for NMS I Thailand 1980/Radio og massmedia; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1981/Five Years Plan of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand 1981-1985, 4-5; ANMS General Assembly for the LMT 1982/Report on Mass media work; Norsk Misjonstidende 9/1977, Thailand - en valdig utfordring til kristen misjon!; Kristusglede - tjenersinn 1981, 35.

³³¹ The FEBC was an evangelical, interdenominational, and non-commercial organisation mainly occupied with radio ministry. Its history dated back to the end of World War II when American soldiers returning from the Pacific brought with them a new awareness of the spiritual needs in Asia. The FEBC was founded in 1945 in the United States. The radio broadcasting started in China in 1947, but after the closing of China the Philippines became the new centre of the work. The ministry in Thailand started in 1952. In the late 1990s, the FEBC was broadcasting in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and some former member states of the Soviet Union. For more information about the FEBC see for instance AFELM Hia 29 Meeting with LMT and the Far East Broadcasting Company, June 28, 1980; Far East Broadcasting Company. Available at <www.febc.org>. Accessed September 18, 2009; A Dictionary of Asian Christianity 2001, 281.

³³² The production of the weekly half-hour programme *Lutheran Hour* began in 1930 in the United States. The initiative to the radio programme was taken by some volunteer members from the International Lutheran Laymen's League. In 2003 the *Lutheran Hour* was heard on over 1,200 radio stations in more than forty countries. In Thailand, the programme was originally produced in English and aimed at American military

organisation to take up work in Thailand and it wanted to get involved in mass media work, it was natural for the LMT to contact the FEBC and suggest cooperation around the Lutheran Hour programme. The LMT and the FEBC agreed that the Lutheran Mission could start to take part in the follow-up work of the Lutheran Hour as the FEBC did not have enough employees to handle all the listeners that responded to the programme. The workers of the LMT contacted thus the radio listeners who had been in touch with the FEBC and invited them to the Lutheran congregations. At this stage, the LMT did not produce any radio programmes of its own but was content with taking part in the follow-up work of the Lutheran Hour, co-producing occasional programmes with the FEBC, and supporting the FEBC financially. The FEBC did not have a radio station of its own in Thailand, but there were several radio stations in the country and airtime could be bought at a reasonable price.³³³

The mass media ministry of the LMT began in earnest when Rev. Christopher Woie of the Norwegian Missionary Society accepted to serve as a missionary in Thailand. Woie, who had earlier worked as a missionary in Ethiopia, had both educational and working experience in the area of mass

personnel stationed in the area. After the Thai Government in 1977 decreed that English broadcasts were no longer acceptable, the FEBC assumed responsibility for producing the programme. For more information on the Lutheran Hour Ministry see for instance www.lhm.org. Accessed September 18, 2009; Sandebudet 2/1999, Internationell mediamission i over 47 lander.

³³³ ANMS General Assembly for the LMT 1980/Report about Mass media; AFELM Hia 29 Meeting with LMT and the Far East Broadcasting Company, June 28, 1980; AFELM Hia 29 Ylimaarainen lahetienkokous, July 3, 1980, §10; ANMS General Assembly for the LMT 1982/Report on Mass media work; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1983/Report from Media Office; Norsk Misjonstidende 19-20/1980, Malet ar eit mediasenter; Norsk Misjonstidende 31/1981, Rekordstor brevstrom fra lyttere; Pa apen kanal 1982, 46.

media. The LMT *Media Office* started its work in January 1982. Later the name of the media ministry was changed to *Lutheran Mass Communication* since this corresponded better with the name that was used in Thai. The purpose of the mass media ministry of the LMT was to support the Lutheran congregations in their outreach programmes. The Lutheran radio programmes were to be forerunners for the Christian gospel, reach out to people that otherwise would not come in contact with Christianity and awaken an interest to know more about Christianity. The LMT was encouraged by reports from other Asian cities, which indicated that contacts made with listeners of Christian radio programmes could create groups of religious seekers that became the nucleus of new congregations.³³⁴

The establishment of the LMT Media Office gave new strength to the mass media work of the LMT. The work became more organised and thought-out. After negotiations with the FEBC and in conjunction with the leaders of the Lutheran Hour Ministry in the United States, the LMT assumed, in July 1982, full responsibility for producing the Lutheran Hour programme and keeping contact with the listeners.³³⁵ The draft scripts for the programmes were sent over from the United States. In Thailand, the material was translated into Thai and given a form that was suitable for the Thai religious, social and cultural context. The programmes consisted mainly

³³⁴ AFELM II 22 Letter from Christopher Woie to William D. Kniffel, November 16, 1983; ANMS Thailand Erfaring fra media-arbeidet i Thailand av misjonsprest Christopher Woie, September 4, 1984; AFELM II 17 Executive Committee of the LMT, February 14, 1985, 33/85; Asia Lutheran News 3/1981, Norwegian Communicator joins Lutheran Media Center in Thailand; Kristusglede - tjenersinn 1981, 35; Finska Missionssällskapets årsbok 1983, 43; Pa apen kanal 1982, 46; Woie 1992, 346.

³³⁵ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1983/Report from Media Office; Finska Missionssällskapets årsbok 1983, 43.

of Christian teaching in the form of dialogues, drama, and music. The programmes were half an hour long and broadcast on Sunday mornings in Bangkok and in the provinces of Saraburi and Surin. The LMT Media Office inherited the broadcasting times and areas from the FEBC. As a consequence, the Lutheran radio ministry did not completely support the church planting and parish work of the LMT as part of the radio listeners lived in areas where the LMT did not have any activity or possibility to do follow-up work.³³⁶

After having been responsible for the Lutheran Hour programme for more than two years, the LMT decided in 1984 to increase the range of its radio programmes. During a ten-month period in 1984-1985, a programme called the *Kingdom of the Heart* was produced, but then the programme had to be discontinued as the radio station, which had been used for the transmission, could no longer offer the LMT airtime. Instead, cooperation was started with another radio station and a programme called *Before Sunrise* was introduced in September 1985. Starting in March 1986 the LMT also had its own children's programme, the *Flower in the Heart*. From 1986, the LMT Media Office thus made three weekly programmes broadcast via five different radio stations, three in Bangkok, one in Surin and one in Saraburi.³³⁷

³³⁶ AFELM Hia 29 Meeting with LMT and the FEBC, June 28, 1980; ANMS General Assembly for the LMT 1982/Report on Mass media work; ANMS General Assembly for the LMT 1983/Report from Media Office; ANMS Thailand Erfaring fra media-arbeidet i Thailand av misjonsprest Christopher Woie, September 4, 1984; Norsk Misjonstidende 31/1981, Rekordstor brevstrom fra lyttere; Pa apen kanal 1982, 46.

³³⁷ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1985/Annual Report from the Broadcasting Department; ANMS Thailand Quarterly Report from the Broadcasting Department, July-September 1985; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1986/Annual Report from the Lutheran Mass Communication; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1987/Annual Report from the Lutheran Mass Communication; AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan tyoalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1988, 9; AFELM Hia 45

The programmes produced by the LMT Media Office consisted of general information on such matters as health and the weather, information about Christianity, Bible teaching, and Christian music. The target group was non-Christians. Seeing that Thailand was a Buddhist country, there were restrictions concerning what could be said and performed during radio programmes. The Lutheran programmes had a clear Christian profile and Christian faith was presented, but Christian spirituality such as devotional practices were not allowed. In consequence, the most important task of the programmes was to introduce the listeners to correspondence courses about Christianity and the Bible. Through these courses and letters, the employees of the Media Office could explain all the things that were not allowed to be presented in the radio programmes.³³⁸

The correspondence between the LMT Media Office and the listeners was lively. All the letters from the listeners were answered. The amount of letters received varied from month to month, but the average number was around 220 letters monthly. In general, the Media Office received most letters around Christmas, a time when the workers often made extra efforts such as offering small Christmas presents for free. During the most active years, the LMT Media Office received over 3,500 letters per year, in the poorest years only about 1,000 letters. Nearly 100 percent of the letters came from non-Christians. The letters dealt mostly with religion in general, ethics, and personal problems. Many of the letters also contained requests for Christian books and other material. The large number of listeners wanting help with personal

Thaimaan työalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1989, 9; Suomen Lahetyssanomien 5/1986, Thaimaan radiotyössä rohkeasti eteenpäin.

³³⁸ AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1991/Lutheran Mass Communication Annual Report 1990; Mission 11/1987, Evangeliet nar manniskor via radio; Misjonstidende 5/1992, Radio for fa.

problems was a dilemma for the LMT Media Office. Solving personal problems was not considered a priority, and since many of the listeners lived far away from the Lutheran congregations, the coworkers of the LMT had limited possibilities to intervene concretely. The employees of the Media Office however still recognised that religious questions and personal problems were often connected.³³⁹

There was a great interest in the three different correspondence courses offered by the LMT Media Office. Statistics produced by the manager of the Media Office showed that an average of 400 persons commenced a correspondence course annually. During the most intensive years, more than 700 persons joined a course. Of those commencing a correspondence course, about 60 percent finished their course and some participants completed all three courses. During the first years of radio ministry, the LMT did not have a correspondence course of its own, but used material produced by other Christian mass media organisations. This was not a satisfying solution for the LMT. Repeatedly it became apparent that the theology on the courses made by non-Lutheran organisations did not correspond with the contents of the Lutheran radio

³³⁹ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1983/Report from Media Office; ANMS Thailand Erfaring fra media-arbeidet i Thailand av misjonsprest Christopher Woie, September 4, 1984; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1984/Report from the Media Office; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1985/Report from the Broadcasting Department; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1986/Annual Report from the Lutheran Mass Communication; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1987/Annual Report from the Lutheran Mass Communication; ALMT General Assembly of the LMT 1988/Annual Report from Lutheran Mass Communication in Thailand; AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan tyoalan yleiskertomus vuodelta 1988, 9; ANMS Thailand Report from the Lutheran Mass Communication, April-August 1989; AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1991/Monthly Report from the Broadcasting Dept. of LMT 1990; Misjonstidende 5/1992, Radio for fa.

programmes. Lutheran correspondence courses used in other Asian countries were, on the other hand, not suitable for the Thai context. Finally, in August 1987, the LMT was able to take into use its own Lutheran correspondence course.³⁴⁰

Since the aim of the mass media ministry was to serve and support the Lutheran congregations in their outreach, the LMT appointed in February 1984 an evangelist, Mrs. Thongtip Hanpradit, to work at the Media Office. In cooperation with the Lutheran congregations, the evangelist was to be responsible for the follow-up work of the radio programmes. The local congregations were also, in due order, engaged in the programme production. The wish of the Media Office was that both the coworkers and members of the Lutheran congregations should contribute to the programme production and that the radio ministry should become a joint responsibility and a natural part of the outreach of the congregations.³⁴¹

In 1989, the LMT Media Office started to evaluate its work. The reason for this was that some of the Lutheran radio programmes, by mistake, had been broadcast via other radio stations than those in Bangkok, Surin, and Saraburi. These radio stations were far away from the Lutheran congregations

³⁴⁰ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1983/Report from the Media Office; ANMS Thailand Erfaring fra media-arbeidet i Thailand av misjonsprest Christopher Woie, September 4, 1984; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1987/Annual Report from the Lutheran Mass Communication; AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan tyoalan yleiskertomus vuodelta 1987, 7.

³⁴¹ AFELM II17 Executive committee of the LMT, January 26, 1984, 9/84; ANMS Thailand Erfaring fra media-arbeidet i Thailand av misjonsprest Christopher Woie, September 4, 1984; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1986/Annual Report from the Lutheran Mass Communication; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1987/Annual Report from the Lutheran Mass Communication; Mission 11/1987, Evangeliet nar manniskor via radio.

and the Media Office did not have any possibility to do follow-up work. Through this mistake, the Media Office saw concrete evidence of the importance of its cooperation with the Lutheran congregations. The LMT stressed once again that the main purpose of the mass media ministry was to support the outreach of the local congregations. As the LMT had been working in the Ubon Ratchathani province since 1985 this was the most natural area to start broadcasts if the LMT Media Office wanted to expand its work. Temporary transmissions had been tried out in the Ubon area in 1985-1986, but the broadcasts had been discontinued due to difficulties in finding a radio station to cooperate with. In October 1990, the radio transmissions in Ubon were resumed and the LMT Media Office started broadcasting programmes five times a week.³⁴²

The radio transmissions in Bangkok, Surin, and Saraburi continued the whole time, but at the end of 1990, it transpired that the sponsor of the transmissions in Surin and Saraburi was no longer willing to support the work³⁴³. Since it appeared hard to find a new sponsor, the LMT decided to discontinue the transmissions in Surin and Saraburi. The Media Office wanted to emphasize the cooperation with the local congregations and concentrate its radio work on Bangkok and the Ubon Ratchathani province where the

³⁴² AFELM II 17 Executive Committee of the LMT, June 28, 1985, 100/85; AFELM II 17 Executive Committee of the LMT, September 26, 1985 and October 3, 1985, 141/85; AFELM II 42 Executive Committee of the LMT, May 15, 1986, 83/86; AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan tyoalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1989, 9; AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan tyoalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1990, 7.

³⁴³ The sponsor of the work had been the Lutheran Laymen's League, i.e. the organisation behind the Lutheran Hour production. In 1991, the Lutheran Hour Ministry started work of its own in Thailand under the name Journey Into Light. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the discontinuance of financial support was connected to this. For more information, see for instance Lutheran Hour Ministry. Available at <www.lhmint.org/facts/thailand.pdf>. Accessed September 18, 2009.

Lutheran congregations could take part in following-up the contacts to the listeners. The media team received special encouragement when they were informed that the radio programmes broadcasted in the Ubon province could also be heard in Laos, a country that was more or less closed to Christian mission at the time.³⁴⁴ In 1994, immediately before the establishment of the Lutheran Church in Thailand, the Media Office produced three weekly radio programmes. Two of the programmes were broadcasted in Bangkok and one in Ubon.³⁴⁵

Even if all the member organisations of the LMT supported the idea of Lutheran mass media work in Thailand, it was, in particular, a Norwegian commitment and all the missionaries assigned to work at the LMT Media Office were Norwegian. Above all, it was the work of one man, Christopher Woie, who for many years led the Media Office with assistance from his wife Solvi. In April 1987, Thai evangelist Chamnan Chantakua was appointed manager of the Lutheran Mass Communication. When the Lutheran Church in Thailand was established in 1994, the responsibility for the mass media work was assumed by the church.³⁴⁶

In addition to radio programmes, the LMT Media Office also produced music cassette tapes and cassette tapes with Christian teaching. According to the media team, there was an enormous need for Christian cassette tapes to be used in radio

³⁴⁴ AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan tyoalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1990, 7; AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1991/Chairman's Report; AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1991/Lutheran Mass Communication Annual Report; Misjonstidende 6/1993, Vi nar til Laos ved hjelp av radioen; Misjonstidende 6/1996, Radiobolger nar fram

³⁴⁵ LMT News March 1994, General News.

³⁴⁶ ANMS Thailand Quarterly Report from the Lutheran Mass Communication, January-March 1987; AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan tyoalan yleiskertomus vuodelta 1987, 7.

programmes and in evangelism. The music cassettes were above all aimed at children, young people, and families. The members of the Lutheran congregations took part in the production of cassette tapes as singers and musicians. The cassettes, aimed at being used for evangelism, consisted in the main of sermons by the LMT evangelists and were principally distributed through the Lutheran congregations.³⁴⁷

The cooperation between the LMT and the FEBC also continued after the foundation of the LMT Media Office and after the LMT assumed responsibility for the Lutheran Hour programme. For many years the LMT Media Office did not have a studio of its own, but used the studio of the FEBC to record its radio programmes. The LMT did not open its own studio until 1991 when the Media Office moved to the new headquarters of the LMT.³⁴⁸ The LMT also cooperated with other mass media organisations in Thailand. Together with the roof organisation *Thai Christian Mass Communicators* and the separate Christian mass media organisations, the LMT Media Office arranged meetings for listeners of Christian radio programmes. The LMT also participated in deliberations between Christian mass media organisations in Thailand and elsewhere in Asia, for instance, within the framework of Thai Christian Mass Communicators and *Lutheran Communication in Asia*.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁷ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1983/Report from Media Office; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1984/Report from the Media Office; ANMS Thailand Erfaring fra media-arbeidet i Thailand, A Report by Christopher Woie in 1984; ANMS Thailand Quarterly Report from the Lutheran Mass Communication, April-June 1986; Pa apen kanal 1982, 47; Mission 11/1987, Evangeliet nar manniskor via radio.

³⁴⁸ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1983/Report from Media Office; ANMS Thailand Erfaring fra media-arbeidet i Thailand, A Report by Christopher Woie in 1984; Misjonstidende 5/1992, Radio for fa.

³⁴⁹ ANMS General Assembly for the LMT 1982/Report on Mass media work; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1983/Report from Media

One of the reasons for the LMT to start mass media work was that statistics from other Asian cities showed that radio work was an effective method of evangelism. The experiences of the LMT were contradictory. The Lutheran mass media work in Thailand was successful in the sense that the interest in its correspondence courses was large and the correspondence between the employees of the LMT Media Office and the listeners was lively. However, it was hard to create permanent contacts with the listeners and the contacts rarely led to a personal faith and conversion to Christianity. The reason for the LMT continuing its mass media ministry seems to have been a hope that the listeners who did not accept Christianity now would later, as a result of the radio work, find faith in the Christian gospel.³⁵⁰

4.5 Literature work through the Rangsan Bookstore

Another field of action that was considered from the very beginning of Lutheran mission in Thailand was starting up literature work and opening a bookstore in the Thai capital. The matter was already being discussed by the first Norwegian Lutheran missionaries in Thailand around 1977. The need for literature work and a Lutheran bookstore was justified in several ways. It was considered the duty and responsibility of the Lutheran missionaries to make Lutheran literature accessible to the people in Thailand. It was hoped that the missionaries through the bookstore would come into contact with Thais that otherwise would not be reached by the

Office; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1987/Annual Report from the Lutheran Mass Communication; ANMS Report from the Lutheran Mass Communication, April-August 1989.

³⁵⁰ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1984/Report from the Media Office; Kristusglede - tjenersinn 1981, 35; Finska Missionssällskapets årsbok 1983, 43; Misjonstidende 5/1992, Fruktelos misjon?.

Christian gospel. Surveys on conversion to Christianity in Thailand had shown that a considerable part of the Thai Christians maintained that the Bible or Christian literature had been the key tool in their conversion. In addition, Lutheran literature would be required for the work of the *Lutheran Mission in Thailand* (LMT) and a bookstore could be used for providing the Lutheran congregations with the material they needed. The *Agreement on Mission Cooperation in Thailand* did not deal with the particulars of the Lutheran ministry in Thailand such as literature work. The *Five Years Plan of Lutheran Mission in Thailand 1981-1985*, however, agreed that the LMT, in the main, should use literature and cassettes produced by other mission agencies. Where Lutheran literature in Thai was needed, the LMT would largely have to take responsibility for the production.³⁵¹

The plan to start literature work was realised in April 1980 when the *Lutheran Bookstore* was opened in association with the Immanuel church. According to the annual report from the Lutheran Bookstore in 1981, the main intention for opening the store was to "*make Christian literature known in the neighbourhood and to inspire Christians as well as non-Christians to read Christian literature*". Over the following years it was stressed that above all the purpose of the bookstore was to help people to find a personal Christian faith.³⁵²

³⁵¹ ANMS Arsrruatet i NMS' Thailand 1977/Felles luthersk litteratur og radioarbeid; ANMS Arsmotet i NMS' Thailand 1978/Litteraturarbeid; ANMS General Assembly for the LMT 1981/Report from the Lutheran Bookstore Klong Toey; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1981/Five Years Plan of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand 1981-1985, 4; Ord som lever 1980, 48.

³⁵² ANMS Misjonserruatet for NMS i Thailand 1980/Radio og massmedia; ANMS General Assembly for the LMT 1981/Report from the Lutheran Bookstore Klong Toey; Woie 1992, 345.

The range of the Lutheran Bookstore consisted of Christian literature, secular books, stationaries, school material, and children's books. In addition, the sale of the material produced by the LMT, for instance cassettes, books, and teaching material, was channeled through the bookstore. By also including products other than Christian literature in the range, the LMT hoped that the bookstore would acquire a larger customer potential. Within the LMT, however, it was soon realised that the location of the bookstore was not well suited for business. Consequently, the sales volume remained low. Most of the sales were of stationary and secular books as well as the private use of the telephone and photocopying services. The Christian literature did not sell well. The individuals responsible of the literature work of the LMT tried to stress that the bookstore was not only a project of the Immanuel congregation, but the bookstore of the LMT and thus the responsibility of all the Lutheran congregations. The ambition was to get the local congregations to take an active part in the work of the bookstore, for instance by selling its products at the local church centres and at Lutheran meetings.³⁵³

Due to the problems of making the bookstore profitable, the store was moved, in the beginning of 1983, to new premises close to the Lad Phrao church. The new premises were on the heavily trafficked Lad Phrao Road and the LMT hoped that the better location would bring more customers to the bookstore and to the congregation. At the same time as the move, the name of the bookstore was changed to *Rangsan*

³⁵³ ANMS Misjonserruatet for NMS i Thailand 1980/Radio og massmedia; ANMS General Assembly for the LMT 1981/Report from the Lutheran Bookstore Klong Toey; ANMS General Assembly for the LMT 1982/Report from the Lutheran Bookstore Klong Toey; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1984/Annual Report from Rangsan Bookstore; Norsk Misjonstidende 16/1980, Buddhisme og kristendom; Woie 1992, 345-346.

Bookstore and the store was administratively separated from the LMT and established as a separate company.³⁵⁴

One of the main intentions with establishing a bookstore had been that the store would be a tool in the outreach and parish work of the Lutheran congregations. To its disappointment, the LMT soon realised that the threshold was high for the Thais to visit a Christian bookstore. Different methods and ideas were tried out in order to arouse interest and to draw more customers. Some of the Lutheran congregations tried to sell Christian literature at local market places. Another attempt to get new customers was when the LMT in 1982 made an agreement with the secular publisher *DK Today Co Ltd*, one of the largest publishers and booksellers in Thailand, to sell secular books as well. In an attempt to increase the number of visitors in the bookstore, the LMT also opened a reading room connected to the bookstore in 1987.³⁵⁵

Since the bookstore was part of the outreach of the LMT, it was not expected to make profit. Yet it was hoped that the store would be able to cover at least some of the running expenses and gradually become self-supported. Over the years, the bookstore was able to cover between 60 to 70

³⁵⁴ AFELM Hia 39 Executive Committee of the LMT, November 25, 1982, 177/82; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1983/Report from the bookstore; AFELM 1117 Joint Meeting of Lutheran Church Foundation in Thailand and Executive Committee of LMT, January 4, 1983; Norsk Misjonstidende 12/1983, Rangsan Bokhandel apnet; Finska Missions-sallskapets arsbok 1984, 42; Woie 1992, 345.

³⁵⁵ AFELM Hia 39 Executive Committee of the LMT, November 4, 1982, 166/82; Agreement of Co-operation between DK Today Co and Rangsan Bookstore, December 9, 1982; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1983/Report from the bookstore; AFELM II 17 Joint Meeting of Lutheran church Foundation in Thailand and Executive Committee of LMT, January 4, 1983; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1987/Annual Report from Rangsan Bookstore; AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan työalan yleiskertomus vuodelta 1987, 8.

percent of the expenses by its sales, but it never became self-supporting. Nor did the connection with the Lutheran congregations develop as closely as the employees of the bookstore would have wished or as close as would have been needed in order for the literature work to prosper. According to the employees of the store, the congregations apparently simply did not see the advantage of cooperating with the bookstore.³⁵⁶

In 1991, the bookstore was finally closed due to unprofitability. The LMT nevertheless planned to strengthen its literature work and increase its book production, but the marketing and selling of the books was to take place through established bookstore chains. For its own part, the LMT planned to start a mobile bookstore unit. This had also been tried out in the early 1980s when a pick-up car was transformed to a mobile bookstore. The book production of the LMT continued thus within the framework of the Material Production at the Lutheran Institute of Theological Education. The emphasis was on books that could be used at the different levels of theological education offered by LITE. The plans for a mobile bookstore unit were never realised.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁶ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1985/Annual Report from Ransan Bookstore; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1986/Chairman's Report; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1987/Annual Report from Ransan Bookstore; AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1991/Ransan Bookstore Annual Report 1990; Makela 1991, 3.6.1; Woie 1992, 345-346.

³⁵⁷ AFELM Hia 39 Executive Committee of the LMT, November 4, 1982, 166/82; AFELM II 24 Executive Committee of the LMT, May 30, 1991, 66/91; AFELM II 24 Executive Committee of the LMT, August 1, 1991, 92/91, Appendix Developing the Literature Work of the LMT; AFELM II 24 Executive Committee the LMT, September 19, 1991, 111/91, Appendix Developing the Literature Work; AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan työalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1991,17.

Summary

In this chapter, the fields of action of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand (LMT) have been examined. The sphere of activity of the Lutheran Mission was extensive, but the working methods were quite traditional. The activities were generally started with an evangelistic motive, and in order to support the work of the Lutheran congregations. On the whole, there was agreement what fields of action the Lutheran Mission should focus on, but the creation of a Lutheran theological full-time education was preceded by lengthy and difficult deliberations. Occasionally, the LMT had to admit that a mode of working it had tried did not turn out as planned. This was the case with Rangsan Bookstore, which was closed due to unprofitability. By starting varying kind of activities, the LMT predetermined, to a great extent, what sort of work the Lutheran Church in Thailand was to devote itself to, as the church then assumed responsibility for the activities after its establishment in 1994.

5. GEOGRAPHICAL EXPANSION OF THE LUTHERAN MISSION IN THAILAND

The Lutheran church planting in Thailand started in the capital Bangkok. However, it had been northeastern Thailand that had first awoken the interest of the Norwegian Missionary Society's (NMS) in the country. The NMS had hoped to begin the Lutheran engagement in Thailand by taking up work in the northeast, but due to the political unrest and the guerilla activities in the area in the mid-1970s, this scheme had to be abandoned. Despite the fact that the plans for work in the northeast could not be realised at that time, the NMS continued to nourish a special interest in this part of Thailand.

A possible expansion of the work to other parts of the country was already under discussion during the first years of the Lutheran mission in Thailand and even before the establishment of the *Lutheran Mission in Thailand* (LMT) in 1980. The *Agreement on Mission Cooperation in Thailand* included nothing explicitly about expanding the work outside of Bangkok. In paragraph VI Areas of Cooperation, the agreement, however, established that the members of the LMT were to cooperate in the "*long range planning of the total work, including the search for new geographical places*". Thus, a geographical expansion of the work seems to have been considered a possible development at the time the Agreement on Mission Cooperation was formulated.³⁵⁸

This chapter will look more closely at the geographical expansion of the Lutheran mission in Thailand. In particular

³⁵⁸ ANMS Thailand Agreement on Mission Cooperation in Thailand 1980, §VI.

the reasons for the expansion and the development of the work outside the capital area; the models of cooperation in the new areas will also be analysed.

5.1 The extension of the mission work to the Ubon Ratchathani province

When the *Norwegian Missionary Society* (NMS) and the *Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission* (FELM) in the mid-1970s started to investigate the possibilities of expanding their mission activity to Southeast Asia, the *Church of Christ in Thailand* (CCT), among several other organisations, was contacted. The CCT welcomed Lutheran missionaries to the country and suggested that they take up work in northeastern Thailand. According to the leaders of the CCT, northeastern Thailand was the most neglected part of the country from a missionary, economic, and development point of view. However, when the NMS sent its first missionaries to Thailand in 1976, the political unrest in the northeast made the NMS decide to build up a mission headquarter in Bangkok before considering work in other parts of the country. The NMS's interest in the Thai countryside had however been awakened and a possible expansion outside of Bangkok was a recurrent topic for discussion among the Norwegian missionaries. The NMS saw northeastern Thailand as the natural direction for a geographical expansion of the work. As soon as the political situation in the northeast allowed, the missionaries hoped to make survey trips there. Within the NMS there was also talk about slowly expanding the Lutheran mission work to the northeast by starting Lutheran activity in villages along the so called Friendship Highway³⁵⁹ between Bangkok and the

³⁵⁹ The road was built with financial support from the United States of America. In 1958 it was opened as the Friendship Highway. For more information see for instance Kakizaki, Ichiro: Road Improvement in the

border with Laos. The only activity that the NMS in fact did have in northeastern Thailand before the establishment of the *Lutheran Mission in Thailand* (LMT), was giving financial support for Christian social work in a camp for refugees from Laos. The support was channeled through the Norwegian Church Aid.³⁰

When the Lutheran Mission was established in 1980, the NMS brought with it its interest in northeastern Thailand. Even if the *Agreement on Mission Cooperation in Thailand* did not say anything about taking up work in the northeastern parts of the country, the agreement did not exclude the possibility of geographical expansion for the mission. In the first long range plan of the LMT for the years 1981-1985, it was clearly expressed that the direction of a possible geographical expansion of the work should be northeastern Thailand. During 1981-1984, representatives of the LMT and the Home Boards of the member organisations of the Lutheran Mission made several survey trips to different provinces in northeastern Thailand in order to investigate where the need for Christian work was most urgent. Even if other parts of the country were also discussed and surveyed, the LMT's interest in work in rural areas was concentrated on northeastern Thailand. The LMT also evaluated the mission methods used by other churches and mission organisations involved in rural

Era of Postwar Rehabilitation in Thailand, 1945-1957. Available at <www.jaas.or.jp/pdf/48-3/119-123.pdf>. Accessed September 18, 2009.

³⁰ ANMS Det Norske Misjonsselskaps Generalforsamling 1975/Skal NMS ta opp nytt misjonsarbeid i Brasil og Sørøst-Asia, Laos/Thailand?; ANMS Arsruadet i Misjonersamradet Hongkong 1976; LNMS Nordbo & Harbakk 1976, 29; ANMS Arsruadet i NMS' Thailand 1977/Vart fremtidige engasjement i Thailand; ANMS Arsruadet for misjonserene i Thailand 1978/Vart fremtidige engagement i Thailand; ANMS Arsruadet for misjonserene i Thailand 1979/Rapport fra flyktingarbeidet i Nong Kai; AMBT Conversation with Egil H. Eggen, February 17, 2003; AMBT Conversation with Eivind Hauglid, February 27, 2003.

mission. In particular, the LMT studied the work of the American missionary Jim Gustafson, who had his roots in the Covenant Church of America. Gustafson combined his mission work with agricultural projects in order to also materially help the people of northeastern Thailand. Gustafson was careful in considering the Thai context in his ministry and the LMT planned to use the work of Gustafson as a model for its own mission in northeastern Thailand.³⁶¹

The investigations and survey trips to the northeast resulted in the General Assembly of the LMT, in 1983, deciding that mission work, preferably both evangelisation and social development work, should be started in Ubon Ratchathani province (for which Ubon is the short name) neighbouring to the border with Laos. Nevertheless, at the General Assembly there were divergent opinions on where and when the new work should be started. It was questioned as to why the LMT should go as far as Ubon Ratchathani when suitable areas were also to be found closer to Bangkok where the LMT already had activity and congregations. It was also stressed that a firm foundation should be laid in Bangkok before moving into the countryside. A firm foundation meant that the LMT should have enough trained coworkers, good

³⁶¹ ANMS Thailand Agreement on Mission Cooperation in Thailand 1980, § VI; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1981/Five Years Plan of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand 1981-1985, 2-3; AFELM Hia 29 Thaimaan tyoalan hallintokunnan kokous, October 16, 1981, 2§; ANMS General Assembly for the LMT 1982/Expansions of operations, North-East, Bangkok, others; AFELM II 22 Joint Board for Thailand, April 5, 1982; AFELM II 22 Report from trip to get to know Jim Gustafson's work, February 28, 1983; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1983/Report from Survey trip to Udon; AFELM II 17 Memorandum from the Executive Committee's Meeting with Jim Gustafson, May 24, 1983; Kristus verdens hap 1983, 52.

teaching material, a clear Lutheran identity, and a well thought-out strategy before thinking of expanding the work.³⁶²

The LMT gave several explanations for its special interest in northeastern Thailand. The northeastern provinces were the poorest and least developed parts of the country. According to the Lutheran missionaries, the Christian work in the northeast was small-scale. For instance, in the Ubon Ratchathani province, there were only a few churches and it was claimed that there was not a single Protestant mission worker in the provincial capital at the time. Many of the people that the LMT became acquainted with in Bangkok came from northeastern Thailand and spent only shorter periods in the capital as seasonal workers. As the LMT did not have any activities or congregations in northeastern Thailand, the Lutheran congregations usually lost contact with the seasonal workers when they returned back home to their villages. Northeastern Thailand was also fascinating since it bordered on Laos, the country which would have been the NMS's first choice for a new mission field in the mid-1970s had it been possible to start mission work there at the time. By extending the mission work to northeastern Thailand, the old dream about working in Laos could be kept alive. The NMS, particularly, worked according to the principle that new work should be started in mainly unreached areas where there was no Christian activity or very limited Christian activity. The Christians in the Thai cities were few, but in most cities, there was still both Christian churches and work, while many villages in the countryside in northeastern Thailand were in total lack of Christian activity. FELM did of course agree with

³⁶² ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1983/Summary of the reports from North East, Ubon; AFELM Cbb 104 Johtokunnan kokous, September 22, 1983, §163 Liite 5/22 and §169 Liite 6; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1986/North Eastern Ministry; Kristus verdens hap 1983, 51; Misjonstidende 13/1984, Kallet fra Nordost; Misjonstidende 11/1986, Ja til Ubon.

the NMS on the importance of going to unreached areas, but valued the urban ministry in Bangkok higher than the work in the countryside.³⁶³

The wish to expand the activities to rural areas and particularly to northeastern Thailand seems thus to have prevailed among the Norwegian missionaries from the very beginning of Lutheran mission in Thailand. The motive of FELM to take up work in Thailand had, on the other hand, been a wish to increase its urban ministry particularly in the large Asian cities. FELM wanted to specialise in urban ministry. While the NMS was ready to send mission workers to both Bangkok and the rural areas, FELM wanted to work exclusively in the capital area. FELM was not convinced of the magnanimity of the NMS's interest in the countryside either. Within FELM there seems to have existed some ideas that the NMS's interest in northeastern Thailand had not been awakened until after the foundation of the LMT and that it was due to economic reasons as there were several Norwegian organisations willing to support projects in social service and community development in rural areas. It might be that the NMS had not communicated its interest in the northeast clearly enough before the establishment of the LMT and that the possibility of obtaining financial support for the work strengthened the NMS's interest for mission work in northeastern Thailand. There is, however, no way of evading the fact that the NMS's interest for this part of the country went back a long time and preceded the establishment of the LMT. The former mission director of FELM, Henrik Smedjebacka, has always maintained, however, that whatever

³⁶³ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1981/Five Years Plan of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand 1981-1985, 2-3; ANMS Det Norske Misjonsselskaps Misjonserruete i Thailand 1987, 30; AMBT Conversation with Egil H. Eggen, February 17, 2003; AMBT Conversation with Seikku Paunonen, December 17, 2004; Faithful to our calling 1981, 2-3; Pa apen kanal 1982, 30; Misjonstidende 11/1986, Ja til Ubon; Makela 1991, 3.3.

the interests of the NMS were before the foundation of the Lutheran Mission, the LMT was established to specialise in urban ministry.³⁶⁴ Norwegian sources, on the other hand, intimate that not all the Finnish missionaries were happy with the concentration on Bangkok and that some of them would have been interested in working in the countryside. However, the home leaders of FELM were particularly unwilling to give up their plans and visions for urban ministry in Bangkok. In fact FELM did not send missionaries to the countryside until after the Lutheran Church in Thailand had been established and the church had made its own decision on which parts of the country it wished to place its focus.³⁶⁵

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong, the third member of the LMT at the time, supported the idea of expanding the work in northeastern Thailand, but was not to any greater extent affected by the decision, as it did not send missionaries to Thailand until the late 1980s. The differing opinions as to whether the work should expand outside of Bangkok or not did not after all lead to any deep conflict within the LMT. FELM did not oppose the plans to commence work in northeastern Thailand, but for its own part it wanted to concentrate on urban ministry and work in Bangkok. On the whole, the NMS accepted this standpoint. Yet

³⁶⁴ AFELM 117 Letter from Mirja Pesonen to Salli Lamponen and Raija Kakko, November 16, 1978; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1980/Five years plan; AFELM I 17 Letter from Seikku Paunonen to Jaakko Makela, November 16, 1982; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1983/Summary of the reports from North East, Ubon; AFELM Cbb 104 Johtokunnan kokous, September 22, 1983, §169 Liite 6; AMBT Conversation with Henrik Smedjebacka, September 3, 1998; AMBT Conversation with Egil H. Eggen, February 17, 2003; AMBT Conversation with Eivind Hauglid, February 27, 2003.

³⁶⁵ AFELM Cbb 104 Johtokunnan kokous, September 22, 1983, 163 § Liite 3; ANMS Misjonsermotet for NMS i Thailand 1986/Arsmelding fra tillitsmann; AMBT Conversation with Henrik Smedjebacka, September 3, 1998; AMBT Conversation with Eivind Hauglid, February 27, 2003.

apprehensions were expressed that the work within the LMT would become too divided if FELM did not take part in the ministry in northeastern Thailand as well. Moreover, it was a considerable challenge for the NMS to find missionaries to fill up positions both in Bangkok and in the northeast.³⁶⁶

The preparations for the work in the Ubon Ratchathani province in the northeast took time. This was mainly due to lack of personnel resources within the LMT. In March 1985, the so-called Ubon team left Bangkok with the purpose of starting church planting and diaconal work in the Ubon province. According to the plans for the northeastern ministry, the work in Ubon was to consist of two teams. One team was to pursue traditional evangelism work while the other was also to include diaconal projects in its activities. However, at this point the LMT was only able to send one team for the work in Ubon. The team consisted of a Danish missionary couple working for the NMS, Peder and Ruth Jorgensen, and a Thai couple, Sompong and Thongtip Hanpradit, working as evangelists within the LMT. The Thai couple had their roots in northeastern Thailand. This coincided with the LMT's ambition to send only Thais that were familiar with the northeastern culture and language to work in the area. Furthermore, missionaries appointed to work in Ubon had to study the language and culture of the area since they differed from those, which the missionaries learnt in Bangkok.³⁶⁷

³⁶⁶ AFELM Cbb 104 Johtokunnan kokous, September 22, 1983, 169 § Liite 6; ANMS Thailand Letter from Christopher Woie to the members of the JBT, November 4, 1983; ANMS Thailand Letter from Seikku Paunonen to Christopher Woie, November 11, 1983; ANMS Thailand utvidet FU-ruate, April 14, 1986, 20/86; AFELM Cbb 110 Johtokunnan kokous, September 15, 1986, §104 Kokousraportti ja matkakertomukset; ANMS Det Norske Misjonsselskaps Misjonserruete i Thailand 1987/Arsmelding fra tillitsmannen; AFELM Cbb 117 Johtokunnan kokous, May 14, 1990, § 50 Matkakertomukset Liite 2.

³⁶⁷ AFELM II 17 Executive Committee of the LMT, June 30, 1983, 88/83;

The centre of the northeastern ministry was preferably to be in the provincial capital Ubon Ratchathani - with the same name as the province - and from there the work was to spread to villages around the town and throughout the province. The over all aim of the work was the establishment of self-reliant local congregations that were able to communicate the Christian gospel in the northeastern Thai context and wanted to contribute to developing the community. The work was to start with evangelism and church planting and as soon as possible local leaders should be trained. When the time was ripe, community development programmes were also to be introduced. Several Protestant mission agencies had started work in northeastern Thailand before the LMT, but most of them had discontinued their ministry due to poor success. Within the LMT it was felt that this had at least partly been due to the missions not having focussed enough on the contextualisation of the Christian gospel. Consequently, the LMT tried to put a strong emphasis on considering the local culture and situation. According to the plans for the northeastern ministry, the national workers at the province centre in Ubon town were to be employed by the LMT, but the workers of the local congregations were to serve on voluntary basis or get their salary from the congregation. This suggestion was made since the LMT wanted to avoid being labelled as a rich mission and feared that such a reputation would lead to unwillingness among the local Christians to take responsibility for the congregations.³⁶⁸

ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1984/New work up-country; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1985/Report from the new work in Ubon Ratchathani; AFELM II 17 Executive Committee of the LMT, October 24,1985,160/85.

³⁶⁸ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1984/New work up-country; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1985/Guidelines for the work of the LMT in the North East Thailand; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1986/ Report from Ubon Ratchathani; Misjonstidende 13/1985, 26 voksne dopt i Bangkok.

As planned, the provincial capital of Ubon Ratchathani became the centre of the LMT's work in northeastern Thailand. In 1986, the LMT rented a house in Ubon town; the house was called the *Good News Center* and functioned as the office and meeting place of the Lutheran ministry in the Ubon Ratchathani province. When the provincial centre in 1989 moved to new premises, the name of the centre was changed to *Ubon Good News Church*. By 1985, the Ubon team had begun regular meetings in five different villages in the Ubon province. Radio broadcasts were started and the first diaconal projects were initiated. In 1988, the LMT opened its second church centre in the Ubon Ratchathani province. This centre, *Phibun Church*, was located in Phibun Mangsahan, a town about 50 kilometres east of the provincial capital.³⁶⁹ The plan to use the ministry of missionary Jim . Gustafson as a model for the Lutheran work in the Ubon province was not realised, as some of the first workers of the LMT in the northeast were not convinced of the suitability of the model.³⁷⁰

In order to support and expand the work in northeastern Thailand, the General Assembly of the LMT decided, in 1986, that it was time to realise the plan of having two evangelisation teams in the northeast. The teams were to have separate budgets and administration and each was to work directly under the Executive Committee of the LMT. The teams began to function in September 1986. Team A managed the work at the province centre in Ubon town, was responsible

³⁶⁹ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1986/ Report from Ubon Ratchathani; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1987/Report from team A, Ubon Ratchathani; AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan tyoalan yleiskertomus vuodelta 1987, 5; AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan tyoalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1988, 11; AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan tyoalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1989,11.

³⁷⁰ ANMS Thailand Some viewpoints concerning LMT's future work in Northeast Thailand by Peder Jorgensen, November 1, 1984; Conversations with Maija and Jaakko Makela, November 26, 2006.

for the radio broadcasts, pursued village evangelism and was together with the Lutheran Institute of Theological Education responsible for training the Thai coworkers and parish members in Ubon. Team B was responsible for the diaconal projects in Ubon, but it was also involved in the outreach. During the first years, different models for the mission in the Ubon Ratchathani province were continually discussed and tried out. Within the LMT, it was not easy to come to an agreement how the ministry in the northeast should be developed after the mission model of Jim . Gustafson had been abandoned.³⁷¹

At the General Assembly of the LMT in 1988, the *Long Range Plan for the Work in Ubon Province* was accepted. In order to make the ministry more effective and further organise the Ubon mission, it was decided that the work should be decentralised. A *Coordination Committee* under the management of the leader of the province centre in Ubon should be appointed. Organisationally the committee was to function under the Executive Committee of the LMT. The Ubon Ratchathani province was to be divided into districts and each district having its own evangelisation team consisting of two Thai evangelists. When needed missionaries could assist the teams. Initially, there were to be four teams. The team working at the province centre in Ubon town were to be responsible for joint work. It was to coordinate the work of the LMT in the Ubon province according to the guidelines made by the Coordination Committee, take care of activities not belonging to a specific district, for instance diaconal work and radio ministry, and work in districts without a team of

³⁷¹ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1986/North eastern ministry of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand; AFELM II 42 Memorandum from Meeting with the Acting Chairman Christopher Woie and the Coworkers in Ubon, September 15, 1986; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1987/Report from Team A, Ubon Ratchathani.

their own. The team was to be responsible for the continuing education for the coworkers in Ubon and for the training of parish members and lay leaders. In addition, the team should arrange meetings for the Lutherans in the Ubon province as well as for anyone interested in Christianity. The other three teams were to be responsible for the work in one district each. One team was to work in Ubon town, one in the Phibun Mangsahan district and one in a district where work had not yet been started.³⁷² In 1989, the General Assembly evaluated the one-year-old long-range plan for the work in the Ubon Ratchathani province. It was decided to clearly divide the work into four parts; the congregations in Ubon and Phibun Mangsahan, the work in several villages in the Ubon province and the diaconal work.³⁷³

By the end of 1990, the work in the Ubon Ratchathani province was organised in such a way that Ubon Good News Church was responsible for the work in the provincial capital and the districts closest to the capital. The Phibun Church managed the work in the Phibun Mangsahan district and the Ubon Provincial Team was in charge of the work in the remaining districts in the province. This organisation continued until 1994 when the newly established Lutheran Church in Thailand took over the responsibility for the congregations and activities in the Ubon province. With regard to the growth of parish membership, the Lutheran congregations in the Ubon province grew faster than the local congregations in Bangkok. The Lutheran missionaries in Thailand had imagined that it would be easier to work among the rootless city dwellers in Bangkok, but to their surprise they had to acknowledge that the Lutheran congregations in the

³⁷² ALMT General Assembly of the LMT 1988/Long Range Plan for the Work in Ubon Province.

³⁷³ AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan työalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1989,11.

traditional villages in the Ubon Ratchathani province attracted more members than the congregations in the capital area.³⁷⁴

Ever since the LMT started to plan the ministry in the Ubon Ratchathani province, it also nourished hopes to be able to help the people of the northeast materially. In 1985, the LMT started cooperation with the provincial educational authorities in Ubon Ratchathani. In association with some local schools, a project with the aim of providing the often undernourished pupils with a proper school meal was started. With the help of the teachers, the pupils grew fruits and vegetables, managed fishponds, kept bees, raised chicken, ducks, pigs, cows etc. and from these they obtained nutritious food.³⁷⁵ Another project in cooperation with the school authorities was opening a dormitory for children in secondary school. Despite the soil being barren in the Ubon Ratchathani province, the majority of the population were farmers. Consequently, the people often had a hard time earning their living. In order to help the children to get a proper education and thereby better prospects to support themselves in other ways than by farming, the LMT opened, in 1990, a dormitory for children attending secondary school in Phibun Mangsahan. The intention was to give gifted children from families of small means living in remote villages a possibility to continue their schooling after they had finished grade 6 - i.e. primary school - by offering them a safe and inexpensive place to stay at in the town. The dormitory had a clear Christian profile and Bible teaching was an important part of the daily life at the dormitory.³⁷⁶

³⁷⁴ AFELM II 24 Executive Committee of the LMT, February 21-22, 1991, 24/91; Makela 1991, 3.3.

³⁷⁵ AFELM II 17 Executive Committee of the LMT, October 24, 1985, 161/85; Misjonstidende 5/1992, stipend, fisk og internat.

³⁷⁶ AFELM II 24 Executive Committee of the LMT, June 29, 1989, 98/89; AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1991/Annual Report for the LMT's Social Work in Ubon Province; AFELM II 24 Joint Board for

The LMT also tried to point out new possibilities for the adult population in the Ubon Ratchathani province to earn its living. The LMT encouraged the people to use local handicraft traditions, particularly weaving, to increase their income. Thus far, handicraft had only been practised, as a rule, for the needs of the family, but if the production was increased and the families sold part of the products, they could earn some extra income. The LMT also established a buffalo bank. The buffalo bank consisted of some water buffalo cows bought by the Ubon Provincial Team. The water buffalo cows were lent to poor farmers, who could not afford buying a water buffalo of their own, to be used in the agricultural work and for milk. The cow and the first calf to be born had to be returned to the buffalo bank after some years, but the rest of the offspring the farmer could keep.³⁷⁷

The LMT was also involved in cooperation with the provincial health authorities. In 1988, a project was started in order to improve the health service in remote villages. Within the framework of the project the villages got regular visits from nursing staff. The villagers were taught how to prepare nutritious food and the nursing staff gave practical medical training to local health-volunteers who received a supply of

Thailand, November 5, 1991; AFELM 8.2.7.4./1. Thaimaan työalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1992, 14; ANMS Thailand Preliminary Project Design Document by Peder Jorgensen: Small Hostel for Village Children in Secondary School; Rogers 1989, 34, 49, 86-87; Misjonstidende 14-15/1990, Skoleinternat i Nordost-Thailand; Misjonstidende 5/1992, Stipend, fisk og internat; Misjonstidende 12/1995, Internat med misjonsperspektiv.

³⁷⁷ Misjonstidende 22/1991, Med smil som vapen og boffekraft som støtte; Misjonstidende 5/1992, stipend, fisk og internat; Suomen Lahetyssanommat 3/1993, Itsenainen kirkko 1994?; Misjonstidende 20/1994, Vannbofler mot vantro.

medicines and responsibility for medication in their home village.³⁷⁸

The Lutheran diaconal projects in the Ubon Ratchathani province were in general small-scale and did not demand large investments of manpower or economic resources. According to the missionaries, the aim was to help the people to help themselves by using methods and expressions that were natural in the northeastern Thai context. The diaconal projects nevertheless also received foreign support. The NMS particularly obtained financial support for the projects in northeastern Thailand for instance from the Norwegian Government through its agency for development cooperation, *NORAD*³⁷⁹, from the fundraising campaign *Aksjon Hap*³⁸⁰ and through the organisation *Skolenes U-landsaksjon*^{381 382}

³⁷⁸ AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan tyoalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1988,11; ANMS Thailand Project Proposal by LDMU December 1990, Drug-cooperation project in remote villages; AFELM II 24 Joint Board for Thailand, November 5, 1991; AFELM 8.2.7.4./1. Thaimaan tyoalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1992, 14; Misjonstidende 14-15/1989, Misjonen aktiv i helsearbeidet; Mission 10/1989, Arbetet utvidgas i nordostra Thailand; Misjonstidende 1/1992, Ragna hjelper folk a bruke medisiner rett; Misjonstidende 5/1992, Helseprosjekt pa landsbygda.

³⁷⁹ For more information see Norad, <www.norad.no>. Accessed September 18, 2009.

³⁸⁰ The national fundraising campaign *Aksjon Hap* has to date been arranged three times, in 1982, 2000 and 2006, by a number of Norwegian mission agencies. For more information see for instance *Misjonstidende* 10/2006, *Gi hap med Aksjon Hap* or *Aksjon Hap*, <www.aksjonhap.no>. Accessed September 18, 2009.

³⁸¹ The development and information organisation *Skolenes - landsaksjon* was founded in 1973 and today uses the name *Hei Verden*. It cooperates with schools in Norway in order to give children from underdeveloped and poor countries the possibility of schooling. For more information see *Hei Verden*, <www.heiverden.no>. Accessed September 18, 2009.

³⁸² AFELM II 22 Letter from Egil H. Eggen to Christopher Woie, November 21, 1983; AFELM II 42 Letter from Svein Nybo to Egil H.

5.2 The emergence of Lutheran groups in the Nakhon Ratchasima province

It was not part of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand's (LMT) strategy or intentions to take up work in the Nakhon Ratchasima province (for which Korat is the short name) in northeastern Thailand. The Christian activities in the area arose spontaneously and unplanned. According to the long range planning of the LMT, the Lutheran Mission was to concentrate its efforts on the ministry in the Bangkok metropolitan area and Ubon Ratchathani province.³⁸³ Probably due to this, the LMT tried for several years to avoid sending permanent coworkers to Korat. Instead, the LMT wanted to find other solutions as to how to take care of the growing Lutheran community in the area.

The development that led to the coming into being of a Lutheran group in Korat started in the mid-1980s. At this time, the Immanuel congregation in Bangkok acquired a new member with his roots in Korat, Mr. Sunthorn, who later became the watchman of the congregation. Through the contacts of this member the Christian gospel spread in his former home village. A few people from the village converted to Christianity and were baptised in the Immanuel congregation. These Christians witnessed about their new faith to relatives, friends, and neighbours and as a result a growing Christian community emerged in the province. According to missionary accounts, some of the early converts in Korat province had been healed from mental illness and spirit possession and this seemed to have served as a witness

Eggen, May 31, 1987; AFELM I 68 Letter from Egil H. Eggen to Kjell Sandvik, September 9, 1991.

³⁸³ AFELM I 66 Five Years Plan for the Lutheran Mission in Thailand 1986-1990, 7; AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1991/Five Years Plan 1991-1995 of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand, 8.

about the strength of Christianity to people in their surroundings.³⁸⁴ The Lutheran community in Korat province was further strengthened as many of the Thai men who became Christians through the work of the Thai Good News Center in Singapore were from this province and elsewhere in northeastern Thailand. The LMT was one of the parties involved in the Lutheran ministry in Singapore, and when the men returned to Thailand the LMT tried to incorporate them in its work and in the Lutheran congregations.³⁸⁵ The work at the Thai Good News Center in Singapore is more thoroughly dealt with in the next chapter.

The Lutherans in Korat province lived principally in the Si Kheu district about 45 kilometres west of the provincial capital Nakhon Ratchasima. Over the years, the LMT tested different models and methods in order to tend to the growing Lutheran group. During the first years, coworkers of the Immanuel congregation visited the new Christians regularly. Later students from the Lutheran Institute of Theological Education were commissioned to pay monthly calls to the group. In addition, the provincial team from the Ubon Ratchathani province visited them and occasionally the Lutherans in Korat got visitors from other congregations as well. With the intention to improve the conditions of the Lutherans in Si Kheu, the LMT also started to train lay leaders from the group. In addition, the LMT tried to encourage contacts between the

³⁸⁴ AFELM II 17 Executive Committee of the LMT, October 11, 1984, 139/84; ANMS Thailand Letter from Odd Arne Havorstad to the Executive Committee of the LMT, January 31, 1989; ANMS Thailand Letter from Norly Nilsen to Egil H. Eggen, December 28, 1990; Kosonen 1989, 70-71; Misjonstidende 16/1994, Biskop for 1050; Hiltunen 1995, 25-26; Mission 4/2002, Andens vind blaser dit den vill; Blessing of Si Kheu Lutheran Congregation of ELCT. Available at <www.angelfire.com/ab/elcthomepage/SiKheu.html>. Accessed September 18, 2009.

³⁸⁵ Misjonstidende 6/1996, Evangelisering i Korat.

Lutherans in the Si Khiu district and nearby Christian congregations. The closest church belonged to the Pentecostal movement and the Lutheran group did have some contact with this congregation. The Lutherans in Korat did not, however, find this a good solution as the two Christian groups had such divergent opinions with regard to membership and baptism. The responsibility for the Lutheran group in Korat province oscillated thus from time to time between the congregations in Bangkok, the provincial team from Ubon and the students at the Lutheran Institute. Despite these measures to look after the group, the Thai Lutheran Assembly expressed worries for the Lutherans in Si Khiu, and how the growing group was cared for. In February 1990, the Executive Committee of the LMT decided therefore to give the Thai Lutheran Committee responsibility to arrange regular visits to the Lutherans in Korat province. However, not until the General Assembly of the LMT in 1991, was the work in Korat officially accepted as part of the LMT's ministry.³⁸⁶

Nevertheless, the Lutheran group in Korat continued to grow and it soon became impossible to handle the work from Bangkok. In October 1991, the Executive Committee finally decided to appoint a Thai evangelist, Mr. Anant Likhitvityanoont, to be permanently in charge of the work in the Si Khiu district. A congregation was established, *Si Khiu*

³⁸⁶ ANMS Thailand Letter from Odd Arne Havorstad to the Executive Committee of the LMT, January 31, 1989; AFELM II 24 Executive Committee of the LMT, February 16, 1989, 24/89; AFELM II 24 Executive Committee of the LMT, October 26, 1989, 159/89; AFELM II 24 Executive Committee of the LMT, February 8, 1990, 21/90; AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1991/Annual Report 1990 from Korat Ministry; AFELM I 81 Minutes from the General Assembly of the LMT 1991, 7, 15; AFELM II 24 Joint Meeting between JBT, LMT-EC and TLC, April 16, 1991, case 1; Blessing of Si Khiu Lutheran Congregation of ELCT. Available at <www.angelfire.com/ab/elcthomepage/SiKhiu.html>. Accessed September 18, 2009.

Church, with 22 members. In 1993, the congregation had 34 members. The congregation has been one of the fastest growing congregations within the LMT, if growth is counted in the number of baptised members. In 1994, an evangelisation team was also appointed to support the Lutheran work in Korat province, especially in remote areas, and tend to the Christian Thai men returning from Singapore.³⁸⁷ Diaconal work was not started in Korat province until after the establishment of the Lutheran Church in Thailand.

That a mission organisation such as the LMT appeared reluctant to take direct responsibility for a Christian group that in fact had emerged as a result of its own work might at a first glance seem astonishing. For the LMT it was, however, an important principle not to let the work spread to too many places in different parts of Thailand. If the Lutheran mission work became too divided in a geographical respect, the missionaries feared that the work would become administratively unwieldy for the future Lutheran Church in Thailand. The unwillingness of the LMT to have permanent work in Korat province and to appoint an evangelist to be in charge of the work probably had its origin in the principle of not dividing the work too much. Ultimately, it seems to have been the Thai Christians' worry for their fellow-believers and the Thai Lutheran Assembly's insistence that the LMT take responsibility for the Lutherans in Korat province, which made the LMT appoint an evangelist to manage the work. The Thai Lutheran Assembly's insistence that the LMT was to care for the Lutherans in Si Kheu was interesting from at least two

³⁸⁷ AFELM II 24 Executive Committee of the LMT, September 19, 1991, 101/91; AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan työalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1991, 14; AFELM II 24 Executive Committee of the LMT, April 23, 1992, 54/92; AFELM 8.2.7.2./2. Letter from Tapio Karjalainen to Seikku Paunonen, August 31, 1993; AFELM 8.2.7.4./1. Thaimaan työalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1993, 9; Finska Missionsällskapets årsbok 1996, 106-107.

points of view. Firstly, it showed that the Thai Lutherans, by 1991, had such a feeling of responsibility for the Lutheran work in Thailand that they could and dared to make demands on the mission and wanted to influence the direction of the work. Secondly, it gives an indication of the later policy of the Lutheran Church in Thailand not to let its work be restricted by geographical factors.³⁸⁸

In 1992, the Executive Committee of the LMT accepted a proposal on how to deal with members moving from one of the congregations of the LMT to areas without Lutheran activity as well as how to deal with new contacts or new Christians in parts of the country where the LMT did not have any mission work. According to this document, it was the responsibility of the old congregation to inform the closest congregation in the new location that one of its parish members had moved to the area and encourage the parish member to become a member of this congregation. If there was no congregation or mission team in the new area, the member was to be encouraged to open up his or her home as a place for preaching. In this case the old congregation of the person was to be responsible for the follow-up work at the new preaching place. If a congregation of the LMT came in contact with a person living in an area where there was no local congregation or mission team, the Lutheran congregation that made the contact should consider starting a cell-group, a bible-study group or a preaching place there. These new regulations cleared at least to some extent the previous uncertainty about the responsibility for new Christian groups.³⁸⁹

³⁸⁸ AMBT Conversation with Egil H. Eggen, February 17, 2003.

³⁸⁹ AFELM II 24 Executive Committee of the LMT, May 21, 1992, 69/92; McGavran 1970, 282.

To the LMT, it was somewhat surprising that the countryside in northeastern Thailand, both Ubon Ratchathani province and Nakhon Ratchasima province, were the area where the Lutheran mission was most successful. Both the Norwegian missionaries, that in 1976 initiated the Lutheran mission in Thailand, and the founders of the LMT had assumed that it would be easier to begin the work in Bangkok. It had been thought that it would be easier to establish contacts with people living in urban areas, and that the masses in the city would constitute a broad basis for church planting. Regarding work in the countryside, the Lutherans had feared that it would be hard to establish congregations as the Christians usually were few and scattered over a vast area. The Lutheran missionaries had hoped that the pluralism of the city would make it easier to arouse interest in the Christian gospel. They were aware that Buddhism had become more private and secularised in the city, while it remained a strong force in the rural areas. Consequently, they presumed that the townspeople would be more ready than the rural population to give up their old faith for Christianity as their bonds to the Buddhist tradition might have been weakened. In practise, however, the congregations in the countryside in northeastern Thailand appeared to be the fastest growing within the LMT if the growth was counted in the number of baptised and active members. The reasons for this were probably several. The family ties were stronger in the countryside and it was more common that entire (extended) families gradually converted to Christianity while the Christians in Bangkok more often came one by one to the congregation.³⁹⁰ Nonetheless, it should not have come as a surprise to the Lutheran missionaries that the work was more successful in the countryside. History had

³⁹⁰ ANMS Arsmotet for misjonserene i Thailand 1978/Vart fremtidige engagement i Thailand; ANMS Misjonsermote i Thailand 1987/Arsmelding fra tillitsmannen; AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan tyoalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1991,16; Thailand into the 80's 1980, 227-229.

shown that Protestant missions had not done well in most cities in the Third World and it had always won more converts among country people. Another factor that spoke in favour of the countryside was that the animistic influence was more obvious in the rural areas. Throughout history, Christianity has found it easier to gain converts among Animists than among followers of the old world religions. In some respects, the Buddhist religion retained a firm grip of the people living in cities. On the other hand, secularisation had led to an overall weakening of the influence of religion on society and personal life, and to a privatisation of religion that as a rule did not favour religions with demands for a marked conversion, such as Christianity.³⁹¹

5.3 Work among Thai migrant workers in Singapore

The *Lutheran Mission in Thailand's* (LMT) interest for mission among Thai migrant workers in Singapore can be dated back to the beginning of the 1980s and the early years of Lutheran mission in Thailand. At this time the *Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore* (LCMS) expressed interest in starting mission work among the Thai people and in 1983 the first tentative contacts between the LMT and the LCMS were taken. In the early 1980s, it was in general hard for Christian missionaries to obtain visas and work permits to Thailand. However, due to Malaysia and Singapore and Thailand being members of the Association of the Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which increased the political, economic, and cultural exchanges between these member states, the LMT hoped that missionaries from the Lutheran Church in

³⁹¹ Mc Gavran 1970, 280-282; Hiebert & Hiebert Meneses 1995, 212-216, 256, 312-317. For more information about secularisation and urbanisation see for instance Cox 1966; urbanisation and religion in Asia, Gnanakan 1989.

Malaysia and Singapore would possibly find it easier to obtain visas and work permits.³⁹²

During the following years, visits were exchanged between the LCMS, the LMT, and representatives of the Home Boards of the member organisations of the Lutheran Mission. After a visit to Singapore in 1986, Jaakko Makela, Chairman of the LMT, summarised his observations from the trip in a letter to Bishop Daniel Chong of the LCMS by proposing three possible areas of cooperation for the LMT and the LCMS. Together the LMT and the LCMS could start ministry work among the Thai community in Singapore, initiate a personnel exchange programme, or start a joint mission in southern Thailand. Of the suggested areas of cooperation, it was above all the thought of starting work among Thais living in Singapore that appealed to the LMT. According to the preliminary plans for the work in Singapore outlined at the time, one missionary from the LMT and the LCMS could each work together with the purpose of reaching the Thais in Singapore with the Christian gospel.³⁹³

There were several reasons for the LMT and the LCMS to desire to start work among the Thai community in Singapore. According to figures given by the LMT, approximately 35,000 Thais were living in Singapore in the mid-1980s. The greater

³⁹² AFELM II 22 Letter from Delbert E. Anderson to Egil H. Eggen and Seikku Paunonen, February 16, 1983; AFELM II 17 Executive Committee of the LMT, March 22 and 24, 1983, 35/83; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1984/The Lutheran Church of Malaysia and Singapore; Makela 1991,3.4; Turnbull 1994, 615-616.

³⁹³ AFELM I 69 Letter from Seikku Paunonen to Peter . K. Foong, January 24, 1984; AFELM I 69 Letter from Egil H. Eggen to Daniel Chong, February 10, 1986; ANMS Thailand Letter from Jaakko Makela to Daniel Chong, June 18, 1986; ANMS Thailand Letter from Daniel Chong to Jaakko Makela, September 16,1986; AFELM II 42 Executive Committee of the LMT, November 6,1986,178/86.

majority of these were migrant workers engaged at construction sites or as domestic servants in Singaporean families. In addition, a considerable group of Thai women married to Singaporean men were living in the country. Due to the policy of the Singaporean authorities, migrant workers were only granted visas for a few years stay in the country. This meant that the work among the Thais in Singapore could be considered part of the LMT's outreach as the Thai migrant workers would soon return to Thailand. After their return to Thailand, the former migrant workers, who had learnt to know the work of the LMT and the LCMS in Singapore, could be encouraged to keep in contact with the LMT and where possible they should be directed to one of the Lutheran congregations.³⁹⁴

The LMT took the proposition about cooperation with the Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore seriously. Several individuals and delegations were sent to Singapore to discuss the issue and survey the situation of the Thai community further. According to the LMT, the investigations showed that there was an apparent need for both evangelisation and social work among the Thais living in Singapore. Admittedly, several churches already had some kind of ministry among the Thais, but for all of them it was just a sideline or voluntary work. None of the churches declared to have enough resources to work among the Thais to the extent they felt was needed. The churches in Singapore were accordingly positively disposed to the thought of the LMT and the LCMS starting a joint ministry among the Thais in Singapore.³⁹⁵

³⁹⁴ ANMS Thailand Letter from Jaakko Makela to Daniel Chong, June 18, 1986; AFELM II 42 Executive Committee of the LMT, October 1, 1987, 117/87 including the report Bringing the Gospel to the Thais Living in Singapore Surveytrip to Singapore; AMBT Conversation with Egil H. Eggen, February 17, 2003; Finska Missionsallskapets arsbok 1990, 87.

³⁹⁵ AFELM II 42 Executive Committee of the LMT, October 1, 1987, 117/87 including the report Bringing the Gospel to the Thais Living in

The concrete planning of the work started after the Executive Committee of the LMT, the Joint Board for Thailand, and the Home Boards of the member organisations of the LMT in 1987 had agreed on starting a joint mission with the Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore among the Thai community in Singapore. However, not until the LCMS in 1988 became a full member of the LMT, did the plans extend far enough for the Executive Committee of the LMT to propose to the Board of FELM that Missionary Salli Lamponen be transferred from Thailand to Singapore with the task of starting up work among the Thai community there.³⁹⁶

Sally Lamponen moved to Singapore in July 1989. Due to the strict visa policy, Lamponen was formally working for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and part of their group of missionaries in Singapore. In October 1989 the new church centre, *Thai Good News Center*, was ready to open its doors. The centre was located in the Golden Mile, a shop and office building that served as a gathering place for the Thais living in Singapore. The Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore did not for the time being have the resources to send a missionary to work at the centre, but the cooperation between Lamponen and the LCMS, and in particular the Singapore District of the LCMS, was still lively. The work at the Thai Good News Center was led by an Administrative Committee. In this committee, the LCMS had a strong representation, but the LMT also sent its representative to the meetings of the committee.³⁹⁷

Singapore, Surveytrip to Singapore.

³⁹⁶ AFELM II 42 Executive Committee of the LMT, October 1, 1987, 117/87; AFELM II 42 Joint Board for Thailand, November 6, 1987, case 6; AFELM II 42 Executive Committee of LMT, June 28, 1988, 83/88; ANMS Thailand Letter from Chen Tian Nan to Christopher Woie, November 18, 1988; AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan työalan vuosikertomus vuodelta 1988.

³⁹⁷ AFELM II 42 Executive Committee of the LMT, October 1, 1987, 117/87 including the report *Bringing the Gospel to the Thais Living in*

According to the *Guidelines for the Singapore Ministry of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand*, the purpose of the work was to "bring Christ's gospel through proclamation and service to the Thai community in Singapore". The activities of the Thai Good News Center consisted of Sunday services, Bible study groups, English language classes, camps and excursions, home calls and sick calls. Since many of the Thai migrant workers were struggling with English, the official language of Singapore, the centre also offered help with translations and practical matters. A significant part of the work was, however, the free social intercourse with the Thais who visited the Thai Good News Center.³⁹⁸

In the guidelines for the Singapore ministry, it was stressed that the work was to be considered part of the work of the LMT, and have a position corresponding to that of the Lutheran congregations and departments in Thailand. Yet it was at the same time emphasised that, in accordance with the *Guidelines for joint action in mission* adopted by the Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation in Budapest in 1984, responding to mission challenges in a given area rested primarily with the local church. If the local church did not have sufficient resources to answering the challenge, it ought to seek cooperation with other churches and mission

Singapore, Surveytrip to Singapore; ANMS Thailand Letter from Thomas F. Schaeffer to Daniel Chong, March 16, 1989; AFELM Cbb 124 Johtokunnan kokous, September 24, 1993, §77 Matkakertomukset Liite 6; Finska Missionssällskapets årsbok 1990, 89; Mission 3/1990, Thailandska gästarbetare nas av den goda nyheten.

☩ AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan työalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1989, 12; AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1991/Temporary Guidelines for Joint Action in Mission in Singapore; AFELM I 68 JBT-EC-TLC Meeting, April 19, 1993, 4; AFELM Cbb 124 Johtokunnan kokous, September 24, 1993, §77 Matkakertomukset Liite 6; Finska Missionssällskapets årsbok 1990, 89; Finska Missionssällskapets årsbok 1993, 76.

organisations.³⁹⁹ The cooperation around the Lutheran ministry among Thais in Singapore was thus complicated. Due to the ministry being carried out in Singapore, the LCMS wanted to take special responsibility for the work. The LMT, on the other hand, wanted to stress the strong connection between the ministry in Singapore and the Lutheran congregations in Thailand. It also seems as if the *Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission* (FELM), at least in the beginning, took a special interest in the ministry in Singapore. The reasons might have been that the work in Singapore was in accordance with FELM's ambition to concentrate on ministry in the larger cities and that the first mission worker sent there was Finnish. Within the LMT, it was emphasised, however, that the mission in Singapore was an integrated part of the activities of the LMT and that all the member organisations of the LMT were equally responsible for the work. This was underlined when Missionary Norlys Nilsen from the *Norwegian Missionary Society* (NMS) was chosen to be Salli Lamponen's successor⁴⁰⁰ at the Thai Good News Center. The main responsibility for the ministry among the Thais in Singapore was still carried out by the Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore, who had chief economic

³⁹⁹ Budapest 1984 "In Christ - Hope for the World" 1985, 189-191; AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1991/Temporary Guidelines for Joint Action in Mission in Singapore; AFELM Cbb 124 Johtokunnan kokous, September 24, 1993, §77 Matkakertomukset Liite 6.

⁴⁰⁰ Missionary Salli Lamponen was in the late 1990s also involved in starting mission work among Thai and Chinese migrant workers in Israel. Due to the increasing decline in the number of Palestinians being allowed to work in Israeli territory, the need for foreign workers increased and an estimated 4,500 Chinese and 20,000 Thais were working in Israel at the time. As in Singapore, the work in Israel was comparatively successful and the number baptised was significant. The work was not connected to the LMT, but a separate ministry of FELM. For more information see for instance *Finska Missionsällskapets årsbok 2000*, 82; *Finska Missionsällskapets årsbok 2001*, 87-88, 117.

responsibility for the work and constituted the local church organization for the Thai Good News Center.⁴⁰¹

The ministry in Singapore was from time to time reinforced by Thai pastors from the LMT, who for shorter periods of time were sent to serve at the Thai Good News Center and to study English at Singaporean schools. Having pastors from Thailand serving at the centre contributed to strengthening the relationship between the Thai Good News Center in Singapore and the Lutheran congregations in Thailand. The centre in Singapore needed more coworkers and the Thai pastors, in this way, gained an opportunity to improve their English skills. The key question for the work among the Thais in Singapore was how to keep contact with those returning home and how to integrate them in the Lutheran congregations in Thailand. When a person who had been baptised at the Thai Good News Center returned permanently to Thailand, he was transferred to the nearest Lutheran congregation or to the Si Khiu congregation, which had an evangelisation team that tended to members living in remote areas. This was a reasonable solution during the first years of the Singapore ministry as most of the members of the Thai Good News Centre in Singapore were from northeastern Thailand. In the mid-1990s, however, an increasing number of members came from northern and central Thailand, a fact that placed new demands on the LMT. In 1995, it was estimated that about 50 percent of the members of the Thai Good News Centre became

⁴⁰¹ ANMS Thailand Draft for Temporary Guidelines for Joint Action in Singapore, January 25, 1990; AFELM II 24 Joint Board for Thailand Annual Meeting, 29 March 1990; AFELM I 67 Letter from Egil H. Eggen to John c. M. Tse, Daniel Chong and Seikku Paunonen, February 14, 1990; AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan työalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1990, 9; AFELM Cbb 124 Johtokunnan kokous, September 24, 1993, §77 Matkakertomukset Liite 6.

inactive or turned to their old faith when they returned to Thailand permanently.⁴⁰²

Nevertheless, a calculation of the number of baptisms and the parish membership of the Thai Good News Center in Singapore shows that it has been one of the fastest growing congregations of the LMT. A special strength of the Lutheran ministry in Singapore has been that several of the Thai men being baptised at the Thai Good News Center have decided to train themselves for full-time service within the LMT and the future Lutheran Church in Thailand after their return home.⁴⁰³

The special responsibility of the Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore for the work at the Thai Good News Center became particularly evident in 1995 when, as a result of the development over a longer period of time, the centre changed from being placed under the LMT's administration to becoming a separate congregation within the LCMS. This was considered a necessary development as both the LMT and the LCMS had felt that the centre needed a clearer Lutheran identity and a feeling of being part of a larger entity. The work in Singapore was more ecumenical than the work of the LMT in Thailand. At the Thai Good News Centre there were at times both volunteers, part time and full time employees from

⁴⁰² AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan tyoalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1990, 9; AFELM I 77 Council Meeting of the Thai Good News Centre, March 26, 1995, 9/95; AFELM I 77 Report from Thai Good News Centre, Singapore 1994/95; AFELM I 77 Thai Good News Centre Annual Report 1995; Finska Missionsallskapets årsbok 1992, 95; Finska Missionsallskapets årsbok 1995,102.

⁴⁰³ AFELM I 68 Letter from Pekka Hiltunen to Thomas Schaeffer, February 16, 1993; AFELM I 68 JBT-EC-TLC Meeting, April 19, 1993, §4; AFELM Cbb 124 Johtokunnan kokous, September 24, 1993, §77 Matkakertomukset Liite 6; AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1994/Chairperson's Report; AMBT Conversation with Terry Kee, May 27, 1997; Finska Missionsallskapets årsbok 1993, 76; Finska Missionsallskapets årsbok 1995,102.

different church denominations and the LMT and the LCMS were struggling to strengthen the Lutheran identity of the workers and the congregation. By incorporating the Thai Good News Center into the LCMS, the LMT wanted to make sure that the work theologically and ecclesiastically remained on a Lutheran foundation. The close connection to the LMT and the Lutheran congregations in Thailand continued nevertheless, and there was still a strong ambition to integrate the Thais returning home in the Lutheran congregations in Thailand.⁴⁰⁴

Summary

In this chapter, I have looked more closely at the geographical expansion of the Lutheran work in Thailand. For the Lutheran Mission in Thailand (LMT) it was not an easy question to decide what geographical areas it should focus on. First, there was the issue of work in the Ubon Ratchathani province. This was an enterprise that the Norwegian Missionary Society was very keen on, while the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission wanted to continue focussing on urban ministry in Bangkok. The work in the Nakhon Ratchasima province, on the other hand, arose spontaneously and unplanned. Due to fears that

404 AFELM I 68 Letter from Seikku Paunonen to Salli Lamponen, August 20, 1992; AFELM I 68 JBT-EC-TLC Meeting, April 19, 1993, §4; AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1994/Chairperson's Report; AFELM I 68 Registrating Thai Good News Centre as a Congregation in LCMS by Norlys Nilsen, June 1, 1994; AFELM Cbb 124 Johtokunnan kokous, September 24, 1993, §77 Matkakertomukset Liite 6; AFELM I 77 Administrative Committee Lutheran Mission to the Thais in Singapore, August 8, 1995, 7; AFELM I 77 Joint Board for Thailand Annual Meeting, April 18, 1996, 14/96; AMBT Conversation with Terry Kee, May 27, 1997; Finska Missionssällskapets årsbok 1992, 95; Misjonstidende 4/1995, Et stort arbeid i en liten bit av verden; Finska Missionssällskapets årsbok 1995,102; Woie 1998, 26.

the Lutheran work in Thailand would become too widespread and difficult to manage, the LMT was, for many years, reluctant to send a worker to care for the Lutherans in the province on a permanent basis. The ministry in Singapore yet again was a mix between outer and inner mission work since both the LMT and its different member organisations, particularly the Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore, were involved in the work. In spite of the LMT being restrained when it came to geographical expansion, the Lutheran ministry outside the capital area became increasingly important to the LMT. The most rapidly growing Lutheran congregations were planted in rural areas and in Singapore, and several of the students training for ministry within the LMT and the future Lutheran Church in Thailand came from these congregations. When the Lutheran Church in Thailand was established in 1994, it became responsible for the work in northeastern Thailand and became involved in the ministry among the Thai community in Singapore.

6. PREPARATIONS FOR AN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN THAILAND

As has been pointed out previously in this thesis, the *Agreement on Mission Cooperation in Thailand* clearly established that the aim of the work of the *Lutheran Mission in Thailand* (LMT) was to found an autonomous Lutheran church in the country. This was formulated in the agreement in the following way "*The main purpose of the LMT shall be to bring Christ's Gospel through proclamation and service, to the peoples in Thailand, and to establish local congregations which shall be united in one Lutheran Church.*"⁴⁰⁵ As the agreement constituted the foundation of the Lutheran mission enterprise in Thailand and determined the purpose of the work, the missionaries were, from the very beginning, occupied with the question of how to prepare the establishment of a Lutheran Church in Thailand. This was the fact even if not all the coworkers of the LMT were of the same opinion as to what model should be chosen when uniting the Lutheran congregations in Thailand.

In 1985, in connection with the preparation of *The Five Year Plan for the Lutheran Mission in Thailand 1986-1990*, the year 1994 was mentioned for the first time as a possible year for the establishment of the Lutheran Church in Thailand. In the annual report from the Constitution Committee in the same year, it was estimated that the Lutheran Church in Thailand could be established within ten years. The Constitution Committee forwarded the idea that before the church could be established there should be at least ten organised Lutheran congregations, ten ordained pastors and a high level of self-support in the congregations. This implied that the LMT

⁴⁰⁵ ANMS Thailand Agreement on Mission Cooperation in Thailand 1980, § 3.

considered it important that the Lutheran mission in Thailand had extensive work, a well-developed organisation including local leaders and a stable economy before an autonomous church could be established.⁴⁰⁶

In this chapter, I am going to look more in detail at how the establishment of an autonomous Lutheran Church in Thailand was planned and what measures were taken in order to prepare the foundation of the church. This preparation is considered from areas such as: the economy and self-reliance, organising the local congregations, uniting the Thai Lutherans, building premises for the future church, creating a Thai Lutheran liturgy, ordaining ministers and strengthening the theology of the Lutheran congregations.

6.1 The formation of a Thai Lutheran liturgy

As has been noted earlier in this thesis, music, singing, and dancing play an important role in Thai culture. Nevertheless, the representatives of the *Norwegian Missionary Society* (NMS) and the *Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission* (FELM) already observed during their reconnoitring tours to Thailand in the mid-1970s, that western hymns and western ways of expressing faith dominated the services of the Thai congregations.⁴⁰⁷ This occurred even though some western Christian customs and manners seemed to be the direct opposite of the Thai way of expressing faith. According to

⁴⁰⁶ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1985/The long-range plan in the Lutheran Mission in Thailand; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1986/Report from the Constitution Committee; Woie 1998, 22.

⁴⁰⁷ ANMS Det Norske Misjonsselskaps Generalforsamling 1975/11 Skal NMS ta opp nytt misjonsarbeid i Brasilia og Sorost-Asia, Laos/Thailand?; Norsk Misjonstidende 15/1975, Thailand har 40 millioner mennesker - bare 200.000 kristne; Hughes 1984, 324; Kotimaa 23/2000, Evankeliumia thain kielella.

Thai Lutheran pastor Suk Prachayaporn, this is exemplified by the fact that western Christians sit on chairs when they worship God, but Thai Buddhists taking part in religious rituals sit on the floor. Westerners stand when they listen to readings from the Bible, but Thai Buddhists sit on the floor and salute by pressing their hands together at the chest when they listen to the chanting of monks. In Buddhist worship the individual and the ritual in itself is in the centre while in Christian worship the fellowship of believers and the content of the religion are stressed. Of course, there are also mutual religious gestures. Palmed hands, for instance, are in Thai culture a custom used for greeting people, but palmed hands are also a way to honour the relics of Buddhism. In Christian worship, palmed hands are a way of praying to God.⁴⁰⁸

As the aim of the work of the *Lutheran Mission in Thailand* (LMT) from the very beginning was to establish an autonomous Lutheran Church in Thailand, the LMT considered it important that the Thai Lutherans for their worship and other church activities would find forms and expressions that fitted the Thai context. Important steps in creating Thai forms for the Lutheran work were to work out a Thai Lutheran order for divine service as well as orders for occasional services and other similar rites. Since there were no Lutheran congregations in Thailand before the LMT started its work, there was no Thai Lutheran liturgy, which could have been used in the Lutheran services. The preparation of a Thai Lutheran liturgy was seen as particularly urgent as creating a similar worship practise in the Lutheran congregations was considered a tool in uniting the local congregations to a Thai Lutheran church.⁴⁰⁹ *The Agreement on Mission Cooperation in*

⁴⁰⁸ Suomen Lahetyssanommat 5/1985, Thailainen jumalanpalvelus syntyy; Karjalainen 1993, 143, 146; Prachayaporn 1998, 65; Kinnunen-Riipinen 2002, 82.

⁴⁰⁹ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1982/Report from the Liturgy

Thailand and the first five-year-plan of the LMT did not mention the preparation of a Thai Lutheran liturgy. In the second five years plan of the LMT, *Five Years Plan for the Lutheran Mission in Thailand 1986-1990*, there was, however, a mention about the importance of a common worship practise when trying to create unity and a sense of community between the Lutheran congregations. In the appendix of the plan, the Liturgy Committee of the LMT was assigned the task of producing a liturgy for the Thai Lutheran congregations in order for the congregations to have the same liturgy for the Sunday morning service and to increase the understanding of the importance of liturgy.⁴¹⁰

The first measures when creating a Thai Lutheran liturgy seems to have been taken in 1978, when Thai coworker Paul Pongsak Limthongvirutn was asked to translate a Chinese service book, the Common Service Book of the Lutheran Church, into Thai. The translation consisted of an Order for service with Holy Communion, an Order for Baptism, and an Order for Confirmation as well as lessons for Sundays and principal festivals. From this translation, at least the orders for Holy Communion and Baptism were used in the Lutheran congregations in Thailand and the translation served as a basis for the future work on a Thai Lutheran liturgy. The order of divine service used in the first Lutheran congregations in Thailand had an easily understood nature, where the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, the Apostolic Creed, and Christian hymns were central elements. According to the plans of the missionaries, this was to change when the people

Committee; Norsk Misjonstidende 34/1980, Blikket framover...; Misjonstidende 10/1992, Fra LMT til ELCT: Hvor star vi - hvor gar vi?; Karjalainen 1993, 142-143; Suomen Lahetyssanommat 4/1994, Thaimaan luterilainen kirkko syntyy buddhalaisen yhteison keskelle.

⁴¹⁰ AFELM I 66 Five Years Plan for the Lutheran Mission in Thailand 1986-1990, 5,16.

had become more used to attending church, singing hymns, and following the readings from the Bible.⁴¹¹

After the LMT had been established in 1980, a Liturgy Committee was appointed to carry on the work on a Thai Lutheran liturgy. The task of the committee was, according to its own understanding, to produce service and baptism orders that could be used in the Lutheran congregations until the future church would be able to elaborate indigenous liturgies of its own. In addition, it was to decide the Bible lessons for Sundays and principal festivals, to evaluate Thai hymn books, and to make models for membership cards and baptism certificates. In its work, the Liturgy Committee wanted to put special emphasis on contextualisation. The committee intended to compose only basic guidelines for the services at this stage and let the Thai context determine how the services should be shaped in detail. From the very beginning, two of the four members of the Liturgy Committee were Thai. In addition to working with the liturgy, the Liturgy Committee was also to design regulations for matters connected to the liturgy, records for the churches and recommendations for the religious language.⁴¹² From the first annual report of the Liturgy Committee, it is possible to conclude that the committee gave priority to selecting Bible lessons for Sundays and principal festivals, a task that was finished in 1983. The lessons consisted of three sets of annual epistle texts and Gospel texts and one set of lessons from the Old Testament. The selection of lessons was mainly based on old Finnish and

⁴¹¹ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1982/Report from the Liturgy Committee; Norsk Misjonstidende 16/1979, Be om at det må lykkes!; Karjalainen 1993,142-143.

⁴¹² AFELM Hia 29 Executive Committee of LMT, January 29,1981,12/81; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1982/Report from the Liturgy Committee; ALMT General Assembly of the LMT 1988/Yearly report from the Liturgy Committee to EC-LMT.

Norwegian traditions, but also lessons used by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong were considered.⁴¹³

Another task that occupied the Liturgy Committee from the beginning, was working out an order for divine service for the Lutheran congregations in Thailand. As a basis for the order of service, the Liturgy Committee used Paul Pongsak Limthongvirutn' Thai translation of a Chinese service book. By the end of 1982, the first Thai Lutheran order for divine service was ready. According to the Liturgy Committee, the order was based on common Lutheran tradition and Lutheran understanding of worship and tried to give the parish an active role in the service. The order of service consisted of an introductory office including confession and absolution, liturgy of the word and liturgy of the Eucharist. The order was a combination of traditions in the Lutheran churches in Norway, Finland, and Hong Kong. In addition, local culture and Thai Christian traditions were taken into consideration. The Liturgy Committee was aware that the service order needed more indigenous forms of worship and music, but considered that the committee required more knowledge of liturgy and Thai culture before it would be able to introduce these. The first service book, which consisted of an order of divine service and Bible lessons for the ecclesiastical year, appeared in 1983, and was taken into usage on a trial basis by the Lutheran congregations. The service book was meant for temporary use and was to be revised before being printed.⁴¹⁴

⁴¹³ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1982/Report from the Liturgy Committee; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1983/Report from the Liturgy Committee; Makela 1991, 4.

⁴¹⁴ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1982/Report from the Liturgy Committee; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1983/Report from the Liturgy Committee; Suomen Lahetyssanommat 5/1985, Thailainen jumalanpalvelus syntyy; Kirkkomme lahetys 1/1994, Lahetyksesta kirkoksi.

After finishing the work on the service book, the Liturgy Committee proceeded with compiling a handbook for occasional services. Between 1984 and 1988, the committee elaborated orders for Holy Communion, baptism, burial of the dead, and marriage service. The committee also planned formulas for ordination, installation of pastors, installation to service within the church, consecration of churches, blessing of homes as well as reception of new parish members. The book of Orders for Occasional Services was printed in an edition for trial use in 1990. The Liturgy Committee also dealt with colours, designs and materials used for instance at the altar, in the liturgical clothing and for the sacramental chalice and cups. During the 1980s, liturgical clothes were not generally used by the Thai Lutheran evangelists and pastors, except for baptisms. Yet the LMT tried to encourage the use of liturgical clothes. In connection with the first ordination of ministers in 1988, the Liturgy Committee made a recommendation to the Lutheran congregations to increase the use of the alba and stola. In 1994, the Chairman of the LMT, Tapio Karjalainen, deemed that wearing liturgical clothes had gradually become more common in the Thai Lutheran congregations.⁴¹⁵

Despite the intention of the Liturgy Committee to replace the first order for divine service with a more indigenous Thai Lutheran liturgy after some time, the first worship order was

⁴¹⁵ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1984/Report from the Chairman; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1985/Report from the Chairman; AFELM II 42 Liturgy Committee, August 28, 1987, §1; ALMT General Assembly of the LMT 1988/Yearly Report from Liturgy Committee; AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1989/Annual Report from the Liturgy Committee; AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1991/Report from the Liturgy Committee; AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1994/Chairman's Report; Mission 9/1987, *Thailandsk gudstjanst i brytningstid*; *Misjonstidende* 5/1992, *En kirke tar form*; Prachayaporn 1998, 67.

still in use in the mid-1990s, at the time of the establishment of the Lutheran Church in Thailand. After the establishment of the church, the worship order was slightly revised and published again in 1996 with the intention to do a more thorough revision later.⁴¹⁶

In 1980, at the time of the establishment of the LMT, the majority of the Protestant churches in Thailand represented different reformed traditions that in general were based on Western low-church tradition. Their services were simple and seemingly unstructured, but in reality the arrangement was quite fixed. The Presbyterian order for divine service used in Thailand had influenced the services of many Thai Protestant churches. American influences could particularly be seen in the singing and music. This also left its traces on the Lutheran service in Thailand, as the first Thai evangelists of the LMT all had their roots in other church denominations and were often unwilling to abandon the liturgy they were used to. At times the Lutheran missionaries in Thailand were so frustrated over this, that they questioned whether it would be possible to build a Thai Lutheran church with the personnel resources at hand.⁴¹⁷

In 1992, Kjetil Aano, the then editor of the Norwegian *Misjonstidende* magazine, described the liturgy of the Lutheran congregations in Thailand as "non-liturgical". By this he meant that although the Lutheran services consisted of the usual liturgical elements, i.e. the confession of sin, readings from the Bible, a sermon, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the blessing, the services were free and easy and

⁴¹⁶ Helle 2002, 57-58.

⁴¹⁷ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1982/Report from the Liturgy Committee; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1983/Report from Survey trip to Udon; Suomen Lahetyssanommat 5/1985, Thailainen jumalanpalvelus syntyy; Karjalainen 1993,142-143.

more like religious meetings. Yet, despite their easy-going style, the services followed a clear pattern and structure. To preach and handle the sacraments was the responsibility of the evangelist or the minister of the congregation, while the parish members were responsible for leading the service and the singing.⁴¹⁸

The Thai Lutheran services usually started with some short songs that could be alternated with short testimonies by the parishioners. One of the parish members functioned as a song leader and the others sang along, clapping their hands or standing up and gesticulating in time to the music. When the actual service started, a meeting leader took over and the short songs were replaced by hymns. The divine services in the Protestant churches in Thailand did not contain, in general, antiphons between the officiating minister and the congregation. An attempt to introduce antiphons was made when the first Thai Lutheran order of divine service was published, but the use of antiphons was unfamiliar to the Thais and the Lutheran congregations remained reluctant to accept them. In congregations where antiphons were used, they were spoken, not sung. Only Agnus Dei and Gloria were used regularly. These two were musically closest to the Thai tradition. Only the Holy Communion's Words of Institution were read word for word from the service book. Occasionally the Lord's Prayer and the Creed were left out. The absolution was generally omitted.⁴¹⁹ Praying was a central part of the

⁴¹⁸ AFELM 8.2.7.4./1. Thaimaan työalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1993, 10; Suomen Lahetyssanommat 5/1985, Thailainen jumalanpalvelus syntyy; Mission 9/1987, Thailandsk gudstjänst i brytningstid; Misjonstidende 5/1992, En kirke tar form; Karjalainen 1993,142; Suomen Lahetyssanommat 11/2002, Kirko lla kuuluu koko paiva.

⁴¹⁹ AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1994/Chairperson's Report; Suomen Lahetyssanommat 5/1985, Thailainen jumalanpalvelus syntyy; Mission 9/1987, Thailandsk gudstjänst i brytningstid; Misjonstidende 5/1992, En kirke tar form; Karjalainen 1993,143,145.

service and the life of the Lutheran congregations. First, the service attendants discussed the prayer subjects in a group and then everybody prayed out aloud at the same time. For Thai Christians praying alone was a strange thought, as was reading the Bible on one's own. Typical for the Thai Lutheran service was an extensive use of the Bible, but it was not unusual that only one of the daily texts was read, either in one voice or in turns. The sermon text was examined together with the preacher. The sermons were often long, since they were considered the best opportunity to teach the new Christians. In order to keep the congregation concentrated, the preacher often tried to make the sermons interactive by reading Bible lessons together with the congregation and asking them questions.⁴²⁰

In general, the Protestant congregations in Thailand celebrated Holy Communion rarely. This might have been due to influences from Evangelical or Pentecostal movements not used to weekly Eucharist. The LMT, however, tried to encourage its congregations to have Holy Communion more often, as the Lutherans wanted to emphasize their being part of Christian traditions that usually had a full worship service every week. The sharing of a meal was something natural in the Thai context. In the Lutheran congregations, it was a common practice to have a meal together after the service. For the Thais eating together was an important part of social intercourse and the parish members took turns in preparing the meal. After the meal it was not unusual that the parish members spent the rest of the Sunday together at the church.⁴²¹

⁴²⁰ AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1994/Chariperson's Report; Suomen Lahetyssanomat 5/1985, Thailainen jumalanpalvelus syntyy; Misjonstidende 5/1992, En kirke tar form; Karjalainen 1993, 143-146; Suomen Lahetyssanomat 11/2002, Kirkolla kuuluu koko paiva.

⁴²¹ Helle 2002, 53; Suomen Lahetyssanomat 11/2002, Kirkolla kuuluu koko paiva.

During its first years, the LMT created an annual calendar system, a church year that was to be followed by the local congregations. The idea behind the church year was anamnestic, i.e. during the year important events in the life of Jesus Christ were recalled and celebrated. Christmas was celebrated quite extensively in the Lutheran congregations, but according to Missionary Jukka Helle of FELM, it was the merry making mood that prevailed in the Christmas celebration. The celebration of Easter with all its different phases was still, in the early years of the 21st century, rather unknown in the Lutheran congregations as was the observing of other central Christian church festivals. Helle does not ponder over the reasons why Easter was not celebrated to any great extent. Thai pastor Wan Petchsongkram of the independent Romklao Church has, however, written about the problems with the crucified Christ in Thai Christianity. According to Petchsongkram, it is for Thai Buddhists impossible to regard with respect or believe in a God that has died on a cross as only an exceedingly sinful person could die a violent death like that. It can be assumed that this view of the suffering God also has affected the celebration of Easter in the Thai congregations. In addition, the Thais are well known for their love of amusements and having fun and this might have contributed to their fascination for celebrating Christmas and their disinterest in recollecting the events of Easter.⁴²²

The Liturgy Committee was also responsible for organising the singing and music within the LMT. With regard to songs and music, the committee stressed two things. Firstly, only one hymn book should be used within the LMT. Secondly, the Thai employees were to be encouraged to use Thai music in their work. The decision to have only one hymn book was made in order to facilitate the cooperation between the

422 Petchsongkram 1975,15; Kim 1980,138-141; Helle 2002, 59-60.

congregations of the LMT and to increase the affinity between them.⁴²³

According to the missionaries of the LMT, there were two hymn books generally accepted by the Protestant churches in Thailand at the time when the Lutheran mission started its work. For the first ten years of its existence the LMT used a hymn book with mainly Western hymns, *Phleng Chivit Christien*, but in 1986 the LMT decided to start using the hymn book of the local Presbyterian church, *Phleng Thai Namadsagan*, as it contained more Thai melodies. The Thai melodies were, nevertheless, relatively few. According to Missionary Tapio Karjalainen of FELM, only 14 of the 340 hymns had a Thai origin. Most of the hymns originated in the United States of America or Great Britain. Along with the hymn book, the LMT also used a booklet, *Phleng Thai Phua Christcak*, that contained only Thai songs.⁴²⁴ The songs sang in the Thai Lutheran congregations were thus of varying kind. There were older international spiritual songs, newer praise songs, and youth songs. Only a few songs had traditional Thai melodies and some Thai Christian songs borrowed their melodies from international and Thai popular music.⁴²⁵

The decision to start using a new hymn book with more Thai hymns was not carried out in the way that the LMT wished. When it came to using Thai music in the service, the Thai coworkers of the LMT and older Christians, who were used to

⁴²³ AFELM Hia 39 Executive Committee of the LMT, September 23, 1982, 145/82.

⁴²⁴ AFELM Hia 39 Executive Committee of the LMT, September 23, 1982, 145/82; AFELM II 17 Executive Committee of the LMT, May 30, 1985, 91/85; AFELM II 42 Executive Committee of the LMT, February 13, 1986, 34/86; Hughes 1984, 324; Suomen Lahetyssanommat 5/1985, Thailainen jumalanpalvelus syntyy; Mission 9/1987, Thailandsk gudstjanst i brytningstid.

⁴²⁵ Mission 9/1987, Thailandsk gudstjanst i brytningstid.

singing western hymns, were generally unwilling. They associated traditional Thai music with Buddhism and wanted to keep the borderline between Christianity and other religions sharp. According to them, Christians should sing Western songs (i.e. American gospels and German hymns) and Buddhists traditional songs. For them Christian music consisted of the Christian songs and hymns that the missionaries had brought with them. This was in line with the general development in Thai society, where people were more attracted to modern (Western) music than to traditional Thai music. However, the negative attitude of the Thai Christians to indigenous music also had historical reasons. The first Protestant missionaries in Thailand had mostly been negatively disposed to everything that could be connected with Buddhism and had regarded Thai culture as an unsuitable source for Thai Christian singing and music.⁴²⁶

Despite this the LMT considered it important to find Thai solutions for the liturgy and music of the Lutheran congregations in Thailand. The experiences from other mission fields had shown that if the local Christians were not encouraged to include indigenous music in the services and other meetings at this point, they would probably ask for it later. Consequently, the LMT tried to motivate the Thai parish workers to have more indigenous elements in the liturgy and together with other churches and Christian organisations it was involved in arranging seminars on writing hymns. The LMT had high hopes that the attitudes to Thai hymns would change for the better when it began its own training of

⁴²⁶ AFELM I 66 Teaching at U-bon, a report submitted by Thai evangelist Pongsak Limthongvirutn, March 24, 1986; AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1994/Chairperson's Report; Norsk Misjonstidende 29/1977, "Fredens stemme" i Thailand; Hughes 1984, 325; Suomen Lahetyssanommat 5/1985, Thailainen jumalanpalvelus syntyy; Mission 9/1987, Thailandsk gudstjanst i brytningstid; Suwanbubba 1994, 171-175; Kotimaa 23/2000, Evankeliumia thain kielella; Makela 2002,105.

evangelists, ministers, and church musicians. The congregations in the northeastern part of the country were, from the beginning, more willing to use traditional Thai tunes in their services.⁴²⁷

The reluctance of the Thai Lutherans to sing indigenous songs was still more surprising as many of the Western hymns were not very well suited to Thai voices. According to Tapio Karjalainen, who has written extensively on the subject, the Western hymns differed considerably from traditional Thai music. Thai music had a five-tone scale, while in Western music an octave consisted of eight notes. Singing Western songs was therefore hard for many Thais not accustomed to Western melodies and notes. Long hymns could even cause a soar throat. The western harmony or accord was foreign to the unison Thai music and choir-singing was consequently unusual in the Lutheran congregations in Thailand. The songs sometimes became peculiar as they had not been translated so that the notes and the different pitches of voice of the Thai language corresponded to each other.⁴²⁸ The use of Western hymns in the Lutheran services also influenced the choice of instruments for the congregation. The most popular instrument was the piano, but since it was a rather expensive instrument, only few congregations could afford one. Mostly the songs were accompanied by guitars or small electric organs, but the use of electric guitars and drums became increasingly popular.⁴²⁹

⁴²⁷ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1982/Comments on the Report from the Liturgy Committee; AFELM II 42 LITE Faculty Meeting, November 10, 1987, 48/87; AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1994/Chairperson's Report; Mission 9/1987, Thailandsk gudstjanst i brytningstid.

⁴²⁸ Norsk Misjonstidende 29/1977, "Fredens stemme" i Thailand; Suomen Lahetyssanommat 5/1985, Thailainen jumalanpalvelus syntyy; Mission 9/1987, Thailandsk gudstjanst i brytningstid.

⁴²⁹ AFELM 8.2.7.4./1. Thaimaan tyoalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1993,

The LMT was not alone in its efforts to use more indigenous Thai music in its services and meetings. In his report to the General Assembly of the LMT in 1986, the Chairman of the LMT, Jaakko Makela, wrote that the interest for indigenous music had increased in Thailand. The latest Thai Christian song books consisted of more Thai and Asian songs than earlier editions. The LMT had in cooperation with the Church of Christ in Thailand and the *Thai Music Committee for Churches* arranged a seminar on indigenous Christian music. The seminar had attracted around 70 participants from different churches. The LMT was also involved in making a Thai Christian song book that would not only consist of translations from other languages, but of more indigenous material as well. The *Thai Indigenous Hymnbook Committee* was responsible for compiling the song book, but the LMT had representatives in the committee.⁴³⁰ After the establishment of the Lutheran Church in Thailand, the church decided, however, to start preparing its own hymn book. The book was to be based on Thai song and music culture and the Thai Lutheran service, but would have contributions from the global Christian music of which also the Thai Lutherans wanted to be a part.⁴³¹

Other facts that complicated the attempts to find Thai solutions for the services of the Lutheran congregations were the language problems and the confusion of ideas. The Thai language consisted of several different levels. By tradition, the Thai Christians used the royal vocabulary and the high language to address the Christian God in printed matters, including the Bible, and in the preaching. However, as this

10; Mission 9/1987, Thailandsk gudstjanst i brytningstid.

⁴³⁰ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1986/Report by the Chairman; AFELM II 24 Executive Committee of the LMT, March 30, 1989, 50/89; AFELM II 24 Executive Committee of the LMT, July 20, 1989, 113/89.

⁴³¹ Woie 1998, 26, 29.

language was not spoken in everyday life, it was difficult to understand for the people attending the services. The Bible commonly used was written in Central Thai, a language that was not entirely understood in all parts of Thailand. In addition, the Christian teaching contained many difficult words and Biblical expressions that were unknown to the Thais. According to Jaakko Makela, for instance the word for justification was strange in the Thai language, particularly for non Christians. The word for grace, phrakhun, on the other hand, was also used in other connections, for instance when talking about the good will and the mercy of the king.⁴³²

In its work on preparing a liturgy for the Lutheran congregations in Thailand, the Liturgy Committee aimed at creating a genuinely Thai Lutheran liturgy. For several reasons the LMT did not entirely succeed in its attempt. To the surprise of many of the missionaries, the local workers showed a great unwillingness towards having Thai elements in the liturgy. They wanted to keep the liturgy that they had learnt in other churches and were afraid that by including Thai elements in the liturgy they would accidentally also introduce manners and customs that originated in Buddhism. Furthermore, the foreign (Western) members of the Liturgy Committee contributed to the difficulties of creating a Thai Lutheran liturgy, as it for them was natural to first turn to their own service books and traditions to see if they could find something for the Thai context. Even if they tried to free themselves from their national traditions, it was natural that they were not entirely able to do so. Consequently, the Thai liturgy contains traces of mainly Finnish, Norwegian, and

⁴³² ANMS Misjonserruattet for NMS i Thailand 1981/Arsmelding fra Thailand feltet; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1984/Vision and strategy for our joint Lutheran ministry in Thailand; Woie 1992, 328; Halmesmaa 1993, 61-63; Prachayaporn 1998, 66; Kosuke 1999, xi, 58-59; Heikkila-Horn 2000, 26; Makela 2000, 157-159; Kusawadee 2005, 36; Makela 2006, 80, 94-95, 99.

Chinese traditions. At times, the Thai coworkers of the LMT expressed irritation that Christianity was stamped as a Western religion in Thailand and also implied that the European missionaries increased this misconception. Even if the missionaries understood some of the criticism that they encountered, they were not ready to take the entire blame for Christianity being perceived as a Western religion. According to their experience, the Lutheran congregations in Thailand would not have given up their Western ways even if all the missionaries had left the country and the work had been entirely run by Thais. This has been confirmed by surveys of the Thai Christians' attitude to the church in Thailand adopting Thai architecture, art, music and manners such as sitting on the floor during the service. Generally, the Thai Christians have been divided and ambivalent about bringing Thai customs and culture into church life.⁴³³

6.2 The theological basis and characteristics of the Lutheran mission in Thailand

In an interview, made in 1992, Henrik Smedjebacka, former director of the *Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission (FELM)*, expressed the opinion that the theology of the *Lutheran Mission in Thailand (LMT)* was somewhat shallow. According to Smedjebacka, the LMT had concentrated on starting up different kinds of activities to such an extent that the theology had suffered. This had become particularly evident when the LMT, in the late 1980s, started to write the constitution for the coming Lutheran Church in Thailand and an agreement between the church and the Lutheran Mission.⁴³⁴

⁴³³ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1984/Vision and strategy for our joint Lutheran ministry in Thailand; Suwanbubbha 1994,188-189.

⁴³⁴ ACHAA Interview with Henrik Smedjebacka, November 11,1992.

In the source material from the LMT, it is often stated that the theological basis of the mission is Lutheran, but deeper theological reflections or investigations are scarce. Although it is reasonable to assume that there were theological discussions and opinions, at least in the different committees of the LMT, for instance in the Liturgy Committee, the Theological Training Committee, and the Ordination Committee, few traces have been left in the minutes and reports from these committees. Not until the formulation of a constitution for the Lutheran Church in Thailand began in the late 1990s, can any explicit theology be detected. Nonetheless, in order to get an indication of the theology of the LMT, I am going to look more closely at the few expressions of theology, which are found in the plans and agreements of the LMT, and analyse from where the Lutheran work in Thailand acquired its theological influences. The preparation of the constitution for the Lutheran Church in Thailand is dealt with in the following chapter.

In the *Agreement on Mission Cooperation in Thailand* it was clearly expressed that the confessional basis of the LMT was to be Lutheran. The Bible was acknowledged as "*the revealed Word of God and as the basic rule and standard of faith and practice*". In addition to the Bible, the LMT confessed the Creed of the Apostles and accepted the unaltered Augsburg Confession as well as Luther's Small Catechism as "*true expositions of the fundamental teaching of the Christian faith*". Concerning the purpose of the work it was stated that the partner organisations of the LMT were to bring "*Christ's Gospel, as understood in the Lutheran tradition*" to the peoples in Thailand and that the aim of the work was to establish a Lutheran church.⁴³⁵

435 ANMS Thailand Agreement on Mission Cooperation in Thailand 1980, Preamble, § II-III.

In the first two five-years-plans of the LMT, the theological sections were brief. It was always stressed that the basis of the work was Lutheran and some of the quotations mentioned above from the Agreement on Mission Cooperation were referred to, but the long-range plans did not enter any deeper into the theology of the LMT or into the meaning of being a Lutheran organisation. Not until in the third five years plan of the LMT, *Five Years Plan 1991-1995 for the Lutheran Mission in Thailand*, was mission theology given more space. At the general assemblies of the LMT there was, however, as a rule at least one motion which in one way or another dealt with the theological thinking of the LMT. Topics that were discussed were, for instance, contextualisation, the role and life of the missionary as well as Christian service versus proclamation.⁴³⁶

At the time of writing *The Five Years Plan 1991-1995*, the LMT seems to have been strongly influenced by the mission thinking of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) as it included parts of the new mission document of the LWF, *Together in God's Missions: an LWF Contribution to the Understanding of Mission*, in the five-year-plan. In conformity with the mission document, the plan stressed the Trinity and that God is a God in mission. According to the plan "*God, as Father, Son and holy Spirit, has an unchanging intention to bring salvation to humankind*" and the central purpose of the LMT was thus to participate in this mission of God. The activities of the LMT - proclamation, service, education, worship, and communication - were to be seen as part of the Christian church's participation in God's mission. The work of the LMT

⁴³⁶ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1981/Five Years Plan of Lutheran Mission in Thailand 1981-1985,1-2; AFELM I 66 Five Years Plan for the Lutheran Mission in Thailand 1986-1990,1, 5; AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1991/Five Years Plan 1991-1995 for the Lutheran Mission in Thailand.

was thus in this five-year-plan mainly seen from a missiological angle of approach.⁴³⁷

An opinion often expressed in connection with discussions on the Lutheran basis of the work of the LMT was that particularly in a Buddhist environment, Lutheranism had much to contribute. The LMT considered that Lutheranism, with its special accentuation on unmerited grace and faith, had an urgent contribution to the Buddhist Thailand where religion was mostly about merit making. According to the Lutheran missionaries, it was important to stress that salvation was a gift from God through faith and grace and nothing that man could earn with good deeds.⁴³⁸ In *Sola Gratia*, a little booklet produced by the LMT to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the birth of Martin Luther, the word of God, salvation by grace, the Lutheran service, and the earthly duties of the Christian were especially underlined as important in Lutheranism and in the Thai context.⁴³⁹ The emphasis of Lutheranism was also seen in the literature production of the LMT. Most of the books and booklets that were translated or produced by the LMT were traditional Lutheran works such as the Augsburg Confession, Luther's Small Catechism, and Luther's Large Catechism. The Lutheran works were needed in the theological training, in the teaching of the members of the Lutheran congregations and for maintaining a Lutheran identity within the LMT. In addition, they were necessary tools when presenting Lutheranism and the Lutheran ministry in Thailand to other church communions in the country.⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁷ AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1991/Five Years Plan 1991-1995 for the Lutheran Mission in Thailand.

⁴³⁸ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1984/Vision and strategy for our joint Lutheran ministry; AMBT Conversation with Henrik Smedjebacka, September 3, 1998; Smedjebacka 1990, 50-51.

⁴³⁹ *Sola Gratia* 1984, 1-8.

⁴⁴⁰ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1986/Report from Theological

Due to the lack of Lutheran theological education in Thailand, the LMT recruited its first national workers from other church denominations in Thailand and continued for several years to recruit and train its coworkers in the theological schools of other churches. Consequently, the workers of the LMT brought with them strong influences from other Protestant church communions, especially from Baptist and Reformed churches. According to Missionary Jaakko Makela of FELM, the fact that several of the first Thai coworkers had their roots in the conservative and/or revivalist fraction of the *Church of Christ in Thailand* (CCT) had a particularly deep impact on the theology of the Lutheran mission in Thailand.⁴⁴¹ In their paper *Vision and Strategy for our joint Lutheran Ministry in Thailand*, presented at the General Assembly of the LMT in 1984, missionaries Tapio Karjalainen and Christopher Woie, claimed that the Thai evangelists of the LMT generally had no knowledge of Lutheranism and no Lutheran identity when they started to work for the LMT. Thai pastor Paul Pongsak Limthongvirutn has gone still further and maintained that many of the first Thai coworkers of the LMT kept their membership in the CCT and refused to identify themselves as Lutherans though working for the LMT. Even after the LMT had, for some years, provided its Thai workers training in Lutheranism, the theology and identity of the coworkers were, according to Karjalainen and Woie, still in 1984, more Reformed than Lutheran. The LMT, on the other hand, had become increasingly aware of how the Lutheran church differed from other churches in Thailand in the understanding of basic theological concepts such as 'law and gospel', 'sin and grace'. The LMT feared that its national workers would not be

Education Department; ANMS General Assembly of LMT 1987/Report from the Lutheran Institute of Theological Education; Mission 2/1988, Den Augsburgska bekannelsen oversatt till thai; Hengellinen kuukausilehti 7/1992, Luterilaista teologia Thaimaassa.

441 Makela 2006, 87.

able to develop a Lutheran identity in an environment totally lacking Lutheran influences and in a situation where the LMT was the only Lutheran organisation and a small minority among the Thai Christians.⁴⁴²

A consequence of having, at an early stage, so many Thai coworkers with backgrounds in other church denominations seems to have been that the LMT later became very careful about employing workers with roots in another church tradition. Several times the LMT declined national workers or missionary candidates who had a past in another church denomination. This seems to have been done in order to be able to continue to emphasise and strengthen the Lutheran identity and basis of the Lutheran mission in Thailand.⁴⁴³

The Pentecostal movement, as well as different independent Charismatic churches, were the fastest growing Protestant churches in Thailand during the 1980s and 1990s. In his master's thesis about the Charismatic movement in Thailand, Thaweep Oiwan, a former bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand, settled that the charismatic accentuations were not restricted to the Pentecostal movement, but affected the whole Protestant communion in Thailand. According to Jaakko Makela, the LMT was also clearly influenced by the

⁴⁴² ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1984/Vision and strategy for out joint Lutheran ministry in Thailand; ANMS Thailand Letter from Norlys Nilsen to Torleiv Austad, June 19, 1984; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1984/Theological Training; Limthongvirutn 1983, 87-88; Makela 2006, 94.

⁴⁴³ AFELM I 68 Letter from Virginia Harter to Kjell Sandvik, August 2, 1992; AFELM I 68 Letter from Seikku Paunonen to Salli Lamponen, August 20, 1992; AFELM I 68 Letter from Egil H. Eggen to Salli Lamponen, September 15, 1992; AFELM II 24 Joint Board for Thailand, November 11-14, 1992, Item 8; AFELM I 68 Letter from Kamol Arayaprateep to Thomas F. Schaeffer, October 4, 1993; AFELM I 68 Letter from Thomas F. Schaeffer to Kamol Arayaprateep, October 15, 1993.

Charismatic movement. The charismatic phenomenons within the Lutheran Mission took place mainly at the informal prayer meetings of the LMT. The attitudes towards the gifts of the Holy Spirit varied from positive caution to active participation. If discussions arose about charismatic experiences, they were mostly about the theological interpretation of the experiences. Contrary to this, Thawep Oiwan has maintained that the LMT in general was not particularly interested in charismatic phenomenons, but some groups within the Lutheran Mission emphasised spiritual gifts. The Finnish missionaries especially, considered the gift of healing, speaking in tongues, and the gift of prophecy essential aspects of the Christian life.⁴⁴⁴

As the Christians, throughout their history in Thailand, have only made up a small minority, their interpretation of the Christian gospel was naturally influenced by Buddhism, the religion of the majority. In the opinion of Tapio Karjalainen and Christopher Woie, the Buddhist influence could, for instance, be seen in a mixing of law and gospel. According to them, Christianity was by many Thai Christians considered to be an ethics and faith was seen as the fruit of one's own efforts and knowledge. Among the Thai Christians, it was commonly considered possible to reach total sinlessness if you strove hard enough. Earthly duties were not seen as important since they were done in a sinful world. Karjalainen and Woie meant that the consequence of this way of thinking was dishonesty and lack of love. This view has, at least to some extent, been shared by the former bishop of the Lutheran Church in Thailand, Banjob Kusawadee, who, in connection to writing about suffering, pointed out that the Thai Christians do their best to follow the will of God in order to gain his favour. However, they often see the grace of God as conditional, as

⁴⁴⁴ AFELM II 42 Executive Committee of the LMT, October 1,1987, 111/87; Oiwan 1998, 8,11, 71-72; Makela 2006, 83.

something you have to earn. The Christian concept of God as Creator and Upholder of the world differed radically from the Buddhist dogma, which does not know a personal God and Creator.⁴⁴⁵ Moreover, the Buddhist law of karma made it harder for the Thais to grasp the divinity of Jesus. A person who was crucified must have suffered from exceedingly bad karma, and was not one to be either listened to or followed. In connection to this, Missionary Jukka Helle of FELM has noticed that most Protestant church buildings in Thailand do not have a crucifix. Usually a plain cross hangs on the wall above the altar table. According to Helle, some people explain this by saying that since Christ is resurrected and ascended into heaven it would not be appropriate to have crucifixes. Another reason might be that in a Buddhist context it could raise questions and misunderstandings if the Christian Lord and Saviour was presented on the cross.⁴⁴⁶

The encounter between Christianity and folk Buddhism was on the agenda of the Lutheran Institute of Theological Education from the very beginning. According to Jaakko Makela, some of the Thai Lutherans were quite open about their encounters with spiritual beings, while others were unwilling to talk about them. The reluctance to discuss the experiences of the spiritual world might be, in Makela's opinion, due to the generally dismissive and disparaging attitude of Westerners towards experiences of this kind. One thing regarding Buddhism, which particularly interested Thai Christians was the thought of the future reincarnation of the Buddha, the Maitreya Buddha. Many Thai Christians were ready to consider this figure of some of the Buddhist texts as a

⁴⁴⁵ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1984/Vision and strategy of our joint Lutheran ministry in Thailand; Hughes 1984, 325-327; Suomen Lahetyssanommat 4/1987, Jumalan toita ihmettelemassa; Kirkkomme lahetys 2/2000, Katekismus seurakuntakoulutuksen pohjana; Kusawadee 2005,47-48, 51-55, 60, 79-83,199; Makela 2006, 99.

⁴⁴⁶ Helle 2002, 45; Kusawadee 2005, 86-87.

prediction of Jesus. Most missionaries were, however, cautious about interpreting the texts in this way. Within the LMT, it was above all the students at the Lutheran Institute of Theological Education that were interested in discussing the position of the Maitreya Buddha. Of the students, it was particularly those who, before their conversion to Christianity, had been practising Buddhism actively, who were fascinated by the texts about the Maitreya Buddha and considered them possible instruments in the apologetic work.⁴⁴⁷ Practical apologetics was an every day reality for Thai Christians. In Thailand, religion was not a private matter and the Thai Christians were expected to be willing to discuss their faith openly. According to the Thai Lutheran pastor Suk Prachayaporn, central subjects for the Thais' discussions about religion were for instance the human nature, the question of suffering and the relation between grace and karma.⁴⁴⁸

Something that occupied the thoughts of the Lutheran missionaries in Thailand from the very beginning was contextualisation⁴⁴⁹, i.e. how the Christian gospel could be presented in a way that made it possible to understand in the Thai context, and how the future church ought to be shaped in order to be integrated into the Thai environment. In The Five Years Plan 1991-1995, it was stated that *"The nature of God as creator demands us in our ministry to have contextualised forms in order to reach the people with the Gospel."* The Five Years Plan also cited the Lutheran World Federation's mission document Together in God's Mission that said *"The Mission of the church always take place within specific, changing historical contexts and differing cultural situations and therefore bears their marks."* At the first assembly of the Lutheran World Federation in Lund,

447 Makela 2006, 96-97.

448 Prachayaporn 1998, 51-64; Makela 2006, 98.

449 For more information about contextualising see for instance Bevans 1992 and Bosch 2003.

Sweden, in 1947 it had already been pointed out that the Lutheran world mission was characterised by unity in faith, but this faith had a variety of expressions due to the different surroundings of the mission and the churches.⁴⁵⁰

As Pali, the language of the holy scriptures of Theravada Buddhism, was the basis of the vocabulary of not only the Thai religious language, but also of the language within humanistic and social sciences, Christian theologians have had substantial difficulties in finding Thai vocabulary and expressions for Christian concepts and theology. Thai Christian language was extensively influenced by the Hindu-Buddhist language and the high language, which was normally only used when talking about the royal family. Respectful words and verbs used primarily for the Buddha or Buddhist monks were also used in relation to Jesus. Even if the Thai Christians became familiar with the Christian vocabulary, they did not necessarily understand the words in a traditional western Christian way, but interpreted them from a Buddhist point of view. Something that further complicated the creation of Thai Christian language and the communication of the Gospel was that the Protestants and the Catholics in Thailand had come to different conclusions when finding Thai vocabulary for the Gospel. Consequently, it was not certain that Thai Protestants and Thai Catholics could understand each other's religious language. A particular problem for the Thai Lutherans was that it was not even self-evident that Thai words used within other Protestant churches to express central Christian conceptions also explained the Lutheran understanding of the same concept. For the Lutheran missionaries the first years of work in Thailand was

⁴⁵⁰ AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1991/Five Years Plan 1991-1995 of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand; Lindqvist 1982, 157-158; Together in God's Mission 1988, 5; From Federation to Communion 1997, 150.

a continuing consideration of how to present the Christian gospel in the Thai context and how to find Thai expressions for central Lutheran concepts.⁴⁵¹

In January 1985, Tapio Karjalainen prepared a paper about contextualisation for the LMT. In the paper John 1:4 was used as an example of contextualisation. Jesus left heaven and became a man. He lived in a certain country, in a certain culture, in a certain religion. He wore Jewish clothes, he went to parties arranged by Jews, he went to their temples, he spoke their language. Jesus was fully contextualised. The message entered into the culture, but it did not let the culture change it. According to Karjalainen, the Catholic Church in Thailand had adapted to Thai culture in many ways and this had probably helped it to get converts. However, it seemed, as if this had also led to many Thai Catholics having difficulties in grasping the difference between Buddhism and Christianity. The Protestant churches in Thailand, on the other hand, had been more careful with contextualisation and instead emphasised the changes in the life of the converts. However, concentration on the outward signs caused outward change, a change in forms, but did not lead to intellectual and spiritual understanding of the faith.⁴⁵² For the contextualisation within the Lutheran mission, the LMT tried to find Thai solutions for instance for the Sunday service, the church interiors and equipment, the liturgical vestments, the music, dance and drama. Adapting the Lutheran church and its teaching to the Thai context was topical during the whole period of

⁴⁵¹ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1984/Vision and strategy for our joint Lutheran ministry in Thailand; Suomen Lahetyssanomat 4/1987, Jumalan toita ihmettelemassa; Woie 1992, 328; Halmesmaa 1993, 61-63; Prachayaporn 1998, 66; Kosuke 1999, xi, 58-59; Makela 2000, 157-159; Kusawadee 2005, 36, 50-51; Makela 2006, 80, 94-95, 98-99.

⁴⁵² ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1985/About contextualisation by Tapio Karjalainen; Keyes 1993, 273-275.

investigation and continued after the establishment of the Lutheran Church in Thailand.

Even if the number of Christians in Thailand was low, and the percentage of Christians remained under 1 percent during the 1980s and 1990s, the Lutheran missionaries had to accept that they were not living in an environment that was without Christian role models or influence. In Bangkok especially, certain churches had a strong influence on Thai Christianity. Just imagining that the Holy Spirit would lead the new Thai Lutherans to choose suitable Thai expressions for the faith was not possible. If the Lutheran missionaries were not ready to lead and guide the new Christians, they would find role models and support elsewhere. In Thailand, there were already strong Christian traditions, manners, and customs. Had the LMT taken radical steps in contextualisation this would have caused isolation from the rest of the Thai Christian community, a price too high to pay for a small Lutheran group.⁴⁵³

Naturally, the theology and mission thinking of the member organisations of the Lutheran Mission influenced the LMT, the Lutheran congregations in Thailand and the coming Lutheran church. The mission agencies' understanding of the suitability of Lutheranism in the Thai context led to a strong emphasis on the Lutheran faith even if some of the missionaries and Thai coworkers of the LMT had rather toned down the confessionalism and instead stressed Christian unity. The mission agencies' and missionaries' interest in contextualising the Christian Gospel led to attempts to also import such phenomena that the Thai Christians did not consider suitable for church life, for instance Christian songs based on Thai musical traditions. The charismatic interests of some

⁴⁵³ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1985/About contextualisation by Tapio Karjalainen.

missionaries led to efforts to introduce this kind of spirituality also in the Thai Lutheran congregations.⁴⁵⁴

6.3 The ordination of Thai ministers

Since the *Agreement on Mission Cooperation in Thailand* clearly stated that the purpose of the work of the *Lutheran Mission in Thailand* (LMT) was to establish local congregations, which were to be united into a Thai Lutheran church, it was natural that the LMT also stressed the importance of having national parish workers. The Agreement on Mission Cooperation did not deal with the question about ordaining ministers explicitly, but confirmed that the member organisations of the LMT should cooperate in recruiting and training local coworkers. The first five years plan of the Lutheran mission stressed the importance of finding and training Thai coworkers that could become leaders of the future church. The ordination of ministers, however, was not mentioned. Not until the second five years plan of the LMT, was ordination clearly considered with the plan approving that the General Assembly of the LMT in 1986 was to decide on the guidelines for the ordained ministry.⁴⁵⁵

Despite the ordination of ministers rarely being mentioned in the official documents of the LMT, the Lutheran mission considered it important to have competent Thai leaders that could take over the responsibility for the Lutheran Church in Thailand when it was established. That a church had local

⁴⁵⁴ Hovedlinjene i Det Norske Misjonsselskaps misjonssyn og misjonsstrategi 1972, 3-4, 6-10; Faithful to our Calling 1981, 5-7; Suomen Lahetyssseuran III viisivuotissuunnitelma 1981a, 5-9, 22-25.

⁴⁵⁵ ANMS Thailand Agreement on Mission Cooperation in Thailand 1980, § III, § VI; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1981/Five Years Plan of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand 1981-1985, 2, 6; AFELM I 66 Five Years Plan for the Lutheran Mission in Thailand 1986-1990, 5.

ministers to lead the work was seen as a presupposition for a church to be regarded as an indigenous church. The Constitution Committee of the LMT forwarded the idea that before the church could be established there should be at least ten organised Lutheran congregations and ten ordained ministers. The emphasis on local employees and leaders was a basic principal for both the *Norwegian Missionary Society* (NMS) and the *Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission* (FELM). This can, for instance, be seen in the long-range plans, strategies and reports made by the NMS and FELM during the 1970s and the 1980s.⁴⁵⁶

The Executive Committee of the LMT started to discuss the ordination of the first Thai ministers as early as in 1982. Information about the ordination practise in other churches in Thailand and in Lutheran churches in Asia was gathered. An Ordination Committee was appointed and the LMT planned to start a course for evangelists who wanted to be ordained. Already during the reconnoitring tours to Thailand in the mid-1970s, the representatives of the NMS and FELM had noticed that many of the Thai churches were fighting problems related to leadership. Most of the churches had been established by foreign missionaries and it seemed as if the missionaries had been allowed to dominate the churches to such an extent that there had not been room for a natural rise of a national church leadership. In its own work the LMT wanted to avoid this development to take place. It was the General Assembly in 1986, which finally dealt with the question of ordaining ministers for the LMT. The Constitution Committee and the Theological Education Department had prepared a set of guidelines for the ordained ministry. During the General Assembly, a lively discussion was held about the

⁴⁵⁶ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1981/Five Years Plan of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand 1981-1985, 2, 6; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1986/Report from the Constitution Committee.

proposed guidelines and after some amendments they were accepted. The *Guidelines for the Ordained Ministry* were later included in the constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand.⁴⁵⁷

According to the Guidelines for the Ordained Ministry, the requirements for ordination within the LMT were as follows: that the candidate for ordination showed "*an attitude of one who is called to serve as God's servant in His church*" (the following Bible verses were used as examples Eph. 4:11-12, 1 Cor. 12:27-30, 1 Tim. 3:1-7), had a Bachelor Degree in theology or an equivalent knowledge of theology, had worked at least three years within the LMT, and was a member of one of the congregations of the LMT. In addition, a person who wanted to be ordained within the LMT had to be called to serve in one of the congregations of the Lutheran mission.⁴⁵⁸

The discussions regarding a suitable time to arrange the first ordination were lively. The Norwegian and Finnish missionaries seem to have had slightly differing opinions on this question. At least some of the missionaries of the NMS would have been prepared to arrange the ordination as soon as there was a suitable candidate for ordination. FELM was, however, careful not to have only one person at the first

⁴⁵⁷ ANMS Det Norske Misjonsselskaps Generalforsamling 1975/11 Skal NMS ta opp nytt misjonsarbeid i Brasilia og *SOTO* t-Asia, Laos/Thailand?; AFELM Hia 39 Executive Committee of the LMT, April 22, 1982, 56/82; AFELM II 17 Executive Committee of the LMT, January 1983, 2/83; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1983/Ordination programme for evangelists in LMT; AFELM II 17 Executive Committee of the LMT, September 27, 1984, 123/84; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1985/Preliminary Guidelines for the ordained ministry in the Lutheran Mission in Thailand; ANMS Minutes of the General Assembly of the LMT, April 15-19, 1986, 16-17; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1986/Report from the Constitution Committee.

⁴⁵⁸ ANMS Thailand Preliminary Guidelines for the Ordained Ministry in the Lutheran Mission in Thailand, 2.

ordination as this could have given the missionaries too great an impact on the choosing of a leader for the future church. Finally, the partner organisations of the LMT agreed not to ordain only one but several ministers at the first ordination, and by so doing the LMT hoped that the first ordained minister would not automatically be seen as the future leader of the church. Another reason for the LMT not to arrange the first ordination too early was that when the first ordination was held, the ministers should be ordained with the coming church in mind and not for service within the Lutheran Mission.⁴⁵⁹

A matter that had to be solved while waiting for the first Thai ministers to be ordained was the administration of sacraments within the Lutheran congregations in Thailand. In principle, the administration of sacraments was reserved for ordained ministers only. However, before the first ordination had taken place, the only ordained ministers within the LMT were the missionaries. In consequence, not all congregations had an ordained minister to lead the work. A solution, particularly concerning the administering of the Holy Communion, had to be found in order to serve the members of the Lutheran congregations. Consequently, the Executive Committee of the LMT decided in 1985 that in case no ordained minister was available, non-ordained persons could also be authorised to administer the Holy Communion in their congregation. In the first place, the local evangelist would be regarded as a possible candidate to receive the authorisation. The authorisation could be given by the Executive Committee on the request of the local congregation and the authorisation was, in general, to be valid for six months. In some cases the authorisation was given for as long as the person was serving in the same congregation where there was no ordained minister assigned

⁴⁵⁹ AFELM I 66 Telefax from Seikku Paunonen to John c. M. Tse, March 16,1987; AMBT Conversation with Maija and Jaakko Makela, May 28,1997.

to work in the congregation. The congregations also occasionally requested that their evangelist be given the right to baptise, but in these cases the Executive Committee kept to its opinion that only ordained ministers could perform baptisms. In 1987, the Liturgy Committee of the LMT questioned the practise of the Executive Committee to authorise non-ordained evangelists and even parish members to administer the Holy Communion as this had led to a situation where evangelists without ordination or installation functioned more or less as ordained ministers. The Liturgy Committee pointed out that even if the right to administer the Holy Communion had been given for a certain context or for a limited period of time it was in some cases practised disregarding the restrictions. There had also been some misuse of the title 'pastor' within the LMT, as evangelists, despite the fact that they had not been ordained, were called pastors. This had caused problems when the Liturgy Committee and the Ordination Committee tried to determine the tasks and the responsibilities of the ordained ministry.⁴⁶⁰

The question of the rights and titles of the offices within the LMT had probably been influenced by the situation in other churches in Thailand. The Church of Christ in Thailand used the terms ordained minister, *sasanacharn*, and pastor, i.e. leader of the local congregation, *sitsayaphiban*, for its offices of preaching. Most Protestant groups in Thailand were

⁴⁶⁰ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1985/Ordaining Thai ministers in Lutheran Mission in Thailand; AFELM II 17 Executive Committee of the LMT, June 28, 1985, 108/85; AFELM II 17 Executive Committee of the LMT, September 12, 1985, 134/85; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1986/Report from the Constitution Committee; ANMS Thailand Letter from Kjell Sandvik on behalf of the Liturgy Committee to the Executive Committee of LMT, October 1, 1987; AFELM II 24 Executive Committee of the LMT, May 30, 1991, 69/91; AFELM II 24 Executive Committee of the LMT, April 23, 1992, 55/92; AFELM II 24 Executive Committee of the LMT, December 17, 1992, 150/92.

influenced by this practise and used the same terms. In addition, many churches had the office of evangelist as well. The relationship between these three offices - ordained minister, pastor and evangelist - was complex. The leader of the congregation, sitsayaphiban, could either be an ordained minister or an un-ordained commissioned church worker. The administration of the sacraments was not reserved for the ordained minister. In most local congregations non-ordained pastors carried out the pastoral duties. Normally it was the non-ordained pastor and the elders or the members of the council of the congregation that had the right to administer baptism and the Holy Communion. The Church of Christ wanted to keep the requirements for ordination high. Ordination was looked upon more as a mark of honour than an ordination to administer the sacraments. The ordained ministry was often disconnected from the local congregations and worked within the administration and theological training of the church. As many of the evangelists of the LMT had a past in the Church of Christ in Thailand or in other Protestant churches it was not surprising that there was some confusion of ideas concerning the offices within the LMT.⁴⁶¹

Towards the end of 1987, the Ordination Committee informed the Executive Committee of the LMT that now there were several individuals who met the requirements for ordination according to the Guidelines for the Ordained Ministry. The Executive Committee accepted four of these for ordination, all of whom were evangelists within the LMT. The candidates for ordination were Sompong Hanpradit, Paul Pongsak Limthongvirutn, Suk Luangfong, and Thaweeep Oiwan. In addition, Banjob Kusawadee fulfilled the requirements for ordination, but since he was studying in Hong Kong at the

⁴⁶¹ ANMS Thailand Letter from Kjell Sandvik on behalf of the Liturgy Committee to the Executive Committee of LMT, October 1, 1987; Smith 1982, 220-221; Makela 2000,198-204.

time his ordination was postponed. The evangelists of the LMT were both men and women and both sexes could serve as person in charge of a local congregation. All the candidates for ordination were however men as the LMT had not yet solved the question of ordination of women.⁴⁶²

Before the evangelists could be ordained, they had to pass an ordination course. The course consisted of instruction concerning Lutheran dogmatics, Lutheran service life and Lutheran occasional services, the Lutheran comprehension of ordained ministry, and the present situation of the LMT. A personal interview with each candidate for ordination was part of the course. During these interviews, the leaders of the LMT were able to make sure that the candidate for ordination had understood and embraced the Lutheran doctrine. The interviews also provided a possibility for pastoral counselling, prayer and spiritual preparation for the ordination.⁴⁶³

The first ordination within the Lutheran Mission was held on April 17, 1988 in the church of the Samroong congregation at the same time as the General Assembly of the LMT that year. The Rev. John C. M. Tse, President of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong (ELCHK) officiated at the ordination. Bishop Samuel Lehtonen from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and Secretary General Odd Bondevik of the NMS were also present. Of the four ministers who were ordained, three were to work in the Lutheran congregations in

⁴⁶² AFELM II 42 Letter from the Ordination Committee to the Executive Committee of the LMT, December 14, 1987; AFELM II 42 Executive Committee of the LMT, April 6, 1988, 42/88; AFELM II 42 Letter from Christopher Woie on behalf of the Ordination Committee to the Executive Committee of the LMT, April 13, 1988.

⁴⁶³ AFELM II 42 Letter from the Ordination Committee to the Executive Committee of the LMT, December 14, 1987; AFELM II 42 Letter from Christopher Woie on behalf of the Ordination Committee to the ordination candidates, March 28, 1988.

Bangkok and one in the Lutheran congregation in the city of Ubon Ratchathani in northeastern Thailand.⁴⁶⁴

Two years later, in March 1990, the Executive Committee of the LMT accepted the evangelists Banjob Kusawadee and Anant Likhitvityanoont for ordination. The ordination was held in Phasee Charoen Good News Church at the same time as the General Assembly of the LMT in 1990. Secretary, Rev. Egil H. Eggen of the NMS officiated at the ordination. Rev. Koy Ying Kwei of the ELCHK, Rev. Thomas F. Schaeffer of the Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore (LCMS), Rev. Thaweeep Oiwan of the Thai Lutheran Committee, Rev. Svein Nybo of the NMS and Rev. Seikku Paunonen of FELM assisted at the ordination. This was the second ordination within the LMT.⁴⁶⁵

In connection with the consecration of the new central office of the LMT at Sukhumvit Soi 50 in Bangkok in November 1991 and the celebration of the 15 years of Lutheran mission in Thailand, the LMT arranged its third ordination. This time the evangelists Visanukorn Upama and Chamraeng Daengruan were ordained. The ordination was officiated by Mission Director Henrik Smedjebacka of FELM, who was assisted by Rev. Koy Ying Kwei, Rev. Thomas F. Schaeffer, Rev. Egil H. Eggen, Rev. Kjell Sandvik of the NMS and Rev. Banjob Kusawadee of the Thai Lutheran Committee officiated at the ordination.⁴⁶⁶ The fourth ordination was held at the same time

⁴⁶⁴ AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan tyoalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1988, 6; Woie 1992, 348.

⁴⁶⁵ AFELM II 24 Executive Committee of the LMT, March 15, 1990, 37/90; AFELM I 81 Minutes of the General Assembly of the LMT 1990; Suomen Lahetyssanommat 5/1994, Thaimaahan syntyi luterilainen kirkko.

⁴⁶⁶ AFELM I 68 Telefax from Seikku Paunonen to Kjell Sandvik, October 18, 1991; AFELM II 24 Executive Committee of the LMT, October 24, 1991, 125/91; AFELM I 68 Program for the 15-years anniversary of Lutheran Ministry in Thailand and dedication of the new premises in Soi 50, November

as the General Assembly of the LMT in 1993. Bishop Daniel Chong of the LCMS and two evangelists, Virachoot Kambao and Kaew Thowannang, were ordained. This time the ordination was held in the Good News Church in Ubon Ratchathani.⁴⁶⁷

All the ten ministers who were ordained within the LMT between 1988 and 1993 were thus men. When the Lutheran Church in Thailand was established in 1994, the new church had eight ordained ministers in service. Two of the ordained ministers had discontinued working for the LMT. One of them had retired from the LMT in order to pursue studies abroad. The other had left due to economic irregularities that had taken place in the congregation of which he had been in charge.⁴⁶⁸

The LMT encouraged both men and women to study theology. All the partner organisations within the LMT represented churches that ordained women as well. During the mission period 1976-1994 many female theologians served in Thailand, but these were not ordained pastors. The Joint Board for Thailand and the Executive Committee of the LMT took the position that they had no objection if a woman, who had been ordained in her home country, wanted to serve in Thailand in an un-ordained position. The LMT did not want, however, to be the one to decide whether the Lutheran Church

3,1991; AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan työalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1991,12; AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1992/Chairperson's Report; Suomen Lahetyssanommat 2/1992, Neljaa syytä juhlia.

⁴⁶⁷ AFELM II 24 Ordination Committee of the LMT, August 24,1992.

⁴⁶⁸ AFELM II 24 Executive Committee of the LMT, May 31 and June 1, 71/90; AFELM I 67 Letter from Svein Nybo to Egil Eggen, June 11, 1990; AFELM II 24 Joint Board for Thailand, April 16,1991, 7; AFELM I 68 Joint Meeting between bishop Daniel Chong and members of EC and TLC, May 24, 1991; AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1992/Chairperson's Report; Finska Missionssällskapets årsbok 1994, 95.

in Thailand should ordain women or not, but left this question to be solved by the young church itself. After its establishment, the Lutheran Church in Thailand appointed two committees to analyse the question of woman ministers. One of the committees was to concentrate on the theological aspects of ordaining women and the other on cultural aspects. However, at the time of writing this thesis no women had yet been ordained within the Lutheran Church in Thailand.⁴⁶⁹

The most prominent positions for the Thai employees of the LMT were mostly held by men. Until the first ordination, Thai men and women serving in the Lutheran congregations were at least in theory more or less equal as there was only one office, the evangelist. The leader of the congregations, the person in charge, was as a rule a missionary and both men and women could hold this position. After the first ordinations, the position of person in charge was mostly filled by the newly ordained ministers. Women could hold the position when there was no ordained minister available. During the first half of the 1990s, around 10 congregations had a male leader, while women were in charge of two or three congregations.⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁶⁹ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1983/Ordination programme for evangelists in LMT; AFELM II 42 Executive Committee of the LMT, June 28, 1988, 80/88; AFELM II 24 Executive Committee of the LMT, September 27, 1990, 104/90; AFELM II 24 Joint Meeting between JBT, LMT-E.C. and TLC, April 16, 1991, case 2; AFELM II 24 Joint Board for Thailand, November 5, 1991, Item 5; AFELM 8.2.7.2./3. Neuvottelumatka Thaimaahan 18-26.4.1994, report by Seikku Paunonen; ALMT Church Council of the ELCT, January 26, 1995, 1/95; ALMT Church Council of the ELCT, May 29, 1997, 59/97; Woie 1998, 27.

⁴⁷⁰ AFELM II 24 Executive Committee of the LMT, November 21, 1991, 127/91 Appendix Administrative responsibilities of persons in charge; AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1990-1994/List of personnel"

The change from foreign to national leadership in the Lutheran congregations in Thailand does not always seem to have been an easy situation for the missionaries. According to Markku Ala-Uotila, Chairman of the LMT in 1990, the leader centred model of leadership, which was common in Thailand, was felt by the European missionaries to be old-fashioned and ineffective. They even feared that it could affect the future church negatively. It was not unusual that the missionaries felt that the local supervisor was not able to organise the work properly and that the leader of the congregation did not benefit the knowledge and experience of the missionary although there would have been plenty of needs in the congregation. The LMT tried to redress the problem by arranging leadership training and by creating alternative models to the leader centred model, but the relationship between the Thai person in charge and the missionaries continued to be problematic in some congregations.⁴⁷¹

The leader centred model of leadership also caused other kinds of difficulties. The concept of a priesthood of believers is one of the basic doctrines of Lutheranism. According to the plans and strategies of the LMT, laymen were to play an important role in the activities of the Lutheran congregations in Thailand. In reality, however, the parish workers were in a key position. According to Missionary Tapio Karjalainen of FELM, the Lutheran missionaries in Thailand soon realised that in cultures that were as strongly authoritative as the Thai culture, the doctrine of the priesthood of believers was almost as revolutionary as the one about justification by faith.⁴⁷² For the LMT, it was nevertheless an important step towards an autonomous church and a condition for the establishment of a Lutheran Church in Thailand, that there were indigenous

⁴⁷¹ AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan työalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1990, 6.

⁴⁷² Hengellinen kuukausilehti 10/1990, Naky Kristuksen maasta.

evangelists and ordained ministers to lead the work of the Lutheran congregations.

6.4 Organising the local congregations

The organising of local congregations was mentioned in the *Agreement on Mission Cooperation in Thailand*, where it was agreed that one of the main purposes of the *Lutheran Mission in Thailand* (LMT) was to 'establish local congregations which shall be united in one Lutheran church'. Further on in the agreement it was stated that one of the areas where the partners of the LMT were to cooperate was the "preparing of guidelines, rules and regulations for national workers, for the establishment of local congregations and for a united Lutheran Church".⁴⁷³ In the first five years plan of the LMT, the main purpose of the work was mentioned several times. According to the plan, it was the hope and prayer of the LMT that after five years there would be at least three organised congregations with satellite congregations, home meetings, and cell groups. In the second long-range plan, *Five Years Plan for the Lutheran Mission in Thailand 1986-1990*, it was clearly established that the establishment of a Lutheran Church in Thailand should start by preparing and putting into practice guidelines for organising the local congregations.⁴⁷⁴

The LMT defined its congregations as fellowships of believers who confessed their faith in words and deeds. These fellowships were divided into organised congregations, non-organised congregations, and preaching places. In order to be

⁴⁷³ ANMS Thailand Agreement on Mission Cooperation in Thailand 1980, § III, § VI.

⁴⁷⁴ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1981/Five Years Plan of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand 1981-1985,1-2; AFELM I 66 Five Years Plan for the Lutheran Mission in Thailand 1986-1990, 5.

considered an organised congregation, a congregation needed at least twenty voting members⁴⁷⁵, its own pastor, evangelist or missionary to lead the work, regular offerings to cover the annual budget, and its own congregation committee. A non-organised congregation did not have enough members to register and was not required to have a congregation committee, but it had its own pastor/missionary/evangelist who led the work. At preaching places, regular Sunday meetings were held, but the work functioned under an organised congregation. The working methods used in the different congregations were similar. Common activities were Sunday services, home calls, Bible groups, English language classes, children and youth groups, book selling and lending, evangelism meetings and social service. Different methods were used according to the needs of the people, the response to the work and the special skills of the employees at the church centre.⁴⁷⁶

According to the view of the LMT, the establishment of a Thai Lutheran church had to begin at grass root level, i.e. in the local congregations. It would not be possible to establish an autonomous Lutheran church if the congregations did not have a clear organisation, active and responsible parish members as well as well-qualified national leaders. Therefore, when the LMT in 1983, appointed a Constitution Committee with the task of planning the establishment of a Lutheran

⁴⁷⁵ According to the Guidelines of the Thai Lutheran Fellowship, 'voting members' were adults who had received baptism and enrolled as members in one of the congregations of the LMT. The voting members had to have been participating in the life of the congregation for at least one year and to have regularly been receiving the Holy Communion.

⁴⁷⁶ AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan työalan yleiskertomus vuodelta 1987, 6; ANMS Thailand Thai Lutheran Fellowship Guidelines, December 15, 1988, 4; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1981/Five Years Plan of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand 1981-1985, 3-4; Suomen Lahetyssanommat 13/1981, Hyvä ettei Jeesus jaantanut hautaan.

Church in Thailand and preparing a proposal for a constitution of the church, one of the first measures of the committee was to prepare guidelines for the local congregations and the congregation boards. According to the plans of the Constitution Committee, the Thai leaders of the Lutheran congregations were to be given about ten years to test the new congregation board guidelines. After this time the national leaders would hopefully be able to present their own visions for the work and the future church and be ready to prepare and take in use a church constitution. In this way the constitution of the future church would not be custom-made by foreigners, but an indigenous Thai Lutheran constitution.⁴⁷⁷

The idea of having a Congregation Board or a Congregation Committee in each of the Lutheran congregations had been broached at an early stage. By 1981, the Executive Committee of the LMT had accepted the first temporary guidelines for the congregation boards of the Lutheran congregations. These boards of the congregations did not have many administrative obligations but were to concentrate on the spiritual work of the congregations. The main purpose of the congregation boards was to work for the growth of the congregation both spiritually and in numbers. In addition, the boards were to encourage and coordinate the different activities at the church centres, promote the cooperation between different fields of action, parish members, and coworkers, and take responsibility for the offerings to the congregation by planning and budgeting. The congregation boards were to have four members and one substitute. The pastor or evangelist in charge was an ex officio member of the board,

⁴⁷⁷ AFELM II 17 Executive Committee of the LMT, June 2, 1983, 76/83, Appendix Guidelines for Functional Committees; AFELM II 17 Memorandum of advisory discussions of the key points in planning the work in Thailand in view of the oncoming General Assembly, February 9, 1984; AFELM Cbb 105 Johtokunnan kokous, May 24, 1984, 87 § Liite N:o 6.

and also the missionary in charge of the congregation had automatically a seat on the board.⁴⁷⁸

The guidelines for the congregation boards were revised two years later in 1983. The responsibilities of the boards remained roughly the same, but there was some elucidation as to how the committees should be elected and who could be elected a member of a congregation board. It was, for instance, made clear that only one representative from each family could serve on the board at the same time. Gradually, the boards also developed a more important role.⁴⁷⁹ The LMT did not, however, consider these guidelines final and therefore the Constitution Committee continued developing the organisation of the local congregations and revising the guidelines of the congregation boards. The congregation boards acquired their final shape in 1986 when the General Assembly of the LMT accepted the revised guidelines for what was now to be called congregation committees. When the guidelines were taken into use the same year it was considered the first step towards organising the local congregations that were to be united in an autonomous Lutheran Church in Thailand. The congregation committees were seen as the predecessors to the congregation boards that, later on, would be established by the autonomous church.⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁸ ALMT Constitution Committee, September 22, 1981; AFELM Hia 29 Executive Committee of the LMT, September 24, 1981, 93/81, Appendix 1 Temporary Guidelines for the Congregation Boards of the Lutheran Churches in the LMT.

⁴⁷⁹ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1983/Regulations of the Congregation Board; AFELM II 17 Executive Committee of the LMT, November 3, 1983, 154/83, Appendix Preliminary guidelines for Church Committees in the LMT.

⁴⁸⁰ ALMT Constitution Committee, January 13, 1986; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1986/Guidelines for Congregation Committees in the Lutheran Mission in Thailand to be used in a local congregation as the first step in organising the congregation; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1986/Report from the Constitution Committee; AFELM Hia 45

According to the plans of the Constitution Committee, the organising of a local congregation should take place in two steps. For new congregations there were preliminary guidelines with limited rights and responsibilities, but after a period of time the congregation could start functioning according to permanent guidelines exercising full rights and responsibilities. As the congregations of the LMT, in 1986, were still generally small and young and more than half of the parish members had been baptised during the previous two years, none of the congregations were considered ready to assume full responsibilities. On the other hand, the increasing number of parish members made it necessary to organise the local congregations better.⁴⁸¹

A congregation committee consisting of four or five members could be elected when a congregation had at least ten baptised members who had attained the age of 18 years and been members of the congregation for at least one year. The minister or evangelist of the congregation was to be an ex officio member of the Congregation Committee. Missionaries who were assigned to work in the congregation could be elected ordinary members of the committee. In case the missionary was not elected a member of the Congregation Committee, he or she could act as a consultative member of the committee. Only one representative from each family could serve on the committee at the same time. The Congregation Committee was to be elected for a period of one calendar year and the members of the committee could be re-elected. It was the Annual Meeting of the congregation that elected the members of the Congregation Committee. The Annual Meeting consisted of all members of a congregation. In addition to electing the Congregation Committee, the tasks of

Thaimaan työalan yleiskertomus 1987, 6.

⁴⁸¹ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1986/Report from Constitution Committee.

the Annual Meeting were to supervise the administration of the congregation, make up long-range plans for the work and provide a fellowship for spiritual nourishing.⁴⁸² The purpose of the Congregation Committee was, on the other hand, to promote the spiritual life of the congregation and to take some responsibility for administrative matters. The committee was, in cooperation with the working team of the congregation, to plan and coordinate different church activities such as Sunday services, Sunday school, youth groups and diaconal work, and to work for the self-support of the congregation, take part in budget planning and bookkeeping. The main emphasis of the work of the Congregation Committee was, however, to be on outreach and nourishing the Christian faith.⁴⁸³

Information on how the congregation committees were introduced and received in the Lutheran congregations in Thailand is scarce. The first congregation to take into use the practice of having a congregation committee was the Immanuel congregation, which had already elected a congregation committee by 1982. The experiment failed, however, as the parish members, according to the pastor of the congregation, were not yet mature enough to carry the responsibility. A new attempt to establish a congregation committee in the congregation was made in 1987. The second congregation to have a congregation committee was Lad Phrao, which elected its first congregation committee in 1984.

⁴⁸² ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1986/Guidelines for Congregation Committees in the Lutheran Mission in Thailand to be used in a local congregation as the first step in organising the congregation; ANMS Thailand Thai Lutheran Fellowship Guidelines, December 15, 1988, 5-6.

⁴⁸³ AFELM II 17 Executive Committee of the LMT, August 9, 1985, 127/85 Appendix Policies and proceeds of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1986/Guidelines for Congregation Committees in the Lutheran Mission in Thailand to be used in a local congregation as the first step in organising the congregation.

The reports from the congregation, however, imply that the dividing of responsibility between the working team and the congregation committee was not felt as clear enough, but the practice of having a congregation committee seems to have continued all the same.⁴⁸⁴ In 1986, something called church meetings were introduced in the Peace Lutheran Soi Amon church. These meetings were held once a month and the church members were called to discuss the situation of the congregation and to plan the work together. The meetings seem to have been an attempt to present the idea of having a congregation committee to support the work of the congregation. The Samroong congregation also started similar meetings in 1986.⁴⁸⁵ The Samroong congregation obtained its first congregation committee early in 1987, and the Laksi congregation also elected its first congregation committee in 1987. The Phasee Charoen congregation reported that it did not yet have a congregation committee in 1987, but that the parish members worked together as if there would have been a committee.⁴⁸⁶ Unfortunately, the information on congregation administration and economy lessens from 1987 and on. This trend seems to coincide with several of the Lutheran congregations acquiring a Thai pastor or evangelist as the person in charge. Maybe the new parish leaders considered the information about organisation and economy

⁴⁸⁴ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1983/Report from Klong Toey; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1986/Report from the LMT Constitution Committee; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1987/Report from Lad Phrao Church

⁴⁸⁵ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1987/Report from Peace Lutheran Church; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1987/Report from Samroong Church.

⁴⁸⁶ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1987/Annual report from Bang Khun Thien; AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan tyoalan yleiskertomus 1987, 6; ALMT General Assembly of the LMT 1988/Yearly report from Samroong Church; ALMT General Assembly of the LMT 1988/Report from Laksi Church.

secondary to information about activities and evangelisation. In addition, the lack of practice in writing reports and formulating oneself in English might be one of the reasons for the curt reports.

In the Five Years Plan of the LMT for 1991-1995, it was established that all organised congregations that could have a congregation committee had one. In some congregations that did not yet meet with the requirements for electing a proper congregation committee, a preliminary committee had been appointed to help the evangelist or the working team. The five-year plan also pointed out that even if the administration of a local congregation was formally in order, the practical matters and responsibilities were in many cases not yet clear enough. It was further stated that the LMT on several occasions had realised that the members of the congregation committees were not yet "mature enough" for the task and not willing to commit themselves to the life of the congregation in this way. The work on organising the Lutheran congregations continued thus until the Lutheran Church in Thailand was established in 1994 and assumed responsibility for the congregations.⁴⁸⁷

6.5 The endeavours made towards achieving economic self-reliance

The first time self-reliance was officially included in the principal thinking of the *Lutheran Mission in Thailand* (LMT) was in the second five year plan, *Five Years Plan for the Lutheran Mission in Thailand 1986-1990*. For the LMT it was important that the future Lutheran Church in Thailand would be self-reliant. The LMT feared that if the church year after

⁴⁸⁷ AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1991/Five Years Plan 1991-1995 of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand, 4-5.

year trusted in foreign missions for support it would never be considered a Thai church. Furthermore, if the support from the LMT for some reason suddenly ceased, the church would have difficulties managing on its own. According to The Five Years Plan, the most important measure in order to make the Lutheran congregations in Thailand self-reliant was to teach the parish members to take responsibility for their own congregation, for the outreach, for each other and for the economic development..⁴⁸⁸

By emphasizing the importance of self-support, the LMT was much in line with the thinking of most of the Western mission agencies in the 1980s. Since the latter part of the 1850s, it had been the aim of the mission agencies to help the churches that they had established or cooperated with, to become self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating.⁴⁸⁹ In a Lutheran context, the importance of creating self-reliant churches had been stressed by the Lutheran World Federation. For instance, at the third All Asia Lutheran Conference in Singapore in 1976, self-reliance was given particular attention, as self-reliance in the Asian context had appeared to be of crucial importance for church autonomy and for the relationship between Asian churches and their overseas partners. Within the Lutheran World Federation, it was stressed that self-reliance was much more than economic self-support and that the contextualisation of the Gospel was the only way to make the Asian churches independent and self-reliant.⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸⁸ AFELM Hia 39 Thaimaan työalueen vuosikertomus vuodelta 1984, 6; AFELM I 66 Five Years Plan for the Lutheran Mission in Thailand 1986-1990, 2, 5; Suomen Lahetysseuran III viisivuotissuunnitelma 1981a, 22-23.

⁴⁸⁹ For more information about the autonomy of the young churches, see for instance Beyerhaus 1956. An Asian view on self-reliance has for instance been given by Jose B. Fuliga at the All Asia Lutheran Seminar on Mission 1978, 137-150.

⁴⁹⁰ Third All Asia Lutheran Conference Singapore 1976, 109-118, 147-169;

However, even before the discussions were properly started concerning the congregations and departments of the LMT becoming self-supporting, there were several practical and economic matters on which the Lutheran congregations had to decide. One of the first decisions that the congregations had to make was when it would be convenient to gather the first collection. It was discussed how many members a congregation needed before it could gather a collection and if it was suitable to gather collections even if the congregation had no baptised members. At least in the beginning the congregations did not gather collections as such but had a collection box somewhere in the church for optional donations. Yet from 1982, there were reports that the LMT, because of a proposal by the Thai coworkers, had started to gather collections in connection to the Sunday services. The money received through collections as well as other local support was to be booked separately from the book-keeping of the LMT. Within the LMT, it was hoped that this would be a start and an incentive for the congregations to work for self-support.⁴⁹¹

It was a source of joy for the missionaries of the LMT that the Thai coworkers saw the importance of starting to gather collections in the Lutheran congregations. According to Missionary Kirsti Kosonen of the *Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission* (FELM), the teaching about offering was an area where the missionaries consciously tried to stay in the background and give the responsibility to the Thai coworkers.

Daressalaam 1977, 233-234; Scherer 1982, 26, 101-101, 210-211; From Dar es Salaam to Budapest 1977-1984 1984, 18-19, 89-90.

¹ AFELM Hia 39 Executive Committee of the LMT, January 21, 1982, 8/82; AFELM Hia 39 Executive Committee of the LMT, November 25, 1982, 176/82; AFELM II 22 Poytakirja piispa John Vikstromin, laaket.lis. Juhani Lukkarin ja Aasiantyön sihteerin Paavo Kilven vierailusta Suomen Lahetyssseuran Thaimaan työalalla 26.1-29.1.1982; AMBT Conversation with Maija and Jaakko Makela, May 15, 2006.

The missionaries felt that they, as foreigners, were not the right persons to teach the Thais about offering and self-reliance, especially as they in comparison with many of the Thai Lutherans were quite affluent. The Thai coworkers' teaching about offering was based on the Bible. At least tithing and Paul's writings about offering were dealt with, but it was also considered important to find a Thai model for the offering. Generally, the teaching about tithing was not taken literally. According to Kosonen, offering was nothing new in the Thai context. The Thais were used to offering in religious contexts as alms and offering was part of Buddhist religious practice. Furthermore, FELM and the *Norwegian Missionary Society* (NMS) considered it important to also stress that their financial contribution to the Lutheran work in Thailand, to a great extent, was based on offerings from Christians in Finland and Norway.⁴⁹²

At the General Assembly of the LMT in 1984, self-reliance was thoroughly discussed for the first time. As a result, the LMT put together an education programme about self-reliance and started to teach the Thai coworkers and the elected representatives of the Lutheran congregations how to make and work according to a budget. The General Assembly did not at this stage make any decision as to how each congregation should proceed in order to become self-supported, but designated the Executive Committee of the LMT to prepare detailed guidelines for the offering to the congregations, the budgeting, and the making of self-reliance plans. The General Assembly gave nevertheless a general recommendation as to how the Lutheran congregations in Thailand should work towards self-support. The congregations were to be divided into two categories according to their age. The so-called old congregations, i.e.

⁴⁹² AMBT Conversation with Kirsti Kosonen, October 8, 2007; AMBT Conversation with Jaakko Makela, March 23, 2009.

congregations that had been established in or before 1984, should increase their degree of self-support by 5 percent annually starting from 20 percent. Since these congregations had been active for some time, it was presumed that they were already self-reliant to some extent and could reach full self-support about fifteen years after their establishment. The young congregations, i.e. church centres that had been established after 1984, were still considered to be totally dependent of foreign funds. These centres were supposed to increase their self-support by 10 percent annually and were to become self-reliant ten years after their foundation. Based on these discussions and recommendations, a self-reliance plan was included in the *Policies and Procedures of the LMT* and in The Five Years Plan for the Lutheran Mission in Thailand 1986-1990.⁴⁹³

On the request of the general assemblies in 1985 and 1986, the treasurer of the LMT, Markku Ala-Uotila, presented a more detailed proposal for a self-reliance and investment plan for the congregations and departments of the LMT to the General Assembly in 1987. According to this proposal, the congregations were no longer divided into old and new ones, but all congregations and departments were to increase their self-support by 6 percent annually. Old congregations with premises of their own were, however, to start from 22 percent and old congregations with rented premises from 12 percent. New congregations and departments were to attain full support from the LMT the first year after their foundation. The new self-reliance and investment programme was to be implemented from 1988, and under these conditions, old

⁴⁹³ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1984/Building a self-supported church; AFELM Cbb 105 Johtokunnan kokous, May 24, 1984, 87 § Liite N:o 6; AFELM Hia 39 Thaimaan tyoalueen vuosikertomus vuodelta 1984, 6; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1987/Investment and self-supporting policies.

congregations with their own premises ought to reach full self-support by the year 2001 and old congregations with rented premises two years later. New congregations were to become self-supported eighteen years after their establishment. According to Ala-Uotila, this meant that the annual increase of self-support in the congregations of the LMT would be a little lower than in other Lutheran churches in Asia. Generally, the annual increase of self-support in Asian Lutheran churches was about 10 percent, but Ala-Uotila judged this too high a percentage for the Thai Lutheran congregations.⁴⁹⁴

A fact, which still divided the congregations, was thus that some of the older congregations owned their premises while the others rented theirs. However, the congregations had not bought the premises themselves, but the LMT had contributed with the greater part of the money. The congregations were therefore requested to pay back at least 10 percent of the price for their church premises. Not until this had been done, could they start saving money for enlarging the premises or building new premises. The younger congregations were encouraged to establish church funds in order to save money for buying a building lot and/or church premises. The proposal for self-reliance and investment policy underlined that the most important thing was not that a congregation reached full self-support rapidly, but that a stable economy was created. The proposal stressed that the self-support capacity was not only dependent on the willingness of the parish members to offer funds to the congregation but a consequence of how the congregation used its funds. If the income was less than what was estimated by the self-reliance programme, expenses had

⁴⁹⁴ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1987/Proposal of Self-reliance and Investment Policy for the Lutheran Mission in Thailand; AFELM II 42 Implementation of Self-reliance and Investment Policy in Bangkok for the Lutheran Mission in Thailand (follow-up of GA-case 4/87).

to be cut and the lacking amount of income was to be considered a debt to the LMT. The debt had to be cleared at the beginning of every New Year before starting to count the following year's income.⁴⁹⁵

In accordance with this proposal, the General Assembly of the LMT accepted in 1987 the first version of the *Investment and self-supporting policies in Bangkok for the Lutheran Mission in Thailand* and agreed that the policies were to be evaluated and adjusted after three years. According to the version that was ratified in 1990, the LMT was to reduce its support to the Lutheran congregations by 7 percent annually. This meant that the congregations were supposed to have become fully self-supported sixteen years after their establishment. In case a congregation had problems with reaching the goals for self-support, the LMT was, however, to be flexible. Concerning the investment policy of the Lutheran congregations, it was decided in 1992 that a congregation ought to fulfil the following criteria before it could invest in land or premises. The congregation had to have at least 30 voting members and be an organised congregation according to the guidelines of the Thai Lutheran Fellowship. It had to have at least 10 percent of the price in savings and its investment plan and budget proposal had to be accepted by the Executive Committee of the LMT.⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹⁵ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1987/Proposal of Self-reliance and Investment Policy for the Lutheran Mission in Thailand; ANMS Minutes from the General Assembly of the LMT 1987, Case 4/87; AFELM II 42 Implementation of Self-reliance and Investment Policy in Bangkok for the Lutheran Mission in Thailand (follow-up of GA-case 4/87).

⁴⁹⁶ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1987/Investment and self-supporting policies; ANMS Minutes from the General Assembly of the LMT 1987, Case 4/87; AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1990/Self-reliance and Investment Policy for the Lutheran Mission in Thailand; Makela 1991, 4.2.

The self-reliance programme was generally received well by the Lutheran congregations even if the LMT, at times, had to explain the principles of the programme so that it would be understood in the same way by all congregations. During the 1980s, when the congregations experienced a rapid growth of membership most congregations were able to reach their goals for self-support, but when the parish membership started to stagnate and even decrease around 1990, the problems began. In the annual reports from the congregations, self-support is seldom mentioned. Yet the reports by the chairman and the treasurer of the LMT imply that the congregations often struggled with the self-reliance programme.⁴⁹⁷

In 1992, Pauli Rantanen, Treasurer of the LMT, expressed serious worries that the self-reliance programme was too rigid. In his experience, the evangelists/pastors and congregation committees used so much time and energy on achieving a self-supporting congregation, that they did not have energy or motivation for other parish work. The congregations were reluctant to use money and energy on outreach as this could make the self-support percentage drop and the maintenance of the parish premises were neglected due to economic reasons. In Rantanen' opinion, this was problematic, as the congregations, in fact, ought to concentrate on outreach since new members meant new and more income instead of increased expenses. It can thus be questioned if the self-reliance programme contributed to the stagnation of membership in the Lutheran congregations. In any case, the Thai parish workers of the LMT became sometimes so worried, depressed, or disappointed by the self-support situation of their congregation that they considered finding another job the only way out.⁴⁹⁸ Missionary Jaakko Makela of

⁴⁹⁷ AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan tyoalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1988, 8.

⁴⁹⁸ AFELM I 67 Proposal for Investment and Church Work strategy Plan for LMT by the Ad hoc Committee for Investments, November 9, 1990;

FELM has seconded Rantanen's view that the self-reliance programme of the LMT was too demanding. According to Makela, the goals of the self-reliance programmes from 1987 and 1990 were intentionally made low so that the congregations and departments would have a realistic possibility to reach them. However, the estimates were nonetheless too optimistic as they were made during a period of powerful growth in the Lutheran congregations. When the congregations in the late 1980s experienced harder times, both missionaries and Thai coworkers felt that the self-reliance programme was too rigid.⁴⁹⁹

A fact, which further complicated the efforts to become self-reliant in the Lutheran congregations, was the fact that the LMT had a reputation of being a rich organisation. It was natural that the Thais obtained this impression, as it was apparent that the LMT had enough money to employ the workers it needed, start church centres and different kind of projects, pursue the work it had initiated and buy or rent premises for its work. Moreover, the salaries of the coworkers of the LMT were often higher than the salary of workers in other Thai Christian churches. The salaries of the LMT were roughly at the same level as the salaries within the Church of Christ in Thailand, but most Thai churches could not afford to pay their employees this much. As a consequence, it was at times hard to motivate the congregations to work towards self-support. When the LMT in the beginning of the 1990s had less funds to use due to financial difficulties within both FELM and the NMS, it was not easy to find understanding for the fact that foreign money would not flow in at the same pace as earlier. The Asian member organisations of the LMT in

AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1991/Treasurer's Report 1990;
AFELM II 24 Executive Committee of the LMT, September 24, 1992,
Appendix Self-reliance programme for congregations.

⁴⁹⁹ AMBT Conversation with Maija and Jaakko Makela, May 15, 2006.

particular stressed, from their own experience, that if a mission agency put in a lot of money in at the beginning of the mission work, it would create problems later on when the mission partner started to reduce its support.⁵⁰⁰

The sources contain little information on how the Lutheran congregations received their income and how the parish members contributed to the economy of the congregation. Since the importance of the teaching concerning offering was mentioned time after time it is reasonable to assume that offerings were an important source of income. According to Jaakko Makela, the collections were the most important source of offering to the congregations. The parish members also gave special offerings, equipment, and materials to the congregation. In addition, the congregations seem to have been inventive in finding other ways to gather money. The Soi Amon congregation obtained income from renting out the parish premises. The Immanuel congregation arranged jumble sales. In Lad Phrao congregation, a women's group made handicrafts that were sold and also in Ubon Good News Church the selling of different kinds of products was an important source of income. Grace Lutheran Church arranged second hand markets. Several congregations arranged English courses and could in this way both earn some money and come in contact with new people. The Ubon Good News Church also admitted that a significant amount of its income came from visiting guests and the paid coworkers of the

⁵⁰⁰ ANMS General Assembly of LMT 1982/Report from the chairman; AFELM II 22 Memorandum from the meeting with Ms. M. Pesonen, head of the FMS missionary training, and the members of EC, October 13, 1983, §4; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1984/Building a self-supported church; AFELM I 67 Letter from Egil H. Eggen to the members of the Joint Board for Thailand, December 28, 1990; AFELM II 24 Joint Board for Thailand, November 11-14, 1992, § 1-4; AFELM I 77 Joint Board for Thailand, April 18, 1996, 9/96. For more information on the question of missions and money see for instance Bonk 1991.

congregation. In order to support and encourage the offering and the endeavours towards self-reliance, it was common that the congregations presented statistics about offerings on a notice board in the church centre.⁵⁰¹

Table 3 The level of self-support in the congregations of the LMT⁵⁰²

CONGREGATION	EST.	1984	1987	1990	1993
Peace Lutheran Church, Soi Amon	1977	6	19/21	57/34	48/54
Immanuel Lutheran Church	1977	7	32/20	43/34	46/54
Lad Phrao Church	1981	6	17/37	68/34	62/54
Samroong Church	1982	4	19/15	35/34	59/54

⁵⁰¹ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1984/Building a self-supported church; AFELM II 17 Executive Committee of the LMT, August 9, 1985, 127/85 Appendix Policies and proceeds of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand; AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1991/Peace Lutheran Church Soi Amon Annual Report; AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1991/Kluay Nam Thai Church Annual Report; AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1991/Lad Phrao Church Annual Report; AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1991/Grace Lutheran Church Annual Report; AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1991/Ubon Good News Church Annual Report; AMBT Conversation with Kirsti Kosonen, October 8, 2007; AMBT Conversation with Jaakko Makela, March 23, 2009.

⁵⁰² The first year of comparison is 1984, which shows the level of self-support at the time when the discussions about self-reliance started within the LMT. After this the self-support percentage is examined every third year. In 1987 the first general recommendation for self-support policies in the Lutheran congregations was replaced by a more detailed self-reliance plan for the Lutheran work in Thailand. In 1990 the self-reliance programme of the LMT was revised for the first time. The fourth year, 1993, presents the level of self-support in the Lutheran congregations a few months before the establishment of the Lutheran Church in Thailand. The statistics are from the end of each year. In the last three columns the first number gives the actual percentage of self-support, while the second tells the self-reliance goal of the congregation.

Grace Lutheran Church, Hua Mark	1983	7	15/13	39/34	44/54
Huay Khwang Lutheran Church ⁵⁰³	1985	-	5/11	22/6	-
Laksi Church	1985	-	19/30	43/24	117/44
Phasee Charoen Good News Church	1986	-	21/8	26/24	33/44
Don Muang Church	1988	-	-	24/12	36/32
Lutheran Church Sukhumvit 50	1993	-	-	-	20/6
Church 11	1993	-	-	-	7/4
Ubon Good News Church	1985	-	3/0,6	22/6	26/26
Phibun Church, Ubon	1988	-	-	42/4	32/24
Si Kheu Church, Khorat	1991	-	-	-	10/7
Fahoan Church ⁵⁰⁴	1993	-	-	-	-
TOTAL		6	16	37	44

Sources: The General Assembly of the LMT 1985-1994/Reports from the Treasurer.

Since the Lutheran congregations were mostly small with less than 50 parish members, their economic situation was very sensitive to fluctuations in membership and other factors. From the table, it becomes clear that it was not unusual that the congregations during the first years after their

⁵⁰³ The self-support goal for the Huay Khwang congregation seems by way of exception to have stayed at 6 percent for one or two years around 1990, probably due to the difficult membership situation in the congregation. The self-support percentage for 1993 is missing as the congregation that year was united with the Lad Phrao congregation.

⁵⁰⁴ As the Fahoan Church was not established until 1993, the congregation still received full support from the LMT in 1993 and the self-support percentage is consequently missing.

establishment succeeded in attaining their self-support goals. However, after a few years the struggle to reach the goals set by the self-reliance programme started. In the early 1990s particularly, as the growth of parish membership abated, the self-support goals became too heavy for several congregations. In most congregations, the percentage of self-support increased slowly, but the goals were not always reached. A few of the congregations even came to a stage when the percentage of self-support started to decline. Naturally, the fact that a great number of the members of the Lutheran congregations came from the lower classes of society negatively affected attempts to become self-supporting. During the period of investigation, only Laksi congregation reached 100 percent self-support.

By the end of 1993, the average percentage of self-support in the Lutheran congregations in Thailand was 44 percent. Nine of the fourteen congregations were able to reach their goals for self-support, but they were nevertheless still, to a great extent, dependent on outside support. Due to the establishment of the Lutheran Church in Thailand, the LMT in March 1994, made a new plan for the self-support of the congregations and departments of the church. The new self-reliance programme was to take effect from the beginning of May 1994. The self-reliance programme, roughly speaking, continued the policies established by earlier plans but gave the congregations more time to become self-supported. According to the new plan, the congregations would receive a fixed amount of annual economic support from the central administration of the Lutheran Church in Thailand. Within twenty years of the establishment of the church, all the Lutheran congregations were expected to have become fully self-supported.⁵⁰⁵

⁵⁰⁵ AFELM II 48 Executive Committee of the LMT, March 17, 1994, 22/94; AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1994/Treasurer's Report with Appendix 4; Mission 11/1993, Thailand far en egen luthersk kyrka.

6.6 The aspiration of the Thai Lutherans to become organised

The eventuality that the Thai workers of the *Lutheran Mission in Thailand* (LMT) and the Thai Lutherans would desire a separate organisation, meetings and discussion forums of their own, was not directly dealt with in the *Agreement on Mission Cooperation in Thailand*. The agreement left these kinds of concrete questions to be decided by the LMT and determined that the member organisations of the Lutheran mission should cooperate in the "*preparing of guidelines, rules and regulations for national workers, for the establishment of local congregations and for a united Lutheran Church*". The only meetings for the Thais that the first five-year plan of the LMT mentioned were gatherings for both missionaries and national workers for training, discussion, and spiritual edification. In the second five-year-plan of the LMT, the importance of the Thais having their own meetings was stressed and the role of the *Thai Christian Fellowship Committee* in building up a future Thai Lutheran church was underlined. It was clear that the Thai coworkers of the LMT and the members of the Lutheran congregations needed to be taken into consideration in the planning of the future church and that they needed a forum where they could express their views and visions.⁵⁰⁶

At the General Assembly in 1985, where the second five year plan was approved, the importance of including the Thais in the building of a Thai Lutheran church was also stressed when the visions and plans of the LMT were discussed/*We missionaries can not build the Thai church. We do not know the culture, we do not know the way of thinking. Our duty is to*

⁵⁰⁶ ANMS Thailand Agreement on Mission Cooperation in Thailand 1980, § VI; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1981/Five Years Plan of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand 1981-1985, 6; AFELM I 66 Five Years Plan for the Lutheran Mission in Thailand 1986-1990, 2,16.

encourage our Thai friends to ask questions. Our duty is to help them to have new visions. We do not know how the Thai church will be. What we state is that it should be part of Thai society and culture."⁵⁰⁷ Even if it was not clearly expressed in the official plans and strategies of the LMT until in the mid-1980s, the missionaries of the LMT were, from the start, aware of the importance of including the Thai Lutherans in the planning of the work and the future church. This can for instance be seen in the fact that from the very beginning there were always Thai representatives in the committees of the LMT.

As has been mentioned previously in this thesis, the LMT was diligent in founding new congregations and starting activities of different kinds. At an early stage the LMT started to plan the establishment of a Thai Lutheran church, but the LMT was a foreign organisation led by foreigners trying to bring about a Thai Lutheran church. In the midst of all this the Thai coworkers of the LMT were searching for their role and identity and they wanted opportunities to influence the work. As a consequence, the national workers were ready, in 1981, to present a set of guidelines for a fellowship designed for the Thai coworkers of the LMT. The LMT was however reluctant to accept the proposed guidelines as it feared that a fellowship solely for the coworkers could divide the little Lutheran group in Thailand. For this reason the LMT modified the proposed guidelines. The new association became a fellowship for both the Thai coworkers and the baptised members of the Lutheran congregations. The fellowship, that was called *Thai Churchmembers and Coworkers' Fellowship of the LMT*, was approved of by the Executive Committee of the LMT in December 1981. According to its guidelines, the aim of the fellowship was to *"have Christian fellowship together and promote mutual understanding between the different centres and branches of*

⁵⁰⁷ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1985/Vision and strategy for our Joint Lutheran Ministry in Thailand.

the LMT". The concrete activities of the fellowship were led by an executive committee, *Thai Churchmembers and Coworkers' Committee*, consisting of a chairman and five members, elected by the Annual Meeting of the fellowship. Organisationally the fellowship functioned under the Executive Committee of the LMT.⁵⁰⁸

Not long after the foundation of the Thai Churchmembers and Coworkers' Fellowship, the LMT realised that the fellowship did not function according to the guidelines that the Executive Committee of the LMT had compiled. It appeared that the Thai coworkers were generally unwilling to invite ordinary parish members to take part in the activities of the fellowship. The coworkers wanted a fellowship of their own where their special interests as LMT employees could be dealt with. The LMT, on the other hand, wanted an association that would also include the members of the Lutheran congregations and where the community between the Thai Lutherans would be emphasised. The membership in the Lutheran congregations was at this time growing fast and the LMT feared that it could harm the establishment of a Thai Lutheran church if already at this stage there were several Thai associations within the LMT. Despite this, the LMT realised that the coworkers and the parish members had somewhat different needs from the fellowship and that two different associations could be needed. It was decided to discontinue the fellowship in its present form. The coworkers would have an association of their own, but the LMT should continue the discussions with the Thai coworkers in order to find a fellowship model that would include both coworkers and parish members and that could be accepted by both groups. The aim of the LMT was still to create a joint association for coworkers and parish

⁵⁰⁸ AFELM Hia 29 Executive Committee of the LMT, December 17, 1981, 123/81, Appendix Guidelines for the Thai Churchmembers and Coworkers' Fellowship of the LMT.

members as it was considered that this kind of a fellowship would most benefit the future Lutheran Church in Thailand.⁵⁰⁹

In accordance with this, the LMT tried to restrict the authority and the activities of the *Thai Coworkers Fellowship of the LMT* when it was established in 1983. This was done, as the LMT feared that the parish members would otherwise have too little influence in the future church. The future church was not to be built with the coworkers in the centre or their association as a basis.⁵¹⁰ Due to fear of division, the LMT also established an association for both coworkers and parish members the same year. In the *Thai Christian Fellowship of LMT*, all baptised members of the Lutheran congregations as well as all full-time employees and part-time employees of the LMT could be members. The purpose of the association was to "*have a Christian fellowship for studying the Bible, worshipping and caring for each other*". The members of the Thai Christian Fellowship had the right to participate in the activities arranged by the fellowship and to attend and vote at the Annual Meeting of the fellowship. Only Christian members could, however, be elected members of the *Thai Christian Fellowship's Committee*. The task of the committee was to function in the period between two annual meetings, to arrange activities for the members, be responsible for the finances of the fellowship, and convene the annual meeting. In addition, the missionaries of the LMT could attend the annual meeting of the Thai Christian Fellowship, but they did not have the right to vote, and could not be elected members of the Thai Christian Fellowship's Committee.⁵¹¹ The activities arranged by the Thai

⁵⁰⁹ AFELM Hia 39 Executive Committee of the LMT, July 13, 1982, 110/82.

⁵¹⁰ AFELM Hia 39 Executive Committee of the LMT, July 13, 1982, 110/82; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1983/Proposal of amended guidelines for the Thai Co-workers and Churchmember's Fellowship of LMT; AMBT Conversation with Maija Makela, June 5, 1997.

⁵¹¹ AFELM II 17 Executive Committee of LMT, June 16, 1983, 81/83, Appendix Guidelines for the Thai Christian Fellowship of LMT.

Christian Fellowship were monthly prayer meetings and an annual camp. The prayer meetings consisted of singing and music, speeches and testimonies, praying and sharing a meal together. The meetings and the camps played an important role in creating unity between the Thai Lutheran congregations and the foreign members of the LMT.⁵¹²

Even if the LMT considered the Thai Christian Fellowship an important step in the process of establishing a Thai Lutheran church, it also realised that the Thais slowly needed to acquire more insight in the work of the LMT and take more responsibility for the Lutheran work in Thailand. Consequently all Thai evangelists were invited to the General Assembly of the LMT in 1986 as observers without the right to vote. The central administration, the Lutheran Institute of Theological Education, the Lutheran Mass Communication, the Rangsan bookstore, and the Kluay Nam Thai day nursery were requested to send one representative each. In addition, the Thai Christian Fellowship Committee was asked to appoint two parish members to attend the General Assembly.⁵¹³

The discussion of how the fellowship between the Thai Lutherans, coworkers as well as parish members, should operate, came to an end in 1987, when the guidelines of the *Thai Lutheran Fellowship* were ratified by the General Assembly of the LMT and the first *Thai Lutheran Assembly* was convened. The Thai Lutheran Fellowship continued the activities of the Thai Christian Fellowship. It was seen as a predecessor of the

⁵¹² ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1983/Report from Chairman; Suomen Lahetyssanommat 4/1987, Thailaista kirkkoa rakentamassa; Makela 1991, 4.4; Woie 1992, 348; Suomen Lahetyssanommat 4/1994, Thaimaalainen luterilainen kirkko syntyy buddhalaisen yhteison keskelle.

⁵¹³ AFELM II 42 Executive Committee of the LMT, February 27, 1986, 40/86; AFELM II 42 Meeting between the Joint Board for Thailand and the Executive Committee of the LMT, April 14, 1986, §3.

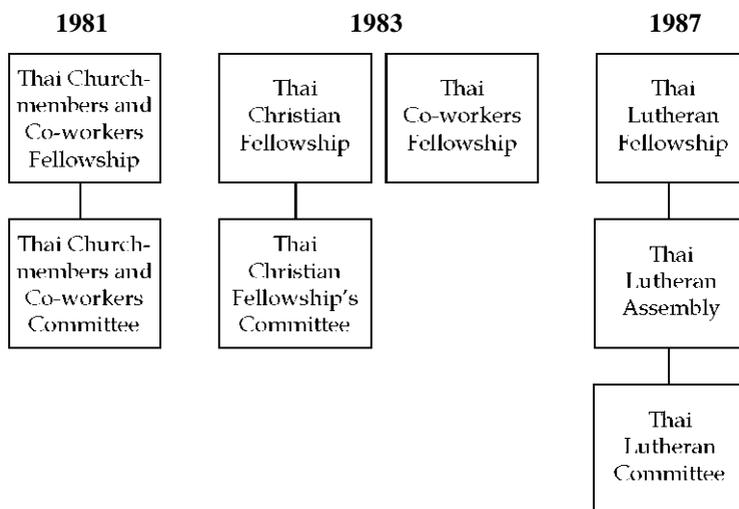
future Lutheran Church in Thailand and had a structure that could be used in developing the self-government of the church. Through the Thai Lutheran Fellowship the voice of the Thai coworkers and parish members would be better heard and their opinions could be considered at an earlier stage of the decision making process. The Thai Lutheran Fellowship was to make up the foundation of the future church as it consisted of the future members of the church. The Thai Lutheran Assembly was compared to the General Assembly of the future church and the *Thai Lutheran Committee* to the board of the church. Everyone who had been baptised and was a member of a local congregation of the LMT, could become a member of the Thai Lutheran Fellowship. The purpose of the fellowship was according to the guidelines to *"strengthen the unity between the congregations of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand, to provide common activities of the above-mentioned congregations, to carry on administrative duties according to the following guidelines and to make preparations towards establishing the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand"*.⁵¹⁴

The Thai Lutheran Fellowship was organised through the local congregations of the LMT. Each congregation had the right to send two delegates, the pastor/evangelist and one parish member, to the Thai Lutheran Assembly, which was the annual meeting of the fellowship. If there was more than one pastor/evangelist in the congregation the other(s) could participate in the assembly as observer(s). The task of the Thai Lutheran Assembly was to give recommendations to the General Assembly of the LMT concerning long-range plans, guidelines and budgets, the establishment of new

514 ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1987/Guidelines for the Thai Lutheran Fellowship; AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan työalan yleiskertomus vuodelta 1987, 4-5; ALMT General Assembly of the LMT 1988/ Report by the Chairman; AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1989/Chairman's Report; Suomen Lahetyssanomat 4/1987, Thailaista kirkkoa rakentamassa; Makela 1991, 4.4; Woie 1992, 348.

congregations and the planning for the future Lutheran Church in Thailand. In addition, the Thai Lutheran Assembly was to further spiritual fellowship between the Lutheran congregations. The Thai Lutheran Assembly appointed the Thai Lutheran Committee, which consisted of a chairman and four members. The Thai Lutheran Committee was to carry out the decisions made by the Thai Lutheran Assembly in the period between two assemblies.⁵¹⁵

Figure 2 The Thai Lutheran associations established 1981-1987⁵¹⁶



After having tried out several different models for organising the Thai Lutherans, it appeared that the LMT in the Thai Lutheran Fellowship had finally found an organisation that

⁵¹⁵ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1987/Guidelines for the Thai Lutheran Fellowship; AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan tyoalan yleiskertomus vuodelta 1987, 4-5.

⁵¹⁶ In this figure, the year of foundation of the Thai Lutheran association in question to be found above the time line. Below the time line the figure shows what relation the associations had to each other.

could serve both the parish members and Thai coworkers of the LMT, and function as a tool in the construction of the Thai Lutheran church. The cooperation between the Executive Committee of the LMT and the Thai Lutheran Committee was from the beginning intense. In 1989, the committees started to have monthly meetings together in order to discuss topics that the committees would deal with in the near future. In his annual report for 1990, the chairman of the LMT, Markku Ala-Uotila, wrote that both committees had felt it meaningful to prepare the matters in this way and that the decision-making had become easier after proper discussions. While planning for the coming Lutheran church, it was important that the future church leaders had both the right and the obligation to take responsibility for administrative questions and participate in the decision making.⁵¹⁷

As early as in 1985 the year 1994 was mentioned as a possible time for the establishment of the Lutheran Church in Thailand. As the year 1994 drew nearer, more and more responsibility was taken over by the Thais, particularly through the Thai Lutheran Committee. In 1991, the Thai Lutheran Committee assumed responsibility for the work in the Nakhon Ratchasima province in northeastern Thailand and for the evangelisation team. During 1991, the LMT decided to found boards for the Lutheran Mass Communication, the Lutheran Diakonia Ministry, and the Lutheran Institute of Theological Education. The intention was to transfer the decision making from the Executive Committee of the LMT to these boards where the Thais were to have a majority. The General Assembly of the LMT in 1991 entitled the Thai Lutheran Committee to appoint two representatives

⁵¹⁷ AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1989/Chairman's Report; AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1990/Chairman's Report; AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1991/Chairman's Report 1990; Suomen Lahetyssanomat 4/1987, Thailaista kirkkoa rakentamassa.

to serve as consultative members at the meetings of the Executive Committee of the LMT. In return, the Executive Committee was to have two representatives at the meetings of the Thai Lutheran Committee. Two years later the Thai representatives in the Executive Committee of the LMT also obtained the right to vote. The Executive Committee and the Thai Lutheran Committee abandoned their former custom to meet separately and started to have all their meetings together. According to the then chairman of the LMT, Tapio Karjalainen, this was important as it signalled that the mission was now ready for change and had trust in the Thai leaders.⁵¹⁸

At the beginning of 1992, the Executive Committee of the LMT delegated some major responsibilities to the Thai Lutheran Committee. The committee became responsible for preparing the budget and following up the bookkeeping of the Lutheran congregations. It also assumed responsibility for the payments and transfers to the congregations in accordance with the budget framework. The Thai Lutheran Committee was encouraged to support and supervise the work of the congregations, to coordinate the cooperation between the congregations and to participate in employing new coworkers for the LMT⁵¹⁹ When the year 1994 arrived, the Thai Lutheran Fellowship had already taken over most of the major responsibilities of the LMT.

⁵¹⁸ AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan työalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1991, 12; AFELM 8.2.7.4./1. Thaimaan työalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1992, 8; AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1992/Chairperson's Report; AFELM I 68 Letter from Kjell Sandvik to Seikku Paunonen, March 1, 1993; AFELM 8.2.7.4./1. Thaimaan työalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1993, 7; AFELM I 81 General Assembly 1994 of the LMT/Chairperson's Report; AFELM II 45 A Short history and Overview of the Work of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand by Tapio Karjalainen.

⁵¹⁹ AFELM II 24 Executive Committee of the LMT, December 19, 1991, 135/91, Appendix Delegation of Responsibilities to TLF/TLC; AFELM II 24 Executive Committee of the LMT, January 30, 1992, 10/92.

The establishment of the Thai Lutheran Fellowship was a concrete step towards the establishment of a Lutheran Church in Thailand. It had a structure that could be used when the self-government of the future church was developed and provided the LMT with an indigenous organisation that gradually could take more and more responsibility for the Lutheran work in Thailand. According to some missionaries' judgement, the activities already started in the early 1980s by the different Thai Lutheran fellowships were of such fundamental importance for the unity of the Thai Lutherans that it might not have been possible to establish a united Lutheran Church in Thailand without the foundation laid down by these fellowships.⁵²⁰

6.7 Building new premises for the Lutheran ministry in Thailand

Plans to build a central office for the *Lutheran Mission in Thailand* (LMT) arose at an early stage. When the Lutheran mission work in Thailand started in 1976, the missionaries opened an office for the mission connected to the Immanuel Lutheran church in Bangkok. The premises at the Immanuel church were however neither adapted to their purpose nor large enough to house all the offices and activities of the LMT. According to the missionaries, the future Lutheran Church in Thailand needed functional premises for its activities and it was important that the church had a central office that could unite the Lutheran congregations. At the beginning of 1984, the first sketches for a new central office were made and the LMT started to look for a suitable area for the planned building. The area was to be outside the business districts, but

⁵²⁰ Woie 1992, 348; Suomen Lahetyssanommat 4/1994, Thaimaalainen luterilainen kirkko syntyy buddhalaisen yhteison keskelle.

still close enough for the communications to be good.⁵²¹ As a consequence, the plans to build new premises for the central administration, the Lutheran Mass Communication, the Lutheran Institute of Theological Education and the Diakonia Department were included in *The Five Years Plan for the Lutheran Mission in Thailand 1986-1990*. The LMT estimated that the new central office could be built during 1987.⁵²²

According to the law in Thailand, only companies and foundations registered by the Thai Ministry of the Interior could own land. During the early years of Lutheran mission in Thailand, the congregation premises were bought in the name of the *NMS Co Ltd*, a private company for business transactions owned by the *Norwegian Missionary Society* (NMS). Soon the missionaries in Thailand realised that the Lutheran mission needed a foundation of its own to manage the property of the mission. By 1977, the missionaries had already started the process of registering the *Lutheran Christian Foundation*, but the Thai authorities did not recognise the Lutheran foundation until the end of 1981. The registration of the foundation was an important step for the Lutheran mission who could finally buy premises in its own name.⁵²³ According to the plans of the LMT, the premises that the LMT was likely to want to sell later on were to be registered in the name of the NMS Co Ltd. The NMS Co Ltd was also to continue running the Rangsan bookstore. All permanent

⁵²¹ AFELM II 17 Executive Committee of the LMT, October 11, 1984, 133/84; AFELM II 17 Executive Committee of the LMT, October 25, 1984, 146/84; AFELM II 17 Executive Committee of the LMT, May 2, 1985, 78/85; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1985/Report from Kluyay Nam Thai church; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1985/Long Range Plan 1986-1988; Misjonstidende 2/1992, Lutherskt arbeid i Thailand -15 ar.

⁵²² AFELM I 66 Five Years Plan for the Lutheran Mission in Thailand 1986-1990, 5.

⁵²³ Finska Missionssällskapets årsbok 1982, 43; Makela 1991, 4.1.

premises were to be registered in the name of the Lutheran Christian Foundation.⁵²⁴

In February 1986, two years after the first sketches for the new central office had been made, the LMT found a suitable building site for its new office. The area was on a side street, Sukhumvit Soi 50, about one kilometre from the Sukhumvit Road, one of the main roads of central Bangkok. The building site was 5,896 m² and quite easy to reach from both the main road and the motorway. On February 13, 1986 the Executive Committee of the LMT decided unanimously to try to buy the plot. The bill of sale was signed on March 27, 1986 in the name of the Lutheran Christian Foundation of Thailand. The price was 8,696,600 Thai baht. The following step was to start the process of registering the plot in the name of the Lutheran foundation.⁵²⁵

At the General Assembly of the LMT in April 1986, Missionary Helge Breivik of the NMS was appointed supervisor of the building project. Breivik established contact with a construction company, Christiani & Nielsen that had been working in Thailand for more than 50 years. The company's Danish managing director promised to give free advice concerning the building project and offered the LMT the use of his staff for a minimum price.⁵²⁶ This was also the stage at which the LMT involved the Thai Christian Fellowship's Committee in the planning of the new central office.

⁵²⁴ AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1991/Five Years Plan 1991-1995 for the Lutheran Mission in Thailand.

⁵²⁵ AFELM II 42 Executive Committee of the LMT, February 13, 1986, 30/86; AFELM II 42 Executive Committee of the LMT, April 3, 1986, 64/86.

⁵²⁶ AFELM II 42 Letter from Helge Breivik to the Executive Committee of the LMT, April 26, 1986; AFELM II 42 Executive Committee of the LMT, April 30, 1986, 70/86; AFELM II 42 Executive Committee of the LMT, June 26, 1986, 108/86.

According to the Executive Committee of the LMT, it was important to give the Thai Lutherans the opportunity to influence the building of the new premises since it was going to be the centre of their future church.⁵²⁷

The process of registering the site at Sukhumvit Soi 50 proceeded slowly. During 1987 the Land Department in Thailand asked the LMT for more information about the building project. The Land Department wanted to know why foreign organisations were interested in investing so much money in Thailand. It wanted proof that the money for the central office would not solely come from abroad, but that at least part of it would come from Thai sources. According to the LMT's interpretation of the situation, the Thai authorities feared that in previous cases Thai foundations had been used for buying property for foreign investors and the authorities wanted to safeguard that this would not happen in the Lutheran case. In addition to the difficulties with registering the plot, the disputes concerning the organising of the Lutheran theological education slowed down the construction plans. As the LMT did not know how the theological education would be organised in the future, it was not possible to estimate what kind of premises the education needed. Not until in December 1988, did the LMT succeed in registering the site in the name of the Lutheran Christian Foundation. Getting the site registered meant that the LMT now had permission to build on the plot.⁵²⁸

⁵²⁷ AFELM II 42 Executive Committee of the LMT, November 6, 1986, 167/86.

⁵²⁸ AFELM II 42 Joint Meeting between Lutheran Church Foundation and the Executive Committee of the LMT, December 3, 1987; AFELM I 66 Letter from Christopher Woie to the members of the JBT, December 18, 1987; AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan työalan yleiskertomus vuodelta 1987, 5; AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan työalan yleiskertomus vuodelta 1988, 7.

When the registration had been completed, Missionary Jan Helge Kristensen of the NMS, the new supervisor of the construction project, started to study the blueprints that had been made for the central office several years previously. The question was whether the sketches met with the present requirements concerning office premises and the new requirements that the decision to provide full-time theological education would imply. The sketches were revised and in October 1989, the new blueprints were ready. The headquarters were to consist of office and meeting premises as well as of premises for the Lutheran Institute of Theological Education.⁵²⁹

However, setbacks to the building project continued. The construction activity in Bangkok appeared to be unexpectedly lively in the late 1980s. The architect offices, the construction firms, and the shops for building materials were overburdened with work. Due to this, the LMT estimated that the documents needed for an application for building license would not be available until January 1990. The LMT assumed that the new premises were not going to be ready before the beginning of 1991. The boom in the construction business also meant that the building costs soared up. It became harder to get hold of basic building materials and to find skilled, reliable workers for the construction project. The LMT therefore considered leaving some of the plans for the future. Within the LMT, there was also skepticism as to whether it was wise to build large premises for the recently started Lutheran Institute of Theological Education and a costly central office for the immersing young church. In addition, it was, at least within

⁵²⁹ AFELM II 24 Executive Committee of the LMT, September 7, 1989, 134/89; AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan työalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1989, 6; ANMS Thailand Estimation of total price for LMT's building project in Soi 50, Sukhumvit Rd by Jan Helge Kristensen, February 23, 1990; Misjonstidende 12/1989, Nybygg for luthersk misjon i Thailand.

the *Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission* (FELM), questioned as to whether it was wise to have the central office of the LMT and future church in the same building.⁵³⁰ If not all the construction plans could be realised at once, the LMT wanted to prioritise building premises for the Lutheran Institute of Theological Education. In the second phase it would build the office premises. The last thing to be built would be the meeting hall. The strained and stressful situation of the construction project led construction supervisor, Jan Helge Kristensen, to resign from his task. According to Kristensen, the LMT needed an experienced person to lead the construction project due to the new challenges and obstacles. Therefore, the Missionary Pauli Rantanen of FELM was appointed to be the new construction supervisor.⁵³¹

According to the LMT, the new central office of the Lutheran mission and the future church was to be simple but functional. This was decided despite the fact that many Thai Christians

⁵³⁰ AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan työalan yleiskertomus vuodelta 1989, 6-7; ANMS Thailand Estimation of total price for LMT's building project in Soi 50, Sukhumvit Rd by Jan Helge Kristensen, February 23, 1990; AFELM I 67 LMT's Building Project in Soi 50, Sukhumvit Rd. Comments to our Present Situation by Construction Supervisor Jan Helge Kristensen, March 21, 1990; AFELM I 67 Muistio, Bangkokin koulutuskeskus- ja toimistorakennushanke, June 7, 1990; Bangkok Post 21.03.1990, Shortage of building materials could worsen.

⁵³¹ AFELM I 64 Joint Board for Thailand, November 6, 1985; ANMS Thailand Estimation of total price for LMT's building project in Soi 50, Sukhumvit Rd by Jan Helge Kristensen, February 23, 1990; AFELM II 24 Executive Committee of the LMT, March 15, 1990, 35/90; AFELM I 67 LMT's Building Project in Soi 50, Sukhumvit Rd. Comments to our Present Situation by Construction Supervisor Jan Helge Kristensen, March 21, 1990; AFELM II 24 Joint Meeting between Joint Board for Thailand and the Executive Committee of the LMT, March 27, 1990; AFELM I 67 Muistio, Bangkokin koulutuskeskus- ja toimistorakennushanke, June 7, 1990; AFELM I 67 Telefax from Egil H. Eggen to Markku Ala-Uotila, Daniel Chong, Koy Ying-Kwaei and Seikku Paunonen, June 14, 1990; Misjonstidende 2/1992, Lutherskt arbeid i Thailand -15 ar.

regretted that the Christian churches in Thailand generally were moderate compared to the surrounding grand and beautifully decorated Buddhist temples⁵³². In the main, it was economic reasons that affected the decision to keep the central office simple. The building complex was to have two floors and consist of two separate buildings with a meeting hall in between. One of the buildings was intended for the Lutheran Institute of Theological Education and would comprise classrooms, a staff room, a library with a reading room, a dormitory for the students as well as some housing for the teachers and the head of the dormitory. The other building was to be an office building where the Lutheran Mass Communication, the Lutheran Diakonia Ministry, the LMT, and the member organisations of the Lutheran Mission, the Thai Lutheran Fellowship and later on the Lutheran Church in Thailand would have their offices. In addition, this building was to comprise meeting rooms as well as a flat for the security guard or housekeeper and his or her family. At the site there was also to be a sports field for the students. If needed, the sports field could later on be used for an enlargement of the theological institute or to construct a building for diaconal purpose, for instance a youth centre or a home for elderly people meant for former employees of the LMT. The meeting hall between the two buildings was also intended to be used as a church. The model for the meeting hall was the sala-building, which was the public rest house or the public meeting hall in Buddhist temples, and consisted of an open room with only a roof.⁵³³

⁵³² For more information on church architecture in Thailand and Asia see for instance Takenaka 1995.

⁵³³ AFELM II 24 Executive Committee of the LMT, January 18, 1989, 09/89, Appendix Master plan; ALMT Construction Committee, June 9, 1989; AFELM II 42 Construction Committee, November 29, 1988; Smith 1977, 127; Helle 2002, 52; AMBT Conversation with Jaakko Makela, March 23, 2009.

In August 1990, the LMT signed a contract with the construction firm Christiani & Nielsen. The building of the premises for the Lutheran Institute of Theological Education began at the end of the year. When the construction work finally started, the work proceeded rapidly. The theological institute moved into its new premises in June 1991 and in October 1991, the office building was ready to be occupied. According to reports from the inauguration of the new central office, both the missionaries and the Thai Lutherans considered it a clear step towards the establishment of a Lutheran Church in Thailand that the Lutherans finally had a headquarters that gathered the different fields of action of the LMT and united the Lutheran congregations.⁵³⁴ The inauguration of the new premises corresponded with the celebration of the 15 years of Lutheran mission in Thailand in November 1991. About 600 guests were present, among them a high representative from the city of Bangkok, the Finnish and Norwegian ambassadors in Thailand as well as representatives from all the member organisations of the LMT.⁵³⁵

Building a central office for the Lutheran Mission and the future Lutheran Church in Thailand was a great challenge for the LMT due to practical, juridical, as well as economical obstacles. The final total cost for the construction of the new central office was 24.7 million Thai baht. All the member organisations of the LMT as well as the Thai Lutherans themselves contributed to the building of the new central

⁵³⁴ AFELM II 24 Executive Committee of the LMT, July 26, 1990, 84/90; AFELM Hia 45 Thaimaan työalan yleiskertomus vuodelta 1990, 10-11; AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1991/Construction Committee Report; Suomen Lahetyssanommat 3/1991, Koulutuskeskukselle omat tilat; Misjonstidende 2/1992, Lutherskt arbeid i Thailand -15 ar; Prachayaporn 1998, 67.

⁵³⁵ Misjonstidende 2/1992, Lutherskt arbeid i Thailand -15 ar; Suomen Lahetyssanommat 2/1992, Neljä syytä juhliä.

office, but the main part of the funds for the construction was donated by FELM.⁵³⁶

Summary

In this chapter, I have looked more closely at the concrete measures that were taken in order to prepare the establishment of a Lutheran Church in Thailand. The Lutheran Mission began at an early stage to plan the establishment of the church. This was done by organising the Lutheran congregations, working with the self-reliance of the congregations, trying to find natural solutions for the Thai context in liturgy and theology, ordaining pastors and gradually handing over more and more of the decision making to the Thai Lutherans. Although it was the wish and the plan of the LMT to include the Thais in the preparations for the establishment of the Lutheran church at an early stage, the Thai Lutherans had, at times, difficulties finding their place in the organisation and the preparations and demanded forums where their opinions could be expressed and would be listened to. The Lutheran missionaries wanted to consider the Thai context in their work, but they did not always succeed in this endeavour. Sometimes they had the Thai Lutherans support in their attempts to show regard for the surrounding society, other times the Thais objected to the plans of the missionaries due to fear of accidentally importing Buddhist influences into the Lutheran congregations. The first measures for the establishment of a Lutheran Church in Thailand were taken in the early 1980s, but towards the end of the decade, the preparations became more focussed and targeted.

⁵³⁶ AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1992/Chairperson's Report; Misjonstidende 2/1992, Lutherskt arbeid i Thailand -15 ar.

7. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN THAILAND

The *Lutheran Mission in Thailand* (LMT) had from the very beginning a clear aim for its ministry. In the *Agreement on Mission Cooperation in Thailand* it was already established that the purpose was "*to bring Christ's Gospel through proclamation and service, to the peoples in Thailand, and to establish local congregations which shall be united in one Lutheran Church*". Local congregations and an indigenous Lutheran church were to be the outcome of the mission and from the start, the missionaries and Thai employees of the LMT worked with this aim in mind. During the first years of the Lutheran mission, measures were already being taken in order to start preparing the establishment of a Lutheran Church in Thailand. Building up a Thai Lutheran church appeared, however, to be a slow procedure and working out a constitution for the church was a lengthy process with many different phases.

As has been mentioned previously in this research, not everybody was convinced that the establishment of a new autonomous church was the best solution for the Lutheran work in Thailand. The suggestion that the LMT should join the Protestant national church, Church of Christ in Thailand, instead of establishing a church of its own was put forward from time to time by some Thai coworkers and missionaries. Despite the occasional questioning of the aim of the work, the LMT continued to plan for a future autonomous Thai Lutheran church.

In this chapter, I am going to look more specifically at the writing of the church constitution for the Lutheran Church in Thailand and the agreement between the Lutheran Mission and the new church. In particular I am going to focus on

central topics that were discussed during the drawing up of the constitution and the agreement: the organisation of the church and the mission, the formulation of the church constitution and the agreement between church and mission. In addition, I will look briefly at the plans and emphases of the new church as well as considering any possible changes that took place during the first year of the church's existence.

7.1 Working out a constitution for the church

The first concrete step towards starting to prepare a constitution for the coming Lutheran Church in Thailand seems to have been taken in 1983 when the *Lutheran Mission in Thailand* (LMT) appointed a *Constitution Committee*. The tasks given to the committee were to plan the step by step transition from mission to autonomous church, to draft a proposal for a constitution for the Lutheran Church in Thailand and to prepare an agreement between the coming church and the Lutheran Mission. On a broader scale, the establishment of a Lutheran Church in Thailand and the writing of a church constitution were discussed at the General Assembly of the LMT in 1984. As early as on this occasion several different models for the organisational structure of the future church were presented. As from 1984, the Constitution Committee reported annually to the General Assembly of the LMT about the progress of its work.⁵³⁷ At this time it was estimated that preparing a constitution draft for the church would take two or three years. The only preparation that had been done before the Constitution Committee started its work was writing

⁵³⁷ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1984/Report from the LMT Constitution Committee; AFELM II 45 Thaimaan luterilaisen kirkon perustamisasiakirjat, January 24, 1994, appendix The History of the Constitution.

preliminary guidelines for the ordination programme and the congregation committees.⁵³⁸

The members of the Constitution Committee did not have any previous experience of drafting a church constitution. The home leaders of the member organisations of the LMT suggested that the committee should start by studying church constitutions from Thailand and Lutheran churches in Asia as well as by considering what kind of a constitution would be appropriate in the Thai context. According to the annual reports from the Constitution Committee, constitutions and agreements between church and mission were studied from at least the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong, the Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore, the Kinki Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church, and the Lutheran Church of Taiwan. The Constitution Committee also met with Asian church leaders in order to get advice on how to build an autonomous Lutheran church in an Asian context.⁵³⁹

In connection with preparing the five-year-plan 1986-1990 for the LMT, the Constitution Committee made a proposal as to how the development from mission to an autonomous Lutheran church should proceed. The proposal was based on

⁵³⁸ AFELM II 17 Executive Committee of the LMT, June 2, 1983, 76/83; AFELM II 17 Executive Committee of the LMT, October 6, 1983, 146/83; AFELM II 22 Memorandum from the meeting with Ms. M. Pesonen and the members of EC, October 13, 1983, §3.

⁵³⁹ AFELM II 17 Executive Committee of the LMT, July 14, 1983, 106/83; AFELM II 22 Letter from Egil H. Eggen to Christopher Woie, November 21, 1983; AFELM II 17 Memorandum of advisory discussions of the key points in planning the work in Thailand, in view of the oncoming General Assembly, February 9, 1984, §2; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1984/Report from the LMT Constitution Committee; AFELM II 17 Meeting between Prof. Scheafer and the Constitution Committee, April 8, 1984; ALMT General Assembly of the LMT 1988/Report of the Constitution Committee.

the idea that the LMT should gradually develop into an autonomous church and that the Executive Committee of the LMT should slowly be converted into the board of the church. The home leaders of the members of the LMT were particularly critical towards this proposal. In their opinion, this model could complicate the local congregations' endeavours towards self-reliance and it would give the LMT the possibility of dominating the church for too long. It was considered important that the Thais were given both the right to influence the work and the obligation to take responsibility during the period of mission. The Constitution Committee was asked to make a new proposal for the transition from mission to church. According to this proposal, the first real step towards establishing a Lutheran Church in Thailand should be to take into use permanent guidelines for the local congregations and to establish Thai bodies that would be forerunners of the governing bodies of the future church and that step by step could take over the responsibility for the Lutheran work. When the Thai Lutheran Fellowship, the Thai Lutheran Assembly, and the Thai Lutheran Committee were set up in 1987, these were considered to be the precursors of the future church bodies.⁵⁴⁰

After the new plan for the transition from mission to church had been approved, the LMT felt that the planning had

⁵⁴⁰ AFELM I 66 Letter from Egil H. Eggen to Jaakko Makela, January 21, 1986; AFELM II 42 Executive Committee of the LMT, April 3, 1986, 58/86; ANMS Minutes of the General Assembly, April 15-19, 1986, 28; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1986/Report from the Constitution Committee; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1986/Final draft for 5-years Plan for the Lutheran Mission in Thailand 1986-1990, 5, 20-21; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1986/Steps towards the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand, new draft prepared by the Constitution Committee; AFELM I 66 Five Years Plan for the Lutheran Mission in Thailand 1986-1990, 5, 7-8; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1987/Guidelines for the Thai Lutheran Committee.

entered a new, more serious stage. Consequently, the LMT decided, in September 1986, to contact the *Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand* (EFT) in order to obtain information about the formalities of establishing an autonomous Lutheran church. The LMT was told that no formal registration of the church would be necessary, as the LMT was already a member of the EFT. Once the church was established, the LMT would only have to let the Thai Ministry of Religious Affairs know the name of the new church. Later, however, the EFT changed its policy and the LMT was informed that the future Lutheran church had to be registered as an organisation under the fellowship similar to the LMT. In order to be allowed to register with the EFT, the church would have to be at least 60 percent self-reliant.⁵⁴¹

In 1987, the Constitution Committee divided its work into three categories: urgent tasks, short-term work, and long-term work. Urgent tasks were things that had to be done during 1987-1988, for instance finishing the guidelines for the Thai Lutheran Fellowship. Work that had to be done during 1989-1990 was considered short-term. During this period, the Constitution Committee was to lay down the general outlines for the agreement between the future church and the Lutheran Mission. The long-term tasks were to finish the writing of an agreement between the church and the mission, and to draft a constitution for the prospective church. This work was to be done during 1991-1994⁵⁴² During the planning stage, there

⁵⁴¹ AFELM II 42 Executive Committee of the LMT, September 12, 1986, 140/86; AFELM II 42 Executive Committee of the LMT, October 16, 1986, 147/86; AFELM II 42 Constitution Committee, December 4, 1987; AFELM I 68 Consultation on Church Constitution, November 4-5, 1991; AFELM II 24 Memorandum from Meeting with the General Secretary of the EFT, February 12, 1992.

⁵⁴² ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1987/Guidelines for the Thai Lutheran Fellowship; ALMT General Assembly of the LMT 1988/Report of the Constitution Committee.

were discussions as to how the Thai context should be expressed in the constitution. It was concluded that a Thai church constitution could only be prepared in cooperation with the Thais. The future church would have to find structures and contents that clearly showed that the Christian Gospel also concerned the Thais and that Christianity was not only a religion for foreigners. In decision making, elections, and in questions of faith, the Thai context had to be specifically considered.⁵⁴³

The concrete work on shaping a constitution and an agreement between the church and mission started in the late 1980s. The work on the constitution was mainly achieved as cooperation between the Constitution Committee, the Thai Lutheran Committee, and the Executive Committee of the LMT. The LMT also arranged several seminars on the constitution with the Thai coworkers, the Congregation Committees of the Lutheran congregations, and the missionaries. Constitution drafts were discussed at the general assemblies of the LMT and at the Thai Lutheran assemblies. In addition, the Thai Lutheran Assembly appointed, in 1991, a separate committee to participate in the drafting of the constitution. The LMT also arranged two separate consultations on the constitution, one in November 1991, and the other in November 1992, with the members of the Constitution Committee, the Joint Board for Thailand, the Thai Lutheran Committee, and the Executive Committee of the

543 AFELM II 17 Memorandum of advisory discussions of the key points in planning the work in Thailand in view of the oncoming General Assembly, February 9, 1984; ANMS Minutes of the General Assembly of the LMT, March 26-30, 1984; AFELM II 17 Meeting between Prof. Scheafer and the Constitution Committee, April 8, 1984.

LMT.⁵⁴⁴ Nevertheless, at the time of writing *The Five Years Plan 1991-1995 of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand* many central issues concerning the constitution and the agreement between the church and the mission were unsolved. The final constitution differed in several fundamental points from the lines drawn up in the five-year-plan.⁵⁴⁵

In the early 1990s, some of the Thai pastors and evangelists of the LMT began to fear that it would be too early to establish the Lutheran Church in Thailand in 1994. As a consequence, the Thai Lutheran Fellowship suggested that the church should not be established until the year 2000. The individuals behind this proposal were afraid that the Thai Lutherans would not be ready to assume the responsibility so soon, that the congregations were too small, that the resources were too restricted, and that the church would not yet be able to introduce a constitution. They also feared that the establishment of the church would take experienced personnel from parish work, as some of the parish workers would be needed for the central administration. The fears and the frustration of the Thai coworkers, however, did not bring about any changes in the timetable. According to the missionaries, it ultimately led to a fruitful discussion that if anything encouraged the Thai Lutherans to continue planning the establishment of a Lutheran Church in Thailand.⁵⁴⁶

⁵⁴⁴ AFELM I 68 Constitution Committee, September 25, 1991, §1; AFELM II 45 Thaimaan luterilaisen kirkon perustamisasiakirjat, January 24, 1994, Appendix The History of the Constitution; Finska Missionsssällskapets årsbok 1994, 95.

⁵⁴⁵ AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1991/Five Years Plan 1991-1995 of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand.

⁵⁴⁶ AFELM I 68 Consultation on Church Constitution, November 4, 1991; AFELM II 45 Seminar on Constitution and Agreement between Church and Mission, October 1, 1992; AFELM 8.2.7.4./1. Thaimaan työalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1993, 8; AFELM II 45 Thaimaan luterilaisen kirkon perustamisasiakirjat, January 24, 1994 and Appendix The History

In 1992, a first draft of the church constitution was presented to the General Assembly of the LMT and to the Thai Lutheran Assembly. By the end of 1992, a concrete proposal for a constitution was finished and the following year it was dealt with by the General Assembly of the LMT and Thai Lutheran Assembly. In 1993, the Constitution Committee presented no less than four different versions of the constitution. The final constitution proposal was finished in December 1993, and sent to the member organisations of the LMT for approval.⁵⁴⁷ In January 1994, the Thai Lutheran Assembly met for the last time. At this meeting in Ubon Ratchathani the assembly ratified the *Constitution and By-laws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand* with some minor changes and voted almost unanimously for the establishment of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand. At the same meeting, the Thai Lutheran Assembly also ratified the *Agreement between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand and the Lutheran Mission in Thailand*. The constitution, the by-laws, and the agreement were also ratified by the Joint Board for Thailand as well as by the member organisations of the LMT.⁵⁴⁸ The Constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand, the By-laws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand and the Agreement between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand and the Lutheran Mission in Thailand are attached as appendixes to this study.

of the Constitution; Misjonstidende 10/1991, Evangeliet i ord og gjerning.
547 AFELM I 68 Letter from Tapio Karjalainen to Thomas Schaeffer, December 23, 1993; AFELM II 45 Thaimaan luterilaisen kirkon perustamisasiakirjat, January 24, 1994, Appendix The History of the Constitution; Finska Missionsällskapetets årsbok 1993, 85-86; Finska Missionsällskapetets årsbok 1994, 95.

548 AFELM I 68 Letter from Thomas F. Schaeffer to Joint Board members, arrived February 9, 1994, incl. Preliminary Report from Thai Lutheran Assembly, January 26-28, 1994 by Svein Nybo; AFELM 8.2.7.4./1. Thaimaan työalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1994, 7; LMT News March 1994, General News; Woie 1998, 24.

The church constitution contained basic principles for the work and the organisation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand, while the by-laws mainly dealt with the obligations and the rights of the local congregations, the parish members, and the coworkers of the church. The constitution was more permanent in its nature, while the by-laws could be amended more easily.⁵⁴⁹

The constitution consisted of ten chapters. It started with a preamble that clarified the task and function of the church of Christ. *"God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit has an unchanging intention to bring justice, redemption and love to humankind. In order to fulfill His mission, the triune God has established His Church, where His gifts of Salvation are shared with the people. Humankind is saved not by any merit of his own but by the grace of God through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church and all power belongs only to Him. The Church, as the body of Christ, is universal, but also appears as regional churches and local congregations."*⁵⁵⁰ As the preamble to the constitution started by emphasising the saving mission of the triune God in which the church participates, there could be seen a clear connection between the constitution and the contemporary international mission thinking, particularly the mission document *Together in God ' Mission* of the Lutheran World Federation. The choice to emphasise the words justice, redemption, and love showed that the church wanted to stress the activities of the holy trinity: the justice of God, the redemption of Christ and the love of the Holy Spirit.⁵⁵¹

⁵⁴⁹ AFELM I 68 Comments on the Constitution of a Thai Lutheran Church from the FELM-working group, September 24, 1991,1; AFELM II 45 Thaimaan luterilaisen kirkon perustamisasiakirjat, January 24,1994.

⁵⁵⁰ ALMT Constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand 1994,1.

⁵⁵¹ LFELM Jukka Helle: Kirkko pelastuksen valittajana. Thaimaan evankelis-luterilaisen kirkon teologinen identiteetti. Seminaarityö. November 10,1994; *Together in God's Mission* 1988, 5-8.

In chapter 1 of the constitution the name of the church is established. The Thai name of the church was *Sapha Khristchak Lutheran Nai Prathet Thai*. In English, the name of the church was *The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand* (ELCT). The Thai name and the English name of the church did not have exactly the same meaning. The name of the church was debated for many years. It was not until the constitution consultation in November 1992 that the final name of the church was decided. The main question concerned the word 'Lutheran'. According to Missionary Jaakko Makela, it was the foreign workers and the home leaders of the member organisations of the LMT that for a long time were cautious about using the word 'Lutheran' in the name. The Lutheran faith and the Lutheran denomination was rather unknown in Thailand and the Thai Lutheran Committee therefore tried to find a name that omitted the word 'Lutheran' and rather focussed on the Lutheran identity of the church by using a central Lutheran concept such as 'grace' or 'righteousness'. When the word 'Lutheran' was after all included in both the Thai and the English name of the church, it was considered a way of giving information about the confessional basis of the church. However, it was stressed that it was not the term 'Lutheran' that was important, but the content of the Lutheran faith and that the church members really understood and embraced the Lutheran theology. In addition, it was recommended that the word Christian should be included in the name in order to make the Christian identity of the church clear.⁵⁵²

⁵⁵² AFELM I 68 Consultation on Church Constitution, November 4, 1991, 5; AFELM II 45 Consultation Nr. 2 on Constitution for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand and Agreement between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand and Lutheran Mission in Thailand, November 11-14, 1992, 5; ALMT Constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand 1994, 1; AMBT Conversation with Jaakko Makela, March 23, 2009.

In chapter 2 of the constitution, the confessional basis of the church is dealt with. *"The Church acknowledges the Holy Bible as the revealed Word of God and as the basic rule and standard of faith and practice. It confesses the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed, and it accepts the unaltered Augsburg Confession and Luther's Small Catechism as true expositions of the fundamental teachings of Christian Faith."*⁵⁵³ The wording of this chapter was almost exactly the same as the chapter on confessional basis in the Agreement on Mission Cooperation in Thailand. The only addition was the Nicene Creed. Faithful to the Lutheran tradition, the Bible was mentioned first as the basis of the church. In all essentials, the confessional basis of the church was the same as in most Lutheran churches of the world, even if some churches have a broader confessional basis. The confession of the church was defined as unchangeable and this part of the constitution can thus not be altered.⁵⁵⁴

Chapter 3 of the constitution discusses the purpose of the church. According to the constitution the purpose was to *"worship God, the Father through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit; to proclaim the Gospel to all human beings; to build up the body of Christ, the Church; and to serve others in love."* This chapter is related to the preamble's text about the church existing in order to fulfill God's mission. The mission would be realised when the church worshipped God, proclaimed the Gospel, built up the church, and served others in love. In concrete terms, the purpose was to be fulfilled through: preaching, teaching the word of God and administering the sacraments, through equipping God's people by training for different ministries, discipleship training and Christian education,

⁵⁵³ ALMT Constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand 1994, 1.

⁵⁵⁴ AFELM I 17 Agreement on Mission Cooperation in Thailand, § II; LFELM Jukka Helle: Kirkko pelastuksen valittajana. Thaimaan evankelis-luterilaisen kirkon teologinen identiteetti. Seminaarityö. November 10, 1994.

through preaching the Gospel to non-Christians in Thailand and in other countries as well as through diaconal work. In this chapter, the young church had already prescribed a lot of tasks and responsibilities for itself. The intention of the church to become involved in mission work among other peoples and cultures was already expressed at this stage.⁵⁵⁵

Chapter 4 of the constitution deals with the membership of the church. According to the constitution, the church was to be organised with the local congregation as its basic unit. The characteristic of a congregation was that it was to be "... *a fellowship of believers who confess their faith in words and practice.*". The focus on the local congregations was a continuation of the strong emphasis on the local congregation within the LMT. Members of the church were to be people who had "*received the Sacrament of the holy Baptism in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*" and had enrolled as a member of a local congregation or a preaching place of the church. This was all in accordance with the Lutheran teaching about baptism, the church, and the congregations found for instance in Luther's Large Catechism⁵⁵⁶

In chapter 5 of the constitution, the ministry of the church is considered. According to this chapter the members of the church were to serve as "*a holy priesthood*" (1 Peter 2:5), but in order to fulfill the purpose of the church there was also to be an ordained ministry (pastors) as well as other ministries in the areas of evangelism, mission, and diaconal work. Only the

⁵⁵⁵ ALMT Constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand 1994, 2; Mission 11/1993, Thailand far en egen luthersk kyrka.

⁵⁵⁶ ALMT Constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand 1994, 2; Svenska kyrkans bekenntelseskrifter 1985, 447-452, 473-483.

pastor had to be ordained, the other tasks could be taken care of by non-ordained individuals and/or volunteers.⁵⁵⁷

For several years it was discussed whether the church should have a president or a bishop as its leader, and how this leader should be elected. If a president were chosen, the administrative leadership would be emphasised and if a bishop were elected, the spiritual leadership would be stressed. To have both a president and a bishop was not an option. The Lutheran missionaries in Thailand had repeatedly experienced that the cooperation between two Thai coworkers in approximately the same position did not work out well. According to the missionaries, the Thais were used to having strong leaders and if there was not a clear leader it would inevitably lead to schisms. In addition, the choosing of a Thai title for the leader of the church caused problems. A close equivalent to the designation 'bishop' was not to be found in Thai language. The closest equivalent was found in the Buddhist monk hierarchy. This designation, which was for instance used by the Catholics, had caused, however, much criticism among Buddhists. Finally, the LMT decided to use the English term bishop. The bishop of the church should be a combination of a spiritual and an administrative leader and have a central position in the church. The bishop was to be elected for three years and re-election was possible only once. During the writing of the constitution, some of the Thais suggested that also missionaries could be installed as bishops of the church. The by-laws finally approved nevertheless established that the bishop was to be elected among the pastors of the ELCT⁵⁵⁸ The role and the duties of the bishop

⁵⁵⁷ ALMT Constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand 1994, 3.

⁵⁵⁸ AFELM I 68 Constitution Committee, October 21, 1991, §5; AFELM II 45 Consultation Nr. 2 on Constitution for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand and Agreement between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand and Lutheran Mission in Thailand, November 11-14,

were more thoroughly dealt with in the by-laws of the constitution.

Chapter 6 of the constitution presents the organisation of the church. The organisational structure of the church and the organisation between the church and the mission caused extensive discussions for many years. One of the fundamental questions was whether the church should be based on a congregational model or a centralised church model and if it was possible to have both a strong central administration and strong local congregations. A congregational model would have implied that the Lutheran congregations were largely independent congregations that only belonged to the same Lutheran national church. A centralised model, on the other hand, would have meant less independency and more unity and cooperation between the congregations and a strong central administration. The missionaries and the home leaders felt that the Thai Lutherans generally knew and understood the concept of independent local congregations. But despite this the LMT, in different ways, had tried to further the unity between its congregations, as the thought of a central church administration seemed still rather unfamiliar to the Thais. For the Thai coworkers of the LMT with their backgrounds in or their influences from the Church of Christ in Thailand and particularly the Baptist and Reformed traditions, the congregational model was the stronger option. The majority of the missionaries, on the other hand, considered the centralised church model more suitable for the Lutheran Church in Thailand. According to them, it was important that the church structure also showed that the Thai Lutheran church was not only a federation of independent local congregations, but a

1992, 5; ALMT By-laws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand, 21; Mission 11/1993, Thailand far en egen luthersk kyrka; Suomen Lahetyssanommat 4/1994, Thaimaan luterilainen kirkko syntyy buddhalaisen yhteison keskelle; Makela 2002,105.

church where unity was important and where the congregations worked together towards a common goal. It was also considered which model would suit the Thai context best, and if the Agreement on Mission Cooperation in Thailand contained information about which model should be chosen.⁵⁵⁹

Several of the partners of the LMT had experience from churches where the local congregations had been transferred one at a time from the mission to the church when the congregations were considered "mature enough"⁵⁶⁰. Consequently, it was natural that this model was considered a possible course of action also for the Lutheran Church in Thailand. The thought that the local congregations ought to be transferred to the new church individually as they became self-reliant seem to have been strong since it was included in The Five Years Plan 1991-1995 of the LMT. Nevertheless, this intention was later abandoned and all the congregations were transferred to the church concurrently with the establishment of the church⁵⁶¹

Another question that was discussed on several occasions during the writing of the constitution was the relationship between the local congregations and the departments of the

⁵⁵⁹ ALMT Constitution Committee, January 4, 1984; AFELM I 68 Comments on the Constitution from the FELM working group, September 24, 1991; AFELM I 68 Consultation on Church Constitution, November 4, 1991,4; AMBT Conversation with Maija Makela, June 5,1997.

⁵⁶⁰ This had, for instance, been the case within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hong Kong (ELCHK) where both the NMS and FELM were involved. For more information about the transfer of the local congregations from the missions to the ELCHK see for instance Strandensens 1992 and Jarva 1982.

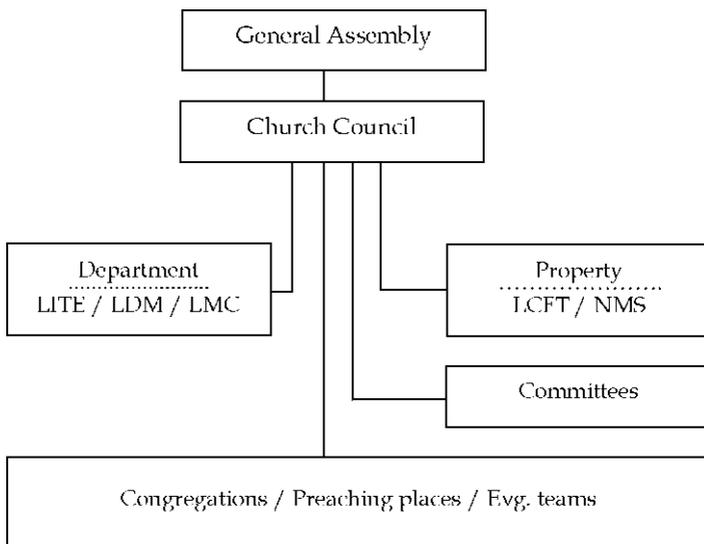
⁵⁶¹ AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1991/Five Years Plan 1991-1995 of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand; AMBT Conversation with Maija Makela, June 5,1997; AMBT Conversation with Egil H. Eggen, February 17, 2003.

church, i.e. the Lutheran Diakonia Ministry, the Lutheran Institute of Theological Education, and the Lutheran Mass Communication. The writers of the constitution agreed that the congregations should be the basic unit of the church and that the departments should serve the congregations. The question was how this should find expression in the organisational structure and to what extent the departments should be allowed to participate in the decision-making of the church. The placing of the Lutheran Church Foundation of Thailand (LCFT) in the organisational structure also caused something of a dilemma, as did the question of how the foundation should be used and administered. On this question the law in Thailand also had to be considered.⁵⁶²

Finally, the LMT decided to use the centralised church model. Despite the fact that many of the Thai coworkers would have preferred the congregational model, it was believed that the central church model was the one that the LMT had envisaged from the beginning, and was therefore the one implied in the Agreement on Mission Cooperation. Nevertheless, since the LMT from the very beginning had stressed the importance of taking into consideration the opinions of the Thai Lutherans, it was noticeable that the LMT in this central issue chose to go against the view of many of the national workers.

⁵⁶² AFELM I 68 Consultation on Church Constitution, November 4,1991, 5; AFELM II 45 Consultation Nr. 2 on Constitution for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand and Agreement between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand and Lutheran Mission in Thailand, November 11-14,1992, 5.

Figure 3 The organisational structure of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand



Source: By-laws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Thailand 1994.

According to the constitution, the church was to be organised and administrated on two levels, locally and nationally. On the local level, the work was to be centred around the congregations. Every congregation was to hold an annual meeting, which should provide the following: fellowship and spiritual nourishment, discuss and approve annual budgets and long range plans, elect the congregation committee and appoint auditors. The congregation committees were to promote outreach ministry, Christian education, diaconal work, and the spiritual life of the congregation.

Nationally, the church was to be administered through the General Assembly. The purpose of the General Assembly was to promote the work of the church in order to fulfill the purposes stated in the constitution, i.e. *"to worship God, the*

Father through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit; to proclaim the Gospel to all human beings; to build up the body of Christ, the Church; and to serve others in love." The General Assembly was the highest authoritative body of the church. The delegates to the assembly were appointed by the congregations, departments, and evangelisation teams of the church. The number of delegates depended on the number of members of the congregation, and whether or not the congregation was independent and self-reliant. All pastors working in the church and all evangelists in charge of a congregation or a preaching place had the right to attend the General Assembly ex officio. In addition, there could be observers taking part in the assembly. For more information about the delegates to the General Assembly, see the by-laws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand.⁵⁶³

The Church Council was to be the executive body of the church, carry out the actions of the General Assembly and administer routine affairs. The Church Council was to be elected by the General Assembly, and consist of the officers of the church, the Bishop, the Secretary of the Church, the Treasurer of the Church, and three additional members. The terms of service of the officers were defined in the by-laws of the church. The General Assembly was also to establish departments to function in different areas of the work. The departments were to be administered by boards.⁵⁶⁴

According to Missionary Tapio Karjalainen of FELM, the ELCT was something of a precursor among the churches in Thailand. Democratic systems were not common in Thailand,

⁵⁶³ ALMT Constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand 1994, 3-5; ALMT By-Laws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand 1994,13-14.

⁵⁶⁴ ALMT Constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand 1994, 5-6; ALMT By-Laws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand 1994,17-20.

but the ELCT accepted democracy as the basis of the constitution and undertook to follow democratic principles in the administration and management of the church. During the writing of the constitution it was debated whether the democratic system was the model that corresponded best with the teaching of the Bible or if the Asian model of having a strong leadership in the pastor of the congregation also had a biblical base. As early as 1984, Thomas F Schaeffer from the Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore had warned the LMT that forcing a democratic way of decision making on an Asian church might even destroy the church. According to Karjalainen, only time would tell how the local culture and the Western democratic system would work together.⁵⁶⁵ The decision to base the ELCT on a democratic system was in any case a remarkable solution since the LMT from the very beginning had stressed that it wanted to take the Thai context into consideration in its work and create a church that would be Thai and not a copy of a Western church.⁵⁶⁶

As the main task of the church was to proclaim the gospel in words and deeds, the organisational model was made with this in mind. The purpose of the administration was to serve the work of the church and the structure was made as light as

⁵⁶⁵ AFELM II 17 Meeting between Prof. Scheafer and the Constitution Committee, April 8, 1984; AFELM II 45 Thaimaan luterilaisen kirkon perustamisasiakirjat, January 24, 1994; AFELM 8.2.7.2./3. Neuvottelumatka Thaimaahan 18.-26.4.1994, report by Seikku Paunonen; Mission 11/1993, Thailand far en egen luthersk kyrka.

⁵⁶⁶ Investigations have nevertheless displayed that it is common that mission organisations more or less consciously transplant their own church structures onto young churches that they establish and consider them the best form of church government. According to the American linguist Eugene A. Nida, history has, however, shown that the most effective church growth usually takes place when the organisation of the church parallels the local social patterns. Nida 1965, 103-108.

possible in order to direct the resources to the actual work and not to maintaining bureaucracy.⁵⁶⁷

In chapter 7 of the constitution the property and finances of the church are dealt with. As has emerged earlier in this study, the LMT had already purchased a significant number of properties, mostly premises for the local congregations, as well as built a central office for the work before the Lutheran Church in Thailand was established. Concerning the property of the mission, the central question was who should own the property after the establishment of the church. Were, for instance, the local congregations entitled to the premises they were using or was it the central administration that ought to have responsibility for them? It was agreed that the church should register all its property with the Lutheran Christian Foundation of Thailand and that all fixed property, purchased on a permanent basis, belonging to the ELCT or to a local congregation were to be owned by the Lutheran Christian Foundation. Property purchased on temporary basis should be registered in the name of NMS Company or another company approved by the Church Council. The bishop and the treasurer of the church were to act as chairperson and treasurer of the Lutheran Christian Foundation of Thailand and the Church Council was to appoint the other members of the board of the foundation.⁵⁶⁸

The church was to be committed to the principle of financial self-reliance. Each congregation or preaching place was to be

⁵⁶⁷ Mission 11/1993, Thailand far en egen luthersk kyrka.

⁵⁶⁸ AFELM I 68 Consultation on Church Constitution, November 4, 1991, 5; AFELM II 45 Consultation Nr. 2 on Constitution for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand and Agreement between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand and Lutheran Mission in Thailand, November 11-14, 1992, 5; ALMT Constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand 1994, 6-7; ALMT By-Laws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand 1994, 23.

responsible for all its expenses, i.e. investments and maintenance expenses for property belonging to the congregation (including property entrusted to the Lutheran Christian Foundation) as well as salary and fringe benefits for paid coworkers of the congregation. In addition, the congregations were supposed to support the common work of the church with 15 percent of the total income of the congregation. All the members of the church were expected to share in fulfilling the financial obligations of the church and the local congregation or preaching place.⁵⁶⁹

Chapter 8 of the constitution deals with registration and relationships with other churches and organisations. The ELCT was to be registered with the Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand and to build and maintain positive relationships with other Christian bodies in Thailand. It was a requirement from the Thai Government that the church registered with one of the existing church bodies in Thailand if it wanted recognition from the authorities. The church was to seek ways of fostering relationships with Lutheran churches and missions in Asian countries as well as in other parts of the world. With the LMT, the ELCT was to cooperate according to an agreement signed by the church and the member organisations of the Lutheran Mission.⁵⁷⁰

Chapter 9 and 10 of the constitution deal with the by-laws and the amendments to the constitution. New by-laws could be

⁵⁶⁹ ALMT Constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand 1994, 6; ALMT By-Laws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand 1994,23-24.

⁵⁷⁰ AFELM II 42 Constitution Committee, December 4, 1987; AFELM I 68 Consultation on Church Constitution, November 5, 1991; AFELM II 45 Consultation Nr. 2 on Constitution for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand and Agreement between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand and Lutheran Mission in Thailand, November 11-14,1992; ALMT Constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand 1994, 7.

adopted as needed by the General Assembly of the church on the condition that they were in accordance with the provisions of the constitution. Possible amendments of the constitution could be made by the General Assembly of the church if they were approved of by two-thirds of the delegates present at two consecutive General Assemblies. The most recently approved version of the constitution and by-laws were to be the rule and norm for the ELCT.⁵⁷¹

While the constitution was difficult to amend the by-laws, which concerned more practical aspects of church life, were easier to change. The by-laws started with a lengthy section about membership in the church. The chapter focussed mostly on the rights and duties of the parish members. According to Seikku Paunonen, former Asia Secretary of FELM, this focus on duties might at least partly have been influenced by the first national workers' background in church denominations that had a more legalistic teaching than the LMT. Moreover, Buddhist influences might be seen here as many of the Thai coworkers, as former Buddhists, were used to the law of karma's demands on the followers of the Buddha. Chapter 2 of the by-laws dealt with the requirements of congregations, preaching places, and evangelisation teams. Chapters 3-5 concerned the annual meetings of the congregations, the congregation committees, the General Assembly of the church, and the Church Council of the church. Chapter 7 concerned the functions of the members of the Church Council, chapter 8, the role of the functional boards, chapter 9, the organised ministries, and chapter 10, the ministry of diaconia. Finally, chapter 11 dealt with the property and the finances of the church and chapter 12 with the relationships of the church. According to Paunonen, the wealth of detail and exactness of the by-laws depicts very well the situation of a young church

⁵⁷¹ ALMT Constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand 1994, 7-8.

that wanted a system that would make the decision-making process and the handling of the church administration as easy as possible.⁵⁷²

7.2 Preparing an agreement between church and mission

In addition to working out a church constitution and by-laws for the *Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand* (ELCT), the *Lutheran Mission in Thailand* (LMT), the Thai Lutherans also had to decide how the cooperation between the church, once it was established, and the Lutheran Mission should be organised in the future, and write an agreement between the church and the mission.

Ever since autonomous, indigenous churches started to emerge as a result of mission work, it has been a challenge for the young churches and their (foreign) partner organisations to find good models for continued cooperation between church and mission. Numerous models of cooperation have been presented, discussed, and tried out. Two extreme models that have been put into practise are, on the one hand, a full integration of the mission organisation within the new church and, on the other hand, two completely separate, parallel organisations with more or less defined cooperation. The supporters of the former model have claimed that the mission organisation has to be dissolved as soon as a new church is established and the work and the resources of the mission transferred to the church. The mission has to be completely

⁵⁷² AFELM II 45 Consultation Nr. 2 on Constitution for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand and Agreement between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand and Lutheran Mission in Thailand, November 11-14, 1992; AFELM II 45 Thaimaan luterilaisen kirkon perustamisasiakirjat, January 24, 1994; ALMT By-laws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand 1994.

integrated in the new church and give up its own identity and independence. If the mission organisation subsists after the establishment of the church, it has to subordinate to the church and only act according to the church's plans and wishes. The followers of the latter model, on the other hand, have considered that both the church and the mission should have their own organisation, work, and independence, and that their areas of cooperation should be agreed on separately. Naturally, there have been several variations to these two models and nowadays most models lie somewhere in between these two extremes. Concerning the experiences of the *Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission* (FELM), the former mission directors Henrik Smedjebacka and Alpo Hukka have both maintained that the most well functioning models of cooperation have been models where the young church and the mission are considered equal partners in the cooperation. In this case, neither of them have to renounce their identity and independency, but both are able to contribute to the work according to their own prerequisites and interests. According to Mission Secretary Egil H. Eggen, the *Norwegian Missionary Society* (NMS) had experience from a series of different models of cooperation and Eggen could present seven different models that were used in Asia alone. The *Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore* had experience from cooperating with one mission partner, while the *Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong* had written agreements with several partners of cooperation.⁵⁷³

⁵⁷³ AFELM I 68 Patterns of Cooperation, by Egil H. Eggen; AFELM I 68 Samarbeidsmodeller mellom kirke og misjon ute, by Odd T. Ommundsen; AFELM II 24 Joint Board for Thailand, November 3, 1991; AFELM I 68 Consultation on Church Constitution, November 4, 1991; AFELM II 45 Consultation Nr. 2 on Constitution for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand and Agreement between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand and Lutheran Mission in Thailand, November 11-14, 1992; AMBT Conversation with Egil H. Eggen, February 17, 2003; Armstrong 1972, 120-121; Let the Earth Hear His Voice 1975, 108-110; Hukka 1978, 39-40; Fuliga

As early as 1983, the LMT appointed a Constitution Committee to plan the establishment of a Lutheran Church in Thailand and prepare a constitution for the church as well as an agreement between the church and its mission partners. Examples of different types of agreements on cooperation between church and mission were collected and the models from an Asian context were studied in particular.⁵⁷⁴

As has been shown previously in this thesis, many of the national workers of the LMT had their roots in other church denominations and particularly in the *Church of Christ in Thailand* (CCT). When the CCT was established in 1934, the mission agencies that joined the church dissolved their organisations in Thailand and integrated all their work in the church. In addition, the missionaries were integrated into the CCT and became employees with the same position as the Thai workers of the church. According to the Korean missionary Samuel I. Kim, the integration of the missions into the CCT caused significant difficulties between the CCT and the mission agencies, and it had not led to an increasing autonomy for the church even if that had been the aim. It is reasonable to assume that the experiences from the CCT affected the Thai co-workers opinion on how the cooperation between the Lutheran Church in Thailand and the LMT ought to be formed. In many cases, the cooperation model of the CCT, i.e. full integration of the mission in the church, was the only model that the Thai coworkers of the LMT knew. On the other hand, some of them might also have been familiar with the problems of the integration model and would therefore be looking for a more useful model of cooperation. In 1985, it was

1980, 191, 196-201; Smedjebacka 1990, 65-66. For more information about partnership and different models of cooperation between churches and missions, see for instance Taylor 1994 and steen 1997.

574 AFELM II 45 Thaimaan luterilaisen kirkon perustamisasiakirjat, January 24,1994, Appendix The History of the Constitution.

suggested that the relationship between the Lutheran Church in Thailand and the Lutheran Mission should be cooperation instead of integration, but a decision about the model of cooperation was not made at this stage.⁵⁷⁵

The concrete drawing up of an agreement between the emerging church and the Lutheran Mission started in the late 1980s" Some of the issues that had to be resolved were the following: Which model of cooperation should be chosen for the church and mission? How large a representation should the LMT have in the governing bodies of the church? How should the missionary representatives in the bodies of the church be elected and who should have the highest decision making power in joint work? Was, for instance, the mission organisation allowed to start new congregations and projects on its own or were all the activities to be joint work and subordinated under the church? In the beginning of the 1990s, the preparation of an agreement between the church and the mission had proceeded so far that the suggested partnership model was included in *The Five Years Plan 1991-1995 of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand*. In broad outline, the agreement proposal suggested that after the establishment of the Lutheran Church in Thailand, the LMT would continue as a partner of the church and as a coordinating body between the mission partners as well as between the church and the mission partners. The church and the mission were to cooperate in the areas of education, diaconal work, and communication, but they could also have work on their own. This meant that the LMT could even run its own congregations, but these were to be transferred to the church when they were considered "mature enough".⁵⁷⁶

⁵⁷⁵ ALMT Constitution Committee, October 25, 1985; Makela 2006, 85; Kim 1982, 79-91.

⁵⁷⁶ AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1991/Five Years Plan 1991-1995 of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand; AFELM I 68 Constitution

The model of cooperation presented in The Five Years Plan 1991-1995 proved, however, not to be the final version. Amendments to the model were suggested by the missionaries, the Thai Lutherans, and the home leaders of the member organisations of the LMT.⁵⁷⁷ The final proposal how the cooperation between the future church and the LMT should be constituted was presented by a group of Thai coworkers at the second consultation on the constitution and the agreement. The proposal was based on the partnership model. It was agreed that this model, called "partnership inside the church", should be further developed and constitute the foundation of the cooperation between the Lutheran Church in Thailand and the Lutheran Mission in the country. Some minor changes were made to the structure, but otherwise the proposal was accepted as such. According to this model, the foreign missionaries were after the establishment of the church to be part of the church structure, even if not fully integrated. A noticeable fact was that the Thai group was prepared to give the Lutheran Mission more influence in the church than the LMT felt it appropriate to have. The Thais would even have been ready to elect a missionary bishop of the church. Finally, the future leaders of the church and the LMT agreed to share the administrative responsibility during the first years. However, the Thais were to have the majority of the seats in the decisive bodies of the church.⁵⁷⁸ According to former Asia Secretary of FELM, Seikku

Committee, September 25, 1991; AFELM II 45 Seminar on Constitution and Agreement between Church and Mission, October 1, 1992; AFELM II 45 Thaimaan luterilaisen kirkon perustamisasiakirjat, January 24, 1994, Appendix The History of the Constitution.

⁵⁷⁷ AFELM I 68 Constitution Committee, September 25, 1991.

⁵⁷⁸ AFELM II 45 Consultation Nr. 2 on Constitution for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand and Agreement between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand and Lutheran Mission in Thailand, November 11-14, 1992, 5; AFELM 8.2.7.4./1. Thaimaan työalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1992, 9; Suomen Lahetyssanomien 3/1993,

Paunonen, the model was based on the thought that the LMT was to have a certain number of representatives in the General Assembly of the church, the Church Council, the boards of the departments and the Lutheran Christian Foundation in Thailand. In this respect, the solution differed from a full integration that would have merged the organisation of the mission fully into the church. The former strong local organisation of the LMT was to become weaker, but the mission would still have the possibility to influence and participate in the work of the church as the church would for many years be in need of foreign support.⁵⁷⁹

The Agreement between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand and the Lutheran Mission in Thailand was ratified by the Thai Lutheran Assembly in January 1994, together with the constitution and the by-laws of the ELCT. The agreement was also ratified by the Joint Board for Thailand as well as by the member organisations of the LMT⁵⁸⁰

The preamble of the *Agreement between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand and the Lutheran Mission in Thailand* started by stating that the Lutheran mission work in Thailand has been performed in close cooperation between Lutheran churches and mission agencies from different parts of the world under the umbrella organisation the Lutheran Mission in Thailand. When the Lutheran Church in Thailand is established, the members of the Lutheran Mission are to continue their cooperation by taking part in the work of the church.⁵⁸¹

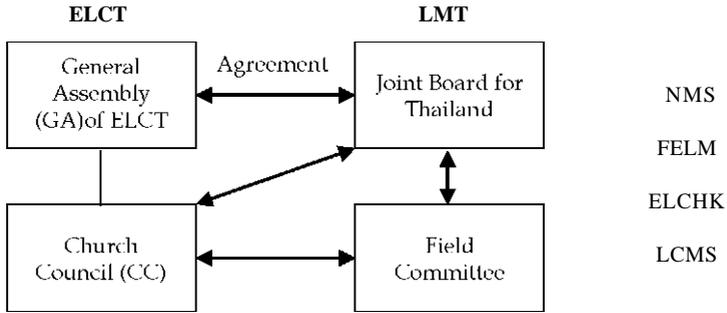
Itsenainen kirkko 1994?; Mission 11/1993, Thailand far en egen luthersk kyrka; LMT News, March 1994, General News; Woie 1998, 23.

⁵⁷⁹ AFELM II 45 Thaimaan luterilaisen kirkon perustamisasiakirjat, January 24,1994.

⁵⁸⁰ LMT News, March 1994, General News.

⁵⁸¹ ALMT Agreement between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand and the Lutheran Mission in Thailand 1994,1.

Figure 4 The relationship between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand and the Lutheran Mission in Thailand.



Work

Source: Agreement between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand and the Lutheran Mission in Thailand

In the official contacts between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand and the Lutheran Mission in Thailand, the church was to be represented by its General Assembly, the highest authoritative body of the church, and the Church Council, the executive body of the church. The LMT, on the other hand, was to be represented by the Joint Board for Thailand, an agency acting on behalf of the Home Boards of the missions and churches that were members of the LMT. For the contacts between the ELCT and the LMT in Thailand, the Lutheran Mission should establish a Field Committee that was to act on behalf of the Joint Board. The Field Committee was to consist of the Field Representative of each of the member organisations of the Lutheran Mission. At the General Assembly of the ELCT, the members of the Field Committee were to be the representatives of the LMT. In addition, the member organisations of the LMT would have the right to send a varying number of delegates to the General Assembly

depending on the number of missionaries the organisation had in Thailand. Member organisations with five or more missionaries would have the right to send one extra delegate and organisations with ten or more missionaries to send three extra delegates. The delegates from the member organisations of the LMT did not, however, have the right to vote in elections of members to the Church Council and could not themselves be elected members or substitutes for members of the council. In addition, the missionaries who were in charge of a congregation, a preaching place or an evangelisation team were to participate in the General Assembly of the ELCT as observers. In addition, the members of the Joint Board for Thailand had the right to attend the assembly as observers. The treasurer of the LMT was to be a consultative member of the General Assembly, which meant that the treasurer had a voice, but no vote. The missionaries and their children were to be associated members of one of the congregations or preaching places of the ELCT and have the same rights and duties as other members. However, they could not be elected delegates or observers to the General Assembly of the ELCT.⁵⁸²

In the Church Council of the ELCT, three of the members of the Field Committee of the LMT were to be members *ex officio*. In addition to the treasurer of the LMT there was to be a consultative member of the Church Council who had a voice, but no vote. The Church Council was to appoint at least one missionary to each board of the church's departments. The number of missionaries was, however, not to exceed 49 percent of the total number of members in each board, i.e. the Thais were always to have the majority in the decision-making of the church. The Church Council was also to appoint at least one missionary each to the Board of Directors of the Lutheran Christian Foundation in Thailand and the Board of Directors

⁵⁸² ALMT Agreement between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand and the Lutheran Mission in Thailand 1994, 3-5.

of the NMS Company Ltd. The Thais should nevertheless have the majority of the seats in both boards.⁵⁸³

Together the church and the mission organisation were to work to fulfil the purpose of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand according to the constitution's chapter 3 *"The purpose of this church IS to worship God, the Father through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit; to proclaim the Gospel to all human beings; to build up tile body of Christ, the Church; and to serve others in love."* The LMT was to provide the church with personnel and financial support. The Church Council should request for missionaries from the Joint Board for Thailand and the Field Committee of the LMT was to inform the Church Council about missionaries that could be suitable for work in Thailand. Primarily, the LMT should provide personnel for work in the areas of evangelism, the establishment of new congregations, Christian education, and diaconal work, but missionaries could also be placed on the basis of the needs of the church. According to missionaries Maija and Jaakko Makela of FELM, the LMT also had the right to be the initiator of new work or developing the work that the mission already had, but all work had to be done in agreement with the ELCT. It was considered that in a country where less than 1 percent of the population was Christian, foreign mission workers would also be needed after the establishment the church. The Church Council was to decide on the placement of the missionaries involved in the work of the ELCT, but the placement had to be in agreement with the church, the missionary and the sending mission agency. The member organisations of the LMT were still to have the right to assign their missionaries necessary work within their own organisation, such as work with field administration and schooling of children, and to employ Thai workers for their

⁵⁸³ ALMT Agreement between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand and the Lutheran Mission in Thailand 1994, 3-4, 7.

administration. The ELCT was to have the main responsibility for all the work, but the LMT would have an important role as a partner of cooperation in realising the mission task in Thailand.⁵⁸⁴

The church was to strive for financial self-reliance, but the LMT was to give financial support according to what had been agreed. All financial support for investments and running expenses was to be channelled through the treasurers and the bookkeeping of the ELCT and the LMT. Support from the LMT for the running expenses of the church should be given monthly according to a budget accepted by both parties. The church was to give a quarterly financial report to the treasurer of the LMT and the Joint Board for Thailand, and both the Joint Board and the Field Committee of the LMT had the right to request details concerning the bookkeeping of the ELCT. The bookkeeping of the ELCT was separated from the LMT on May 1, 1994⁵⁸⁵

The Agreement between the ELCT and the LMT was to be valid until 1998 when it should be reconsidered. Amendments to the agreement had to be approved by both the ELCT and the LMT. Anyone of the partners could terminate the agreement after notice had been given five years in advance. If agreed by both partners the termination could also be executed sooner⁵⁸⁶

⁵⁸⁴ ALMT Agreement between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand and the Lutheran Mission in Thailand 1994, 2, 5-6; AFELM 8.2.7.4./1. Thaimaan tyoalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1994, 7; AMBT Conversation with Maija and Jaakko Makela, May 28, 1997; Finska Missionssallskapets arsbok 1992,107.

⁵⁸⁵ ALMT Agreement between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand and the Lutheran Mission in Thailand 1994, 6-7; AFELM I 77 Treasurer's Report Jan-Apr 94 by Markku Ala-Uotila.

⁵⁸⁶ ALMT Agreement between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand and the Lutheran Mission in Thailand 1994, 7.

The Norwegian Missionary Society, the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong and the Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore signed a new agreement on mission cooperation among themselves the day before the establishment of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand. In this agreement, the confessional basis of the LMT, the membership, the purpose of the cooperation and the organisation were dealt with. The agreement contained the formal basis for the continuing cooperation within the framework of the LMT. The main purpose remained, to *"bring Christ's Gospel through proclamation and service to the peoples of Thailand"*. This purpose was to be realised through the members of the LMT joining forces in cooperation and working in partnership with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand in order to promote an efficient planning and use of resources as well as a joint Lutheran witness and a broad Christian fellowship. Some of the tasks of the LMT continued, however, for example, the missionaries still needed to apply for their visas, residence permits and working permits through the Lutheran Mission, and it was through the LMT that the missionaries were elected to seats in the administrative bodies of the ELCT and could participate in the General Assembly of the church. In the long run, however, the LMT aimed at making itself unnecessary. If the Lutheran Mission was no longer needed or considered appropriate it could be dissolved, but the member organisations could continue if they considered it necessary.⁵⁸⁷

Before the establishment of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand, the LMT had been a strong organisation for missionary pioneer work where the Executive Committee had a central position. After the foundation of the church the LMT was to continue with a simpler organisation. In the new

⁵⁸⁷ AFELM I 77 Agreement on Mission Cooperation in Thailand, April 23,1994; Woie 199 "21-22.

organisation the Joint Board for Thailand, i.e. the home leaders, were to take a more prominent role. In the situation where a new autonomous church had been established, it was, according to Seikku Paunonen, common that the field organisation of the mission became weaker and that difficult questions that may occur were dealt with in a more neutral forum. The forum included members that did not participate in the everyday work in the mission field, in this case the Joint Board. In this way, the missionaries would become more free to do actual mission work and possible strains between the young church and the mission partner(s) in this period of transition would lessen in the mission field.⁵⁸⁸

Overall, Paunonen considered that the process of drafting a church constitution for the ELCT and an agreement between the church and the Lutheran Mission had been slow and difficult. To accommodate the Thai context, the varying backgrounds of the Thai coworkers and parish members, some with roots in other church communions and other with Buddhist and/or Animist background together with the four different mission partners, two old Nordic mission organisations and two young Asian churches, had not been an easy task for the LMT and the Thai Lutherans.⁵⁸⁹

The last General Assembly of the pioneer mission Lutheran Mission in Thailand was held on April 20, 1994. The LMT was also to continue to exist after the establishment of the autonomous Lutheran church, but with a lighter field organisation and with restricted work and responsibility.⁵⁹⁰

⁵⁸⁸ AFELM 8.2.7.2./3. Neuvottelumatka Thaimaahan 18.-26.4.1994, report by Seikku Paunonen.

⁵⁸⁹ AFELM II 45 Thaimaan luterilaisen kirkon perustamisasiakirjat, January 24, 1994.

⁵⁹⁰ AFELM I 81 General Assembly 1994 of the LMT/Chairperson's Report.

7.3 Strategies and emphases of the new church

At the Thai Lutheran Assembly in January 1994 in Ubon Ratchathani, the assembly approved the constitution and the by-laws of the *Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand* (ELCT) as well as the agreement between the church and the *Lutheran Mission in Thailand* (LMT) with only some minor changes and with a large majority. After this approval the decisive bodies of the member organisations of the LMT were to make their decisions about the constitutive documents. Rev. Thomas F. Schaeffer, Chairman of the Joint Board for Thailand, hoped that only absolutely necessary changes or recommendations would be raised at this late stage as a delay could affect the timetable for the establishment of the church negatively. During the coming three months, all the member organisations of the Lutheran Mission accepted the constitution and the by-laws of the church and the agreement between church and mission.⁵⁹¹

The establishment of the new church was celebrated concurrently with the first General Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand, which was held April 21-24, 1994. On the very first day of the General Assembly, immediately after constituting the assembly, the delegates proceeded with the election of the first bishop and the first secretary of the church. The 34-year old pastor Banjob Kusawadee was elected Bishop of the ELCT. Banjob Kusawadee had obtained his master of theology degree at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Hong Kong, and was the only Thai employee of the ELCT with this level of theological

⁵⁹¹ AFELM Cbb 125 Johtokunnan kokous, February 4, 1994, § 11 Thaimaan ev.lit.kirkon perustamisasiakirjat Liite N:o 6; AFELM I 68 Letter from Thomas F. Schaeffer to Joint Board members, arrived February 9, 1994, incl. Preliminary Report from Thai Lutheran Assembly by Svein Nybo.

training. Pastor Suk Prachayaphorn was elected Secretary of the Church. The first treasurer and the first church council of the ELCT were elected on the second day of the General Assembly. Ms. Suprane Srimongkolkan was appointed Treasurer of the Church and the new Church Council met for the first time already during the General Assembly. The height of the General Assembly was the last day when the constituting of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand was celebrated and Banjob Kusawadee was installed as Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand by Bishop Gideon Chang of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore. Among others attending the celebration, were the Norwegian Ambassador Willy Fredriksen, the Finnish Ambassador Eero Salovaara, Dr. Charan Ratanabutra from the Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand, and the Asia Secretary Thomas Batong from the Lutheran World Federation. There were also several bishops from the Lutheran churches in Norway and Denmark as well as high representatives from the member organisations of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand. The programme consisted of traditional Thai dance, greetings from the foreign guests, the history of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand, hymn-singing, choir-singing, prayer, and the unveiling of the new signboard of the ELCTJ⁹²

According to the travel report by Seikku Paunonen, former Asia Secretary of the *Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission* (FELM), the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand had 988

⁵⁹² ALMT General Assembly of the ELCT 1994/Agenda & Programme: AFELM I 68 Celebration for the Constituting of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand (ELCT); AFELM I 68 Installation of the Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand and Prayer for the Church Council; AFELM 8.2.7.2./3. Neuvottelumatka Thaimaahan 18-26.4.1994, report by Seikku Paunonen; LMT News, March 1994, General News; Suomen Lahetyssanommat 5/1994, Thaimaahan syntyi luterilainen kirkko; Mission 5/1994, En ny kyrka blev till.

members on the day of its establishment. The number of Thai coworkers was 54. Ten people had been ordained as ministers and eleven were evangelists. The new church had 14 congregations. Eleven of the congregations were situated in the Bangkok metropolitan area and three in the northeastern part of the country. The number of missionaries, at the end of 1993, was 28⁵⁹³

As early as April 1994, when the new leadership of the ELCT met for the first time, membership of the church in some domestic as well as international Christian organisations was dealt with. Despite the occasional discussions whether a membership in the Church of Christ in Thailand would have been a better solution for the LMT, the Lutheran Mission had been, during all its existence, a member of the *Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand* (EFT). The establishment of the ELCT offered, at least in theory, the Thai Lutherans a possibility to reconsider membership in the EFT. At the first meeting of the Church Council, it was decided, however, that the church should apply for membership in the Evangelical Fellowship in Thailand. The application was recommended by the LMT and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand was accepted as a member of the EFT the same year.⁵⁹⁴

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) had been a special partner of cooperation with the LMT a long before the establishment of the ELCT. The contacts between the LMT and the LWF dated back to the time of the foundation of the Lutheran Mission. From the very beginning, the LMT had

⁵⁹³ AFELM 8.2.7.2./3. Neuvottelumatka Thaimaahan 18-26.4.1994, report by Seikku Paunonen; AFELM 8.2.7.4./1. Thaimaan työalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1994, 7-8; LMT News, March 1994, General News; Kotimaa 27-28/1994, Luterilaisuus sopii myöskin Aasiaan.

⁵⁹⁴ ALMT Church Council of the ELCT, April 1994, 4/94; AFELM I 77 General Assembly of the ELCT 1995/Report from the Bishop; Woie 1998, 24-25.

regular contacts with different departments of the Lutheran World Federation as the LWF tried to act as a coordinator of the Lutheran work in Asia and a mediator between the Lutheran churches. The contacts between the LMT and the LWF were, according to the LMT's point of view, an important aspect in preparing the establishment of a Lutheran Church in Thailand. By staying in touch with the LWF, the LMT wanted to help the Thai Lutherans to develop a Lutheran identity and show the Thai Lutherans that they were part of a large communion of Lutheran churches and Lutheran Christians.⁵⁹⁵

The contacts between the LMT and the LWF had found different expressions. By December 1982, the Church Cooperation Department of the LWF had already arranged a theological symposium in Luther-studies in Bangkok. During the 1980s, representatives or observers from the LMT participated in several meetings and seminars arranged by the LWF in different places in Asia. When the General Assembly of the LWF was held in Budapest in 1984, Thai Evangelist Paul Pongsak Limthongvirutn and Missionary Christopher Woie represented the LMT in the guest category. In addition, in 1988, the LMT was asked by the LWF to host a theological consultation in Bangkok in June the following year⁵⁹⁶ The LMT also received financial support from the LWF for its theological education and discipleship training.⁵⁹⁷

⁵⁹⁵ AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1991/Five Years Plan 1991-1995 for the Lutheran Mission in Thailand.

⁵⁹⁶ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1983/Report from chairman; AFELM II17 Executive Committee of the LMT, August 4,1983,116/83 and 117/83; AFELM II17 Executive Committee of the LMT, 15 December, 1983, 173/83; ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1987/Report from Chairman; AFELM II 42 Executive Committee of the LMT, September 29,1988,102/88; AFELM I 81 General Assembly of the LMT 1991/Five Years Plan 1991-1995 of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand; Budapest 1984 "In Christ - Hope for the World" 1985, 295; Kusawadee 1989, 9; Woie 1998, 24.

⁵⁹⁷ AFELM II 42 Executive Committee of the LMT, November 24, 1988,

Until April 1994, the contacts between the Thai Lutherans and the LWF had been channelled through the LMT. After the establishment of the Lutheran Church in Thailand, it was time for the Thai Lutherans to decide if they wanted to continue the contacts and the cooperation with the LWF. At the first meeting of the new Church Council, it was decided that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand should apply for membership in the Lutheran World Federation. The fact that the question of membership in the LWF was dealt with already at this stage, was an expression of the eagerness of the ELCT to create international contacts and show that it was part of the communion of Lutheran churches around the world. In June 1994, the ELCT was accepted as a full member of the LWF.⁵⁹⁸

According to the annual report in 1994, of the Finnish resident representative in Thailand, Markku Ala-Uotila, the establishment of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand did not bring about any significant changes to the Lutheran ministry in the country. As the establishment of the church had been planned since the early 1980s, and the responsibility for the Lutheran work had gradually been transferred to the Thais, there were no sudden changes on the day of the establishment of the church.⁵⁹⁹ Some new areas of emphasis, plans, and strategies were, however, revealed in conjunction with the foundation of the church and these were, for instance, expressed in the new long-range plan of the church for the years 1996-2000. Until then, the church seems to have

149/88; AFELM II 42 Executive Committee of the LMT, November 23, 1989, 163/89; AFELM I 68 Letter from Markku Ala-Uotila to Seikku Paunonen, September 6, 1993; Kusawadee 1989, 9.

⁵⁹⁸ ALMT Church Council of the ELCT, April 23, 1994, 2/94; AFELM I 68 Letter from Thomas p. Batong to Banjob Kusawadee, May 3, 1994; AFELM I 77 General Assembly of the ELCT 1995/Report from the Bishop; Woie 1998, 24.

⁵⁹⁹ AFELM 8.2.7.4./1. Thaimaan työalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1994, 7.

continued implementing the five-year-plan 1991-1995 of the Lutheran Mission and in many respects, the new long-range plan continued along the path that had been staked out by the mission.

The ministry of the LMT had been, to a great extent, based on the work in the local congregations. The congregations also continued to be the basis of the Lutheran work in Thailand after the establishment of the ELCT. The work in the congregations continued along the previous lines. This was made possible, as the main responsibility for most of the congregations had already been transferred to Thai evangelists and pastors before the establishment of the church. With regard to parish work, it was a predetermined goal of the long-range plan that nine new congregations should be founded during the five-year period 1996-2000.⁶⁰⁰

In addition to parish work, diaconal projects both in Bangkok and northeastern Thailand, outreach with the help of Christian radio programmes, and theological training also continued to be important elements of the Lutheran ministry in Thailand after the establishment of the ELCT. The ELCT wanted to put a strong emphasis on theological education and discipleship training. It hoped that the number of students at the Lutheran Institute of Theological Education would increase and planned to continue sending theologians to study abroad. The ELCT wanted to keep the standard of the theological teaching high, and decided that at least some of the Thai teachers should pass their doctor of theology exam within the period of the first long-range plan.⁶⁰¹ The church continued to pursue

° AFELM I 82 General Assembly of the ELCT 1995/Five Years Plan 1996-2000 of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand; AFELM 8.2.7.4./1. Thaimaan työalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1994, 7; Mission 11/1993, Thailand far en egen luthersk kyrka; Woie 1998, 23-24, 26.

AFELM I 82 General Assembly of the ELCT 1995/Five Years Plan 1996-2000 of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand;

the diaconal work in Bangkok and northeastern Thailand started by the LMT. In addition to running the diaconal projects, the ELCT wanted to strengthen the teaching about diaconia at the parish level and strive for closer cooperation between the congregations and the diaconal projects.⁶⁰² Due to internal problems within the Lutheran Mass Communication, the ELCT rearranged the department after the establishment of the church. The aim was to attach the radio work more closely to the local congregations. The programmes were still broadcasted in Bangkok and Ubon Ratchathani, but it was also planned to start radio transmissions in the Nakhon Ratchasima province. An event, which encouraged the work of the mass media department, was when the mass media workers learnt that the Lutheran radio transmissions in Thailand could also be heard in Laos. This became clear when the employees of the Lutheran congregation in Ubon Ratchathani were approached by parish leaders from Laos who wanted to obtain additional Christian teaching.⁶⁰³

The long-range plan 1996-2000, also contained some plans and areas of emphasis, which were new to the Lutheran work in Thailand. One of the new ideas, which were introduced, was that the ELCT should become a nationwide church. Until then the Lutheran work in Thailand had been concentrated on three geographical areas, i.e. the Bangkok metropolitan area, the Ubon Ratchathani province, and the Nakhon Ratchasima province. The ELCT considered however that the challenges in Thailand were so great that the church ought to use contacts also in other parts of the country in order to reach all the

Misjonstidende 6/1996, Kirken i Thailand i dag; Woie 1998, 31.

⁶⁰² AFELM 8.2.7.4./1. Thaimaan tyoalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1994, 12; AFELM I 82 General Assembly of the ELCT 1995/Five Years Plan 1996-2000 of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand.

⁶⁰³ AFELM 8.2.7.4./1. Thaimaan tyoalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1994, 10; AFELM I 82 General Assembly of the ELCT 1995/Five Years Plan 1996-2000 of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand.

people of Thailand with the Christian gospel. Another subject that was much stressed in the long-range plan was mission work. The church wanted not only to respond to the spiritual challenges in Thailand, but also to be involved in bringing the Gospel to other countries, primarily to neighbouring countries in Southeast Asia.⁶⁰⁴

The trend that the congregations outside Bangkok grew faster in terms of membership than the congregations in the metropolitan area continued after the establishment of the ELCT. New congregations were not established in Bangkok after 1993, but in the countryside the number of baptisms implied that new congregations would have to be founded in the near future. Since it seemed far easier for the church to expand outside the capital, the LMT expressed worries that the work in Bangkok would stagnate or even start to decrease. It was questioned whether or not it would be good for the church if the many new parish members in the Thai countryside changed the nature of the church from an urban church with the majority of its members and congregations in the capital to a rural church with its focus on the countryside. From the very beginning, it had been the wish of the LMT to concentrate on the capital area. The challenges in the capital continued to be great as urbanisation brought more and more people to the city. The questions asked were whether the success in the countryside would lessen the church's efforts in the city and whether the members of the Lutheran congregations in the capital would feel at home in the same church as the people from the provinces or could the success in the countryside inspire the languishing city congregations. As a majority of the leaders of the new church had their roots

⁴ AFELM I 82 General Assembly of the ELCT 1995/Five Years Plan 1996-2000 of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand; AFELM 8.2.7.2/4. Thaimaan työalueen toimintasuunnitelma 1997; Misjonstidende 6/1996, Kirken i Thailand i dag; Woie 1998, 27, 30.

in the Thai countryside, it might have felt natural for them to stress the rural areas where the work was more successful. It was also a fact that most of the Lutheran congregations in Bangkok had reached the size which investigations had shown to be typical for congregations in the Thai capital.⁶⁰⁵

The establishment of new congregations was also a question of economy and resources. The fear of not keeping within the framework of the self-reliance programme was, according to Jaakko Makela, Resident Representative of FELM in 1996, holding back the church planting. According to both the five-year-plan 1991-1995 of the LMT, and the long-range plan of the ELCT 1996-2000, new congregations should no longer be established using old models, which required much money, costly premises, and a lot of manpower. Instead, the church planting was to be based on cell-groups that would develop into local congregations. By starting with a low profile, it was hoped that the new congregations would become self-reliant sooner and with less effort. In his annual report in 1996, Jaakko Makela, however, still wrote that the ELCT continued to base its church planting on the models that had been used by the Lutheran Mission. There was a lot of talk about cell-groups, but with some exceptions the ELCT did not manage to get this model to work in the congregations.⁶⁰⁶ In addition to the cell-group strategy, the ELCT continued to use evangelisation teams to visit Christians living in villages,

⁶⁰⁵ AFELM II 17 Letter from Jaakko Makela to Pauli Rantanen, January 9, 1991; AFELM 8.2.7.2./4. Letter from Jaakko Makela to Paavo Kilpi, January 17, 1996; AFELM 8.2.7.4./1. Thaimaan tyoalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1996, 4-7; AFELM 8.2.7.4./1. Thaimaan tyoalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1997, 4-7; Woie 1998, 28-32.

⁶⁰⁶ ALMT Church Council of the ELCT, March 9, 1994, 47/94; AFELM 8.2.7.4./1. Thaimaan tyoalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1994, 8; AFELM 8.2.7.4./1. Thaimaan tyoalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1996, 6-7; Woie 1998, 29-30.

bring the gospel to new areas, and establish new preaching places in the villages.⁶⁰⁷

It was already established in the constitution of the church that the ELCT was to pursue mission work abroad, but the ELCT also chose to put a strong emphasis on mission work in its first long-range plan and mentioned the neighbouring countries as possible areas for its mission. According to the three selves formula, the establishment of an autonomous indigenous church was not to be an end in itself. The new church was to continue the spreading of the Christian Gospel and the church planting. It was to become self-propagating. Consequently, the ELCT appointed in 1995, a Mission Committee to plan the mission of the church. Through the Thai Good News Center in Singapore, the ELCT was already involved in a type of mission work.⁶⁰⁸ In addition, the ELCT was interested in mission work and mission cooperation particularly in the Mekong area. Therefore, in November 1994, the ELCT attended a seminar that was arranged in the north of Thailand with the aim of investigating the possibilities of using northern Thailand as a base for mission work in Indochina and southern China. The initiative for the seminar had been taken by the *Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hong Kong* and the *Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore* as well as some other Lutheran churches. The political liberation and

⁶⁰⁷ AFELM 8.2.7.4./1. Thaimaan työalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1994, 8; AFELM I 82 General Assembly of the ELCT 1995/Five Years Plan 1996-2000 of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand; Woie 1998, 26, 30.

⁶⁰⁸ ALMT Constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand 1994, 3; AFELM 8.2.7.2./3. Letter from Markku Ala-Uotila to Seikku Paunonen, August 10, 1994; AFELM I 82 General Assembly of the ELCT 1995/Five Years Plan 1996-2000 of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand; ALMT Church Council of the ELCT, July 20, 1995, 89/95; AFELM 8.2.7.4./1. Thaimaan työalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1997, 12-13; Finska Missionssällskapet's arsbok 2000, 36-38; Wagner 1972, 216-218, 221-223; Winter 1972, 130-136.

the improved traffic and trade contacts between the countries had created new possibilities also for mission work. The plan was to establish a Christian training centre on the Thai side of the border, as there were no formal border formalities in this area.⁶⁰⁹

Immediately after its establishment, the ELCT accepted a new self-reliance programme. According to the new programme, each congregation would receive an annually decreasing amount of money as support from the member organisations of the LMT. The support was to be channelled to the congregations by the central administration of the ELCT. During the time of the last self-reliance plan of the LMT, each congregation had only been allocated a target of a certain percentage of self-support that it had to reach. The fact that the congregations now would get an exact sum for their support aimed at making the financial planning more concrete and helping the parties concerned to project their finances more accurately. At the end of 1994, the self-support percentage of the Lutheran congregations was 49 percent on average. The Laksi Congregation and the Lad Phrao Congregation were the congregations with the highest percentage of self-support and were supposed to become self-reliant in the near future. As the self-reliance plan of the ELCT was largely based on offerings from parish members, it was important for the congregations to get more members if they wanted to be able to follow the plan. That the present members would be able to increase their support significantly was unlikely. After the establishment of the ELCT, the departments of the church were no longer given concrete self-reliance plans that they were supposed to follow. Possibilities

⁶⁰⁹ AFELM 8.2.7.4./1. Thaimaan työalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1994, 10-11; AFELM 8.2.7.4./1. Thaimaan työalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1996, 11-12; Kirkkomme lahetys 1/1994, Lahetyksestä kirkoksi; ELCT News letter, April 1996, News from the bishop.

of getting more local income were, however, to be studied and implemented. It would not be good for the church if all the support for the work of the departments came from abroad. With regard to the Lutheran Diakonia Ministry, it was particularly discussed whether or not it should be an aim of this work to also become self-supporting. According to the LMT, it was clear that the church ought to strive for self-reliance also in the diaconal work. The church and its members should learn to take responsibility for the diaconal projects and not only channel foreign money to different projects. On the other hand, at least for the time being, there was not enough local money to run extensive diaconal projects. For the foreign mission agencies it was, however, comparatively easy to find supporters for diaconal work and social projects.⁶¹⁰

⁶¹⁰ AFELM 8.2.7.4./1. Thaimaan työalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1994, 7; AFELM I 82 General Assembly of the ELCT 1995/Five Years Plan 1996-2000 of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand; AFELM 8.2.7.2/4. Thaimaan luterilaisen kirkon itsekannettavuusohjelman toteutuminen, report by Markku Ala-Uotila, April 7, 1995; AFELM I 82 General Assembly of the ELCT 1997/Treasurer's Report.

Table 4 The membership and self-reliance situation in the congregations of the ELCT at the end of 1994⁶¹¹

CONGREGATION	EST.	ACTIVE MEMBERS	SELF-RELIANCE
Peace Lutheran Church, Soi Amon	1977	79	55%
Immanuel Lutheran Church	1977	65	49%
Lad Phrao Church	1981	113	78%
Samroong Church	1982	80	71%
Grace Lutheran Church, Hua Mark	1983	24	51%
Laksi Church	1985	51	85%
Phasee Charoen Good News Church	1986	74	32%
Don Muang Church	1988	52	42%
Lutheran Church Sukhumvit 50	1993	20	21%
Church 11	1993	10	12%
Ubon Good News Church	1985	66	21%
Phibun Church, Ubon	1988	111	48%
Si Khiu (Church), Khorat	1991	48	16%
Fahoan Church	1993	?	?

Source: Development of income and self-reliance of the congregations of the ELCT during 1990-1995, report by Vesa Kosonen.

⁶¹¹ When reading the table it is as well to keep in mind that the church members of the ELCT came from very different social backgrounds. For instance, the parish members of the Laksi Congregation came mostly from wealthy backgrounds, while the members of the Phibun Church and the Phasee Charoen Congregation, in general, came from poor conditions. AFELM I 82 General Assembly of the ELCT 1995/Five Years Plan 1996-2000 of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand; AFELM 8.2.7.2/4. Thaimaan luterilaisen kirkon itsekannettavuusohjelman toteutuminen, report by Markku Ala-Uotila, April 7, 1995; AFELM 8.2.7.4./1. Development of income and self-reliance of the congregations of the ELCT during 1990-1995, report by Vesa Kosonen., December 27, 1996.

Moreover, after its establishment the ELCT received a significant part of its income from the member organisations of the LMT. This was seen, for instance, in the budgeting of the operational expenses. During the first three years after the establishment of the ELCT, the local income for operational expenses was around 20-25 percent of the total income. For parish work and evangelism, the ELCT was able to contribute with more than 30 per cent of the operational expenses, but for the diaconal ministry and the theological education, more than 80 per cent of the income was from foreign sources. Furthermore, when it came to investment in land, church buildings and other premises a significant part of the income came from the members of the Lutheran Mission, even if the local congregations were supposed to contribute to their new church buildings with a certain percentage of the total cost of the building project. The personnel expenses made up about half of the budget of the ELCT. In general, the Norwegian Missionary Society and the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission supplied 40-45 percent of the foreign income each, while the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong, the Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore, and the *Kinki Evangelical Lutheran Church* contributed with less than five percent each.⁶¹²

612 AFELM II 48 Executive Committee of the LMT, December 16, 1993, 133/93, Appendix Operational and Investment Budget 1994; AFELM I 82 General Assembly of the ELCT 1995/Realization of Income and Expenses, May-Dec 1994; AFELM I 77 Budget 1995 of the ELCT; AFELM I 77 Treasurer's Report 1995, by Vesa Kosonen; AFELM I 82 General Assembly of the ELCT 1996/Realization of Income and Expenses 1995; AFELM I 82 General Assembly of the ELCT 1997/Realization of Income and Expenses 1996; AFELM 8.2.7.2/4. Thaimaan luterilaisen kirkon itsekannettavuusohjelman toteutuminen, report by Markku Ala-Uotila, April 7, 1995; AFELM I 77 Treasurer's Report 1996, by Vesa Kosonen; I 77 Policy and Guidelines for Economical Support from LMT to ELCT; AMBT E-mail from Tero Norjanen to Marika Bjorkgren-Thylin, October 19, 2007.

In 1996, Jaakko Makela wrote that the establishment of the ELCT had not affected the self-reliance of the congregations to any great extent if it was only the recorded revenue that was concerned. However, due to the fact that the congregations were supposed to pay 15 percent of their income to the central administration of the church, Makela felt that the voluntary work in the congregations, the direct donations and the donations of tangible assets had increased after the establishment of the church. The self-reliance programme accepted in 1994 was nevertheless generally considered reasonable, as the congregations were mostly able to reach the goals of the programme.⁶¹³

As a natural consequence of the establishment of the ELCT, the role of the LMT in the Lutheran work in Thailand became less important. The resident representatives of the member organisations of the LMT were members of the Church Council and other administrative bodies of the church, but mainly they represented their own organisation and its interests, not the LMT. This was seen, for instance, in the investments of the partner organisations. The Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore was principally interested in supporting church projects in village congregations, the NMS concentrated on the work in the Ubon Ratchathani province, and FELM emphasised the urban ministry in the Bangkok metropolitan area.⁶¹⁴

According to Missionary Christopher Woie of the NMS, many of the Thai coworkers and church members had great and probably unrealistic expectations from the establishment of the ELCT. A few years after the foundation of the church there

⁶¹³ AFELM II 48 Church Council of the ELCT, February 22, 1996, 22/96; AFELM 8.2.7.4./1. Thaimaan työalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1996, 8.

⁶¹⁴ AFELM 8.2.7.4./1. Thaimaan työalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1996,

were still many questions to be solved, and not everything had transpired as hoped. As a consequence, some downheartedness could be discerned within the church. According to Woie, this was due to several factors. Firstly, the pressure to become economically self-reliant was hard for several small and poor congregations. Secondly, the development of Thai society was rapid and particularly in Bangkok the economic growth was fast. This meant that expenditures increased, but the salaries of the employees of the church did not increase at the same pace as the expenses. Thirdly, the church leadership was new and young as far as experience was concerned and the church had to face many challenges regarding leadership. In an attempt to support the church in finding its model for leadership, the LMT assisted in arranging leadership seminars for the workers of the church. Fourthly, the missionary contribution in the local congregations had decreased after the establishment of the church, a fact that meant a reduction of the total coworker resource locally. Several of the long-time mission workers in Thailand returned home permanently around 1994. For many years these missionaries had been planning the establishment of the ELCT and when the church finally was founded they felt it to be the right time to retire from the work in Thailand. New missionaries to some extent replaced those returning home, but naturally, the change of personnel affected the work.⁶¹⁵ Before the establishment of the church, the missionaries were used to having, if not a leading role, at least largely independent work. After the establishment of the church, there were Thai leaders on different levels, who decided about the work. However, it was not easy either for

⁶¹⁵ AFELM 8.2.7.4./1. Thaimaan työalueen yleiskertomus vuodelta 1995, 8-9; AFELM 8.2.7.2/4 Thaimaan ev.lut. Kirkon ensimmäinen työyhteisökoulutus; AFELM I 77 Missionary Conference of the LMT 1996/Chairperson's Address; AFELM I 77 Missionary Conference of the LMT 1997/Chairperson's Address; AMBT Conversation with Eivind Hauglid, February 27, 2003; Woie 1998, 28.

the new Thai leaders to take over the leading role from the missionaries whom they were used to look up to and regard as the leaders of the work.⁶¹⁶ Literature about the process of establishing new churches is relatively unanimous that cooperation problems are inevitable as all parties search for new models and roles for the work and cooperation.⁶¹⁷ All things considered, it can be questioned if the LMT focussed on the planning of the foundation of the ELCT to such an extent that it did not have time to prepare itself for the reality of life after the establishment of the church.

A study conducted by the Lutheran World Federation among churches in Africa, Asia and Latin America in the 1970s, indicated that even if the churches, in name, were autonomous, many of them felt that the life of the church to a high degree, directly or indirectly, was determined by outside factors. These included such factors as overseas mission boards, churches in the rich part of the world, or international organisations. The following areas of dependence were felt to be particularly problematic; finances, decision making and cultural dependence as well as dependence on foreign personnel. As a young church, with several foreign partners of cooperation it is probable that the ELCT, in the future, will have to devote much time to reflection over the question of

⁶¹⁶ AFELM 8.2.7.2./3. Letter from Markku Ala-Uotila to Seikku Paunonen, August 8, 1994; ALMT Church Council of the ELCT, August 18, 1994, 69/94; AFELM 8.2.7.2./3 Letter from Markku Ala-Uotila to Seikku Paunonen, September 2, 1994; AFELM 8.2.7.2./3 Letter from Markku Ala-Uotila to Seikku Paunonen, October 10, 1994; AFELM I 77 General Assembly of the ELCT 1995/Report from the Bishop; AFELM I 77 Letter from Suk Prachayaporn to Seikku Paunonen, November 23, 1995.

⁶¹⁷ Fuliga 1980, 194; Budapest 1984 "In Christ - Hope for the World" 1985,103.

dependency and to developing its own identity, role and position.⁶¹⁸

Summary

In this chapter, I have looked in more detail at the writing of a church constitution for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand (ELCT) and the shaping of an agreement between the Lutheran Mission in Thailand (LMT) and the new church. I have also studied the plans and the areas of emphasis of the new church and considered changes that took place during the first year of the church's existence. According to the home leaders of the member organisations of the Lutheran Mission with their previous experience from writing church constitutions and collaboration agreements, the process in Thailand was lengthy and at times complicated. There were several parties that wanted their opinions to be heard in the process, the Thai Lutherans as well as the missionaries and home leaders of the members of the LMT. In addition, there were different cultural and church traditions to take into consideration as the members of the Lutheran Mission consisted of both old Nordic missionary societies and young Asian churches. The LMT had underlined, from the very beginning that it wanted to take into consideration the Thai context and the opinions of the Thai Lutherans in the work on the constitution. In some fundamental questions concerning the constitution, the LMT still chose another solution than the one forwarded by the Thais or the one that would have been natural in the Thai society. Through the establishment of the ELCT, the church had, at least in theory, the possibility to disassociate from the activities and the strategies of the Lutheran Mission. However, on the whole, the church

⁶¹⁸ The Identity of the Church and its Service to the Whole Human Being 1977, 2, 7-10; steen 1997, 8,12-14.

continued along the same lines as the mission. Only in special cases, for instance, those concerning the geographical expansion did the church chose another solution than the LMT.

8. CONCLUSION

The aim of this research was to examine the coming into being of the *Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand* (ELCT) by exploring the development from the Lutheran pioneer mission started in 1976 to the founding of an autonomous Lutheran church in 1994. Attention has been particularly given to strategic, operational, financial, and organisational issues. In addition, the Lutheran mission enterprise in Thailand was to be considered in relation to contemporary international mission thinking as well as to more local perspectives such as contextualisation and the adaptation of the work to the Thai society.

The planning for the instigation of Lutheran mission work in Thailand began during the first half of the 1970s. At this time, the *Norwegian Missionary Society* (NMS) as well as the *Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission* (FELM) developed a particular interest in Southeast Asia and wished to expand their mission to this area. When the NMS and FELM sent their first mission workers to Thailand in 1976 and 1978 respectively, the new workers were Lutheran pioneers in the sense that there was no Lutheran work and no Lutheran congregations in the country at the time. In 1980, the cooperation organisation *Lutheran Mission in Thailand* (LMT) was founded by the NMS and FELM. At this stage, the partners of cooperation had already agreed that the establishment of an autonomous Lutheran Church in Thailand was the purpose of their work. This goal was formulated in the *Agreement on Mission Cooperation in Thailand* between the two missionary societies; it then became a guideline in the work of the Lutheran Mission. In the course of time, two Asian Lutheran churches joined the work of the LMT. By signing the agreement, they too accepted the purpose of the Lutheran mission being the establishment of an autonomous Lutheran church. In the first annual reports by the chairman of the Lutheran Mission, a recurrent topic was

the uncertainty that the missionaries felt when confronted with the task to model the Lutheran mission work in Thailand and unite all forms of Lutheran activity into a national Lutheran church. None of the missionaries had previous experience of planning the establishment of an autonomous church and in view of the demanding task the missionaries felt unsure.⁶¹⁹

The purpose of the Lutheran work in Thailand was nevertheless to build up an autonomous Lutheran church, and according to the Agreement on Mission Cooperation, the local congregations were to be the foundation of the work. Consequently, the LMT set about its work by planting congregations in the Thai capital Bangkok. The aim was to find areas without Christian activity and to establish local congregations for people living in the neighbourhood. The intention was that the congregations would be based on cell groups and home meetings, which would bring the Christian gospel into the everyday life of the inhabitants of Bangkok. In order not to divide families, the LMT strove particularly hard to reach extended families. The church planting model of the LMT had, however, some weaknesses. The Thais were not generally willing to open up their homes for parish groups and often they were uncomfortable with taking a leading role in the cell groups and home meetings. Social connections were more important than location when the Thais chose their congregation, but it was still hard to reach whole families. The Lutheran missionaries had imagined that the church planting in Bangkok would benefit from the fact that the social pressure from the surrounding Buddhist society would not be so strong in the city. However, it soon appeared that the secular and individualistic lifestyle of large cities had also reached Bangkok. The missionaries had hoped that it would be easier to establish congregations in Bangkok as many people were

⁶¹⁹ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1980/Report from Chairman.

living in a comparatively small area. Nevertheless, it was the Lutheran congregations in the Thai countryside that had the most rapid growth with regard to the number of members. During their first years of existence, the Lutheran congregations in Bangkok still experienced significant growth, but when the number of parish members reached 50-60, the growth stagnated or even started to decline. On the whole, the numerical gains of the Lutheran work in Thailand were quite low. The Lutheran congregations do not seem to have been able to convince the Thai Buddhists that the Christian Gospel concerned them as well.

One determining reason for the LMT to choosing Bangkok as starting point for its mission enterprise in Thailand was that in the mid-1970s it was not possible, for political reasons, to take up work in northeastern Thailand, the area that had first caught the interest of the Norwegians, in particular. In the altered situation, the Lutheran mission workers chose to start building up a mission centre in the capital instead. Urban ministry in Bangkok was also, from the very beginning, the priority of FELM and part of FELM's strategy to move the focus of its mission from the African countryside to the cities of Asia. The NMS was, however, not willing to give up its dream of work in northeastern Thailand and the areas that had a border with Laos. The NMS justified its interest in the Northeast by the fact that in the Thai capital, there was already considerable Christian activity, but large parts of the northeastern provinces were in total lack of a Christian presence. Moreover, the primary task of the NMS was to go to unreached peoples. FELM did not oppose the LMT when in 1985 it started mission work in the northeastern Ubon Ratchathani province. Nonetheless, the somewhat differing areas of focus of the NMS and FELM led to slight strains between the two organisations, even if they both declared that they understood and accepted each other's priorities

The question of geographical expansion was also, in other respects, a complicated issue for the LMT. In the Lutheran pioneer mission situation in Thailand, the missionaries were afraid of dividing the work and the limited resources of the LMT too much. When Lutheran groups in the mid-1980s also started to appear spontaneously outside the agreed centres of the Lutheran work, i.e. Bangkok and the Ubon Ratchathani province, the LMT tried every means of finding other solutions rather than taking up permanent work in the Nakhon Ratchasima province, where the new Lutherans lived. Among the other measures taken to care for the Lutherans in the province, the LMT tried to encourage the contacts between the Lutheran group and an existing Pentecostal church in the area. Finally, it was the Thai coworkers of the LMT that demanded that the Lutheran Mission take responsibility for the Lutheran group, as the group had, in fact, resulted from the work of the Lutheran congregations. With time, the Lutheran groups and congregations in northeastern Thailand became more and more important for the Lutheran Mission and the Lutheran church as the work expanded most powerfully in these areas.

From the very beginning, the Lutheran mission was also involved in diaconal work in Thailand. The first missionaries were immediately arrested by the obvious social needs in the country and wanted to contribute to improving the living conditions of the people. The diaconal work of the LMT was seen, nevertheless, mainly as a tool in the outreach of the Lutheran congregations. As a consequence, the LMT tried to only start such diaconal projects that could be managed by the small Lutheran congregations. When it appeared that the congregations still had difficulties in administering the projects, the LMT decided in 1987, to establish a special diaconia department to support the local congregations and manage more demanding diaconal projects. However, the aim was still that each project should be connected to one of the

local congregations. Other tools for the Lutheran church planting were mass media work and literature work. Through the mass media work the LMT came in contact with a great number of people, but it soon appeared that it was hard to maintain the contacts with the radio listeners and that the process to a personal Christian conviction was long. The LMT also tried opening a Christian bookstore, but the bookstore never became profitable and after 11 years of struggle, it was closed down.

During the first years after the foundation of the LMT in 1980, the mission workers started to discuss how the Lutheran Church in Thailand should be developed . The reason for this was partly that the purpose of the work - the establishment of an autonomous Lutheran church - was so clearly expressed in the Agreement for Mission Cooperation, and partly that during the first years it was uncertain how long the Lutheran missionaries would be allowed to stay in the country. The Thai government planned to reduce drastically the number of visas issued to foreign missionaries and together with the communist activities in the area, the future of the Lutheran mission in the Thai nation became uncertain. Consequently, the LMT encouraged the planning of an autonomous Thai Lutheran church that could take over the responsibility for the work in case the missionaries had to leave. In 1984, the LMT decided to work for the establishment of the Lutheran church by 1994.⁶²⁰

As the LMT had to recruit all its first national parish workers from the theological institutions of other church communions, the LMT had, at an early stage, to make a decision on how the Thai coworkers should be trained for service in the Lutheran congregations. In contact with followers of Buddhism,

⁶²⁰ ANMS General Assembly of the LMT 1981/Five Years Plan of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand 1981-1985,1-3,7.

Hinduism, and Islam, the member organisations of the LMT felt that Lutheranism had much to contribute especially with its emphasis on salvation and grace as a gift from God. The question was whether the LMT needed a theological full-time education of its own in order to provide for the future need of parish workers in the Lutheran congregations or if it could continue to train its coworkers in the theological institutions of other churches. The main issues were whether the LMT had enough resources to have its own theological education and how a theological full-time education could be established by legal means, as Thailand had strict rules for religious and private schools. The core question was also about whether the LMT should establish an autonomous Lutheran church or if both the Lutheran theological education and the Lutheran congregations rather should be incorporated into an already existing church communion, in this case the *Church of Christ in Thailand* and the *Bangkok Institute of Theology*. Finally, the group that insisted on the LMT needing its own theological education won the debate. When the work of the LMT came to crossroads where difficult decisions had to be made, the determinant question was generally what would benefit the Lutheran identity of the work and the future church the most. In this case, it was quite clear that the LMT having its own Lutheran theological education would strengthen the Lutheran identity of the work the most. An issue connected to the question of theological education was the ordination of the first Thai ministers. The LMT considered it fundamental that the Lutheran Church in Thailand had national ministers. The LMT was, however, careful not to ordain the first ministers at too early a stage. Since all the first Thai parish workers had their roots in other church denominations, it was considered important that they were given time to develop a Lutheran identity and theology before their ordination. The first ordinations should take place with the impending church in mind, and not only service within the Lutheran Mission.

When the Lutheran Church in Thailand was established in 1994, the new church had eight ordained ministers in service.

The local congregations were the basic unit of the Lutheran work in Thailand, and the organisational structure of the Thai Lutheran church was to be built with the congregations as a basis. As a consequence, it was vital that guidelines for the organisation of the local congregations were prepared at an early stage and that the parish members were involved in the work and management of the congregations. At the beginning of the 1980s, the LMT had already started to discuss the economical responsibilities of the local congregations, and in the mid-1980s, self-reliance was included in the principal thinking of the LMT. The intention was that the congregations and departments of the LMT would gradually take more responsibility for their economic self-reliance until they became completely independent of outside (foreign) support. The LMT tried to keep the self-reliance plan at a realistic level so that the congregations would have a reasonable possibility of reaching the goals. The first plans were however made during a period of powerful growth of membership in the Lutheran congregations, and as the growth diminished, it appeared that the aims had been set too high. At the time of the establishment of the Lutheran Church in Thailand in 1994, only one congregation was fully self-supporting and the church was largely dependent on foreign economic support.

In the groundwork for a new church, the delegation of responsibility to the future national leaders of the church was an important question. As early as the beginning of the 1980s, the Thai coworkers of the LMT started to ask for a forum where, as national employees, they could discuss their ministry and working conditions. Due to fears concerning the dividing of work and allowing the Thai coworkers too much influence in the development of the coming Lutheran church, the LMT tried to unite both the Thai coworkers and parish

members in one Thai association. Over the years, the LMT tried several different models for organising and uniting the Thai Lutherans. However, not until the Thai Lutheran Fellowship was established in 1987, did the LMT find a model that could be used in building up the coming church. At the same time, the LMT tried to relinquish progressively more of the leadership for the Lutheran congregations, the diaconal projects, and other activities to Thai employees. At the end of the 1980s, the Executive Committee of the LMT and the Thai Lutheran Committee started to have joint meetings. Gradually, the Thai Lutheran Committee took more responsibility for the planning and the follow-up of the work and the budget. A particularly important role was played by the Thai Lutheran Committee in the preparation of the constitution for the Lutheran Church in Thailand, and the agreement between the Lutheran Mission and the church. According to the home leaders of the member organisations of the LMT, the work on the church constitution and the agreement between church and mission was a lengthy and challenging process with many different parties, cultures, and church traditions to take into consideration.

The LMT was aware that a church, which in its outer forms and teaching was characterised by Western culture and ways of expressing faith, would never be considered a Thai church, and would not be able to take root in Thai society. From the very beginning, the LMT tried to employ national workers who were familiar with Thai religion, culture, and ways of thinking, and who would more easily be able to find appropriate ways to present the Christian gospel and develop the Lutheran ministry in a manner that fitted Thai society. The LMT gave much attention to the adaptation of the liturgy, the singing, and the music into a Thai context. Much time was also devoted to philological questions of how to find appropriate Thai expressions for central Christian and Lutheran terms. The intention of the Lutheran Mission was to carefully consider

the Thai context and find such forms and expressions for the church life that would fit into Thai society. In practice, it appeared to be hard for the Lutheran congregations to adapt to the surrounding society. Not only was the Lutheran faith new in Thailand, but the coworkers and members of the Lutheran congregations had been influenced by other, stronger Christian traditions, such as American low church traditions. These traditions had become normative in Thai Christianity and the Thai Lutherans were not willing to give up these models of church life and ways of expressing faith. Nevertheless, at the time of the establishment of the Lutheran Church in Thailand, the LMT could only hope that with time the Lutheran customs and the Thai elements would gain more ground and be accepted in the Lutheran Church in Thailand.

The concrete work of writing a church constitution and an agreement between the church and the Lutheran Mission started in the late 1980s. The intention of the LMT was that the constitution should also be adapted to the Thai context and that Thai ways, for instance, in organising and leading a church, should be considered. It was, however, hard to determine what were genuine Thai customs and what were manners that had been imported from other Western church communions. As many of the Thai coworkers of the LMT had their backgrounds in non-Lutheran churches, they brought with them various traditions and customs and the LMT was unsure how much these should be allowed to influence the church. In the end, customs and traditions that originated in other church communions were not allowed to influence the constitution of the Lutheran Church in Thailand to any great extent. The church was to be built on common Lutheran traditions and church customs. In addition, the organisational structure, the decision-making, and the management of the church were to be based on Western traditions and democracy. Even though there was much discussion about

contextualisation during the writing of the church constitution, the constitution bore apparent foreign influences.

All the partners of cooperation within the LMT had experience from countries where the Lutherans were divided into several small competing Lutheran churches and this was a development that the LMT wanted to prevent. The LMT was anxious that the Lutheran work in Thailand should be through cooperation and that all Lutheran churches and organisations who wanted to work in Thailand should be incorporated into the LMT. It was important that only one association, the Thai Lutheran Fellowship, should be established for the Thai Lutherans, and finally that only one Lutheran church should be established in the country. The principle adopted of leaving the doors to the LMT open for other Lutheran churches and organisations to join later on, depended on two factors. Partly it was the desire to keep together the Lutheran work in Thailand, and partly it was the view of the Lutheran World Federation that the responsibility for mission work in each area rested, above all, with the already existing Lutheran churches in the region. In its work, the Lutheran Mission in Thailand was particularly influenced by the contemporary mission thinking of the Lausanne Movement and the Lutheran World Federation.

The mission cooperation within the LMT was a typical example of the intricate and complex structure of Christian world mission at the end of the 20th century. However, it was rare that mission agencies started work in a pioneer situation and followed the development of the work until the day when a new autonomous church was established. Within the LMT, there was not always unanimity as to where the emphasis of the mission should be and how the work should develop. In times of crisis, the Agreement on Mission Cooperation and the clearly stated purpose of the work *"to bring Christ's Gospel through proclamation and service, to the peoples in Thailand, and to*

establish local congregations which shall be united in one Lutheran Church" helped the LMT to focus on the central questions of the ministry.⁶²¹

This research has shown that the LMT had a clear purpose and aim for its work. From the very beginning, the endeavour was to establish a national Lutheran Church in Thailand. In order to attain this goal, the LMT founded local congregations, started different kinds of activities and made use of contemporary models and principles for mission and cross-cultural church planting. Often the *Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hong Kong* served as a model of how to build up the work in an Asian situation. However, not all the models and methods were well suited for a Thai context, and the LMT had to evaluate its way of working when the activities did not provide the planned and hoped for results. Even if not all the activities of the LMT were successful and not all the working methods functioned as hoped, the LMT reached its over all aim when the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand was established in 1994, and the responsibility for the Lutheran ministry in Thailand was given over to the Thai Lutherans.

The LMT succeeded in its ultimate goal, but it can be debated whether the new church was the kind of church that the LMT had striven to foster. The ideals had been set high, with the LMT wanting to create an indigenous church. The church was not to be a copy of Western Lutheran churches, but a church where the national elements had an important and visible place. It can also be questioned if foreign mission agencies can detach themselves from their backgrounds to such an extent that they can bring about a church that does not bear traces of its founders and their traditions. The fact that there were several partners of cooperation within the LMT might have

⁶²¹ AFELM 8.2.7.2./3. Neuvottelumatka Thaimaahan 18.26.4.1994, report by Seikku Paunonen.

prevented the Lutheran Church in Thailand from developing a total dependency on one mission partner, but the ELCT still had strong bonds to its founders. After its establishment, the church was also largely dependent on foreign economic support through the LMT. Although the ELCT had local leadership, the question was how much the foreign partners controlling the finances could steer the young church and the development of the work. The ELCT has shown positive signs of self-propagation and spread to new parts of the country. On the other hand, the membership growth of the congregations in Bangkok seems to have stagnated and the expansion to new areas could be a sign of the church choosing the least difficult method, and targeting areas where growth could be easily achieved. The LMT was among the forerunners in using Thai dance and music in its work, but otherwise the contextualisation seem to have remained somewhat superficial. Through its contacts to and later membership in the Lutheran World Federation, the Lutheran work in Thailand placed itself in the worldwide family of Lutheran churches. This contributed to the Lutheran work in Thailand developing an international identity and strengthening its position on the national scene. During its first year of existence, the ELCT had already made some decisions that separated it from the lines drawn up by the LMT, for instance, by deciding that it wanted to be a national church and not to only concentrate its work on Bangkok and northeastern Thailand.

The further development of the young Lutheran church, the integration of the church in Thai society and the adaptation to the Thai context are subjects outside this research. These should, however, be made the subjects for one or several other investigations. To further examine these subjects would be important not only for the young church in question, but for all agents involved in mission work, communicating the gospel in a cultural context unfamiliar to oneself and working

in partnership with churches around the world. In addition, the sentiments and opinions of the missionaries, the Thai coworkers, and the Thai church members regarding the establishment and the shaping of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand is a subject that could be more thoroughly investigated. Additionally, the dependency of the ELCT on foreign missions and churches could be studied in another investigation, as it is most probable that this small young church with several foreign partners of cooperation will have to deal with these questions.

SAMMANFATTNING

Syftet med denna avhandling är att undersöka den evangelisk-lutherska kyrkans i Thailand, *Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand*, framväxt från att missionsarbetet startades år 1976 till att en självständig kyrka grundades år 1994. Särskild vikt läggs på att analysera bakgrunden till och utformningen av det lutherska missionssamarbetet i Thailand, granska arbetets tyngdpunkter och utveckling samt studera de konkreta förberedelserna för grundandet av en självständig luthersk kyrka i landet.

Det var under första delen av 1970-talet som Det Norske Misjonsselskaps, Finska Missionsallskapets och den evangelisk-lutherska kyrkans i Hong Kong (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong) intresse för att starta missionsarbete i Sydostasien väcktes på allvar. Statistik över den kristna missionens utbredning visade att Sydostasien var en försummad region och att merparten av missionärerna arbetade på den afrikanska landsbygden. Den politiska situationen, kriget i Vietnam och kommunismens snabba frammarsch i Indokina gjorde Sydostasien aktuellt och intressant. Eftersom Kina efter år 1949 gradvis hade stängt för kristen mission närmde många missionsorganisationer också en önskan om att finna nya sätt att nå kineserna med det kristna evangeliet. Då länderna i Sydostasien hade betydande kinesiska minoriteter var de intressanta också i detta avseende. Det Norske Misjonsselskap, Finska Missionsallskapet och evangelisk-lutherska kyrkan i Hong Kong samarbetade redan i Hong Kong och kände till varandras intresse för Sydostasien. När det stod klart att åtminstone de två nordiska missionsallskapen skulle utvidga sin verksamhet till Thailand inledde de förhandlingar om att grunda ett samarbetsorgan i landet.

Det Norske Misjonsselskap sende sine første missionärer till Thailand år 1976. De første finlandske lutherske missionärerne ankom år 1978. Samarbetsorganet *Lutheran Mission in Thailand* grundades år 1980. Som ett rättesnöre for arbeidet skrevs ett samarbeitsavtal, *Agreement on Mission Cooperation in Thailand*, som faststallde arbeidets teologiske grund, arbeidets syfte samt premisserna for samarbeidet. Senare anslot sig även tre asiatiske kirker - Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong, Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore och Kinki Evangelical Lutheran Church - till den lutherske missionen i Thailand.

Enligt samarbeitsavtalet var avsikten med det lutherske missionsarbeidet i Thailand att en sjalvstendig nationell luthersk kirke skulle grundas. Redan år 1985 foreslogs det att kirken skulle grundas inom tio år. Målsætningen att grunde en sjalvstendig kirke ifragasattes i og for sig av en handfull thailendere og missionärer som ansag at de forsamlinger som oppstod som ett resultat av arbeidet snarere borde integreres i nagon av de eksisterende kirkerne. Emedan avsikten att grunde en sjalvstendig kirke hade skrivits in i samarbeitsavtalet var dock motstandernes mojligheg at andre målsætningen begrenset.

Da det lutherske samarbeitsorganet i Thailand inledde sin verksamhet fanns det inte nagon luthersk kirke eller nagra lutherske forsamlinger i Thailand. Den lutherske missionen i Thailand var pionjermission i det avseendet at den maste bygge opp den lutherske verksamheten og organisationen i landet fran grunden. I borjan hade Det Norske Misjonsselskap dromt om at koncentrere missionsarbeidet i Sydostasien till Laos og nordostre Thailand. Pa grund av det spande politiske laget i dessa omraden beslut man dock at starte verksamheten i hovedstaden Bangkok og bygge opp ett missionshokkvarter i hovedstaden innan man gikk videre till

andra landsdelar. När det senare blev aktuellt att expandera arbetet till nya områden var nordöstra Thailand den naturliga riktningen. Till följd av begränsade resurser försökte missionärerna dock begränsa arbetets geografiska utbredning till ett fåtal områden. För Finska Missionssällskapet hade missionsarbetet i storstaden Bangkok från första början högsta prioritet.

Fundamentet för det lutherska missionsarbetet i Thailand bestod av evangelisation, församlingsplantering och församlingsarbete. Avsikten var att finna områden som saknade kristen aktivitet och grunda församlingar för invånarna i grannskapet. De första missionärerna foreställde sig att det skulle vara lättare att arbeta i Bangkok än på den thailändska landsbygden. I städerna bodde många människor på ett litet område och det sociala trycket från den buddhistiska omgivningen var mindre i en anonym storstad. Det visade sig dock att den sekulariserade och individualistiska livsstilen som kännetecknade samtida storstäder också hade nått Bangkok. Sist och slutligen var det de lutherska församlingarna på landsbygden i nordöstra Thailand som lyckades locka flest medlemmar. I avsikt att stödja församlingarnas arbete och utökat verksamhet igångsattes även diakoniprojekt, radioarbete, litteraturmission samt teologisk utbildning.

De första konkreta åtgärderna för att förbereda grundandet av en luthersk kyrka i Thailand vidtogs redan i början av 1980-talet. Den lutherska missionens anställda började då sammanställa en luthersk gudstjänstordning, förbereda ordinationen av de första thailändska lutherska prästerna, reflektera över hur den lutherska kyrkan kunde anpassa sig till den buddhistiska omgivningen, arbeta för kyrkans självförsörjning samt planera hur ansvaret för det lutherska arbetet i Thailand gradvis kunde överföras på de thailändska

lutheranerna. I situationer da svara beslut om arbetets utveckling skulle goras var den avgorande fragan vad som gagnade den kommande lutherska kyrkan i Thailand mest.

I slutet av 1980-talet gick forberedelserna in i ett nytt skede da det konkreta arbetet med att skriva en konstitution for kyrkan samt ett samarbetsavtal for kyrkan och den lutherska missionen paborjades. Avfattandet av en konstitution for den lutherska kyrkan i Thailand samt ett samarbetsavtal mellan kyrkan och missionen var en lang och komplicerad process dar manga olika parter, kulturer och kyrkotraditioner skulle sammanjamkas. Centrala fragor om bland annat kyrkans ledning och organisation, dess integrering i det thailandska samhallat samt ansvarsfordelningen mellan kyrka och mission skulle avgoras och det tog tid for missionarerna, de thailandska medarbetarna och forsamlingsmedlemmarna samt missionsorganisationernas hemmaledningar att finna en gemensam linje i fragorna. Problemet var inte bara att den lutherska traditionen var frammande i Thailand utan att de thailandska medarbetarna och forsamlingsmedlemmarna var influerade av andra kristna traditioner, framst reformerta och baptistiska kyrkotraditioner, som hade natt Thailand langt innan den lutherska missionen inledde sin verksamhet dar. Den lutherska missionen var medveten om att en kyrka som praglades av vasterlandsk kultur och trosutovning aldrig skulle betraktas som en thailandsk kyrka och darfor agnades sarskild energi at att forsoka finna thailandska former for arbetet. Det var emellertid inte latt att avgora vad som var genuint thailandska seder och bruk och vad som hade importerats fran andra vasterlandsk kyrkotraditioner. Allt eftersom ar 1994 narmade sig delegerades mer och mer av arbetet och ansvaret till thailandarna. Da kyrkan slutligen grundades ar 1994 uppgav flertalet missionarer att forandringen inte var dramatisk eftersom thailandarna redan i flera ar i hog grad hade ansvarat for arbetet.

Missionssamarbetet inom den lutherska missionen i Thailand var ett typexempel på den kristna världsmissionens komplexa struktur i slutet av 1900-talet. Det var dock ovanligt att missionsorganisationer startade arbete i en pionjarsituation och följde arbetets utveckling tills en självständig kyrka hade grundats. Inom den lutherska missionen rådde det inte alltid enighet om var arbetets tyngdpunkt skulle ligga och hur verksamheten skulle utformas. De motsättningar uppstod hjälpte dock samarbetsavtalets tydligt uttalade målsättning missionärerna att fokusera på de centrala frågorna i arbetet.

Den lutherska missionen lyckades med sin avsikt att grunda en självständig luthersk kyrka i Thailand, men det kan ifrågasättas huruvida den nya kyrkan blev en sådan kyrka som den lutherska missionen hade haft för avsikt att åstadkomma. Anpassningen till den thailandska kontexten blev kanske inte så grundlig som missionssamarbetets initiativtagare hade önskat. Den nygrundade kyrkan hade 14 församlingar i Bangkok och på landsbygden i nordöstra Thailand, men på det hela taget förblev de numerära virmingarna få. Kyrkan var vid sitt grundande också i hög grad beroende av stöd från de missionsorganisationer och kyrkor som hade varit med och grundat den.

ABBREVIATIONS

ACHAA	Archives of Church History at Abo Akademi University
AFELM	Archives of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission
AHS	Archives of Henrik Smedjebacka
ALMT	Archives of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand
AMBT	Archives of Marika Bjorkgren-Thylin
ANMS	Archives of the Norwegian Missionary Society
BIT	Bangkok Institute of Theology
CCT	Church of Christ in Thailand
EFT	Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand
ELCHK	Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong
ELCT	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand
FELM	Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission
JBT	Joint Board for Thailand
KELC	Kinki Evangelical Lutheran Church
LCFT	Lutheran Christian Foundation in Thailand
LCMS	Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore
LFELM	Library of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission
LITE	Lutheran Institute of Theological Education
LMT	Lutheran Mission in Thailand
LNMS	Library of the Norwegian Missionary Society
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
NMS	Norwegian Missionary Society

APPENDIXES

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Appendix 1:

MAP OF THAILAND AND ITS ENVIRONMENTS



Appendix 2:

AGREEMENT ON MISSION COOPERATION IN THAILAND

PREAMBLE

The Norwegian Missionary Society and the Finnish Missionary Society, which sent their first missionaries to Thailand in 1976 and 1978 respectively, are Lutheran mission agencies with the chief aim of bringing Christ's Gospel, as understood in the Lutheran tradition, to those who are not yet Christians. In fulfilling this task they make the following agreement on mutual cooperation:

I NAME

The cooperation between the agencies concerned shall be carried out under the name of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand (hereafter LMT).

II CONFSSIONAL BASIS

The LMT acknowledges the Holy Bible as the revealed Word of God and as the basic rule and standard of faith and practice. It confesses the Creed of the Apostles and it accepts the - altered Augsburg Confession and Luther's Small Catechism as true expositions of the fundamental teaching of the Christian faith.

III PURPOSE

1. The main purpose of the LMT shall be to bring Christ's Gospel through proclamation and service, to the peoples in Thailand, and to establish local congregations which shall be united in one Lutheran Church.
2. By joining forces in cooperation, the partners of the LMT shall work for promoting an efficient: planning and use of their resources, a joint Lutheran witness and a broad Christian

fellowship.

IV MEMBERSHIP

Membership shall be comprised of those mission agencies and churches which approve the conditions laid down in this agreement. New members shall be accepted into the LMT by the General Assembly in consultation with the Home Boards concerned.

V RELATIONSHIPS

1. The LMT shall seek ways of fostering relationships with Old Testament churches and missions in Asian countries as well as in other parts of the world.
2. The LMT shall work for establishing good relations with other Christian bodies in Thailand.

VI AREAS OF COOPERATION

The main areas of cooperation shall be as follows:

- 1 Long range planning of the total work, including the search for new geographical places as well as for new methods and approaches in the spreading of the Gospel.
2. Recruiting and training of national workers.
3. Evaluating the need of and extending the call for expatriate workers.
4. Preparing of guidelines, rules and regulations for national workers, for the establishment of local congregations and for a united Lutheran Church.
- 5 Sharing of financial responsibilities for the work of the LMT.

VII RIGHTS OF THE INDIVIDUAL PARTNER

The individual partner shall have the following rights:

1. To preserve its own identity as a mission agency or church, and to keep its tradition with regard to salaries, housing, children's education, terms of service etc for its missionaries.
2. To make use of its traditional field organization as far as it seems to be helpful for the work and not to conflict with this agreement.
3. To take responsibility for certain projects and activities which are included in a long range plan or otherwise are accepted by the appropriate authorities of the LMT.

VIII ORGANIZATION

The LMT shall be functioning through a General Assembly, an Executive Committee and its chairman, and through full committees appointed as the need arises.

1. General Assembly

A. Members of the General Assembly shall be all the missionaries of the partners concerned, and national employees invited by the Executive Committee. Voting members shall be those who have been serving one of the partners for at least one year on this mission field.

B. The General Assembly shall meet at least once annually. Extra Assemblies may be held on request of two thirds of the voting members of the missionary body, or when so decided by the Executive Committee.

C. The General Assembly shall have the following powers:

discussion of general issues related to the task of the LMT, and for seeking ways of giving inspiration to all engaged in the various activities of the LMT.

D. At least two thirds (2/3) of the voting members shall be required for a quorum. Motions shall be carried by a simple majority vote, and elections shall be by secret ballots, when so required.

E. Each voting member of the Assembly and each Home Board shall have the right to take initiatives and to make proposals to the Assembly meetings.

^
2. Executive Committee

A. The Executive Committee shall consist of the missionary in charge of each partner organization, and of 1-2 other members with substitutes from each partner. The treasurer of the LMT shall be a consultative member in finance matters.

B. The Executive Committee shall be convened by the chairman as often as needs arise. At least two thirds(2/3) of the members shall be required for a quorum, and one of them has to be the chairman or vice chairman.

C. The Executive Committee shall have the following functions:

a. To be responsible for the supervision of the work of the LMT, and for the implementation of the assignments given by the General Assembly.

b. To take initiatives and to make recommendations to the General Assembly with regard to the work of the LMT.

c. To prepare the agenda for the General Assembly.

d. To prepare the annual budget for the LMT and to submit it to the General Assembly for further action.

e. To supervise the finance and the administration of the LMT.

f. To make temporary arrangements for the expatriates and national employees, when necessary between the General Assembly meetings.

g. To be responsible for the continuation of the work while missionaries go on furlough and vacation.

h. To provide a forum for counselling and solving of problems related to the personnel fo the LMT.

I. To deal with matters related to local churches, various missions and aid-agencies as well as with matters related to public authorities.

O. The minutes of the Executive Committee meetings shall be distributed to all missionaries in the LMT, to national workers who are members of the General Assembly, and to the Home Boards concerned.

3. Chairman of the LMT

The chairman shall have the following functions:

A. To act as chairman of the Executive Committee.

B. To prepare the agenda for the meetings of the Executive Committee.

C. To be the official representative of the LMT.

D. To convene the meeting of the General Assembly and to be responsible for the distribution of the Assembly minutes.

E. To be responsible for the filing of all records related to the LMT.

4. Treasurer

The treasurer shall have to following functions:

A To act as the book-keeper of the LMT.

B. To be in charge of the financial administration of the LMT.

IX LANGUAGE

The language of the LMT shall be English.

X REGISTRATION

The LMT shall be registered through the Evangelical Fellowship in Thailand.

XI REVIEW OF AGREEMENT

This agreement shall be reviewed after three years.

XII AMENDMENTS

Amendments of this agreement shall be made in consultation with the Home Boards concerned. The final decision shall be taken by the General Assembly by two thirds (2/3) majority vote.

Signed and delivered:

Appendix 3:

**CHAIRPERSONS OF THE LUTHERAN MISSION IN
THAILAND 1980 1994**

Chairpersons

Rev. Helge Breivik	1980-1982
Rev Jaakko Makela	1982-1983
Rev. Christopher Woie	1983-1984
Rev Jaakko Makela	1984-1987
Rev Christopher Woie	1987-1989
Mr. Markku Ala-Uotila	1989-1991
Rev. Kjell Sandvik	1991-1993
Rev Tapio Karjalainen	1993-1994
Rev Eivind Hauglid	1994-

Vice Chairpersons

Ms. Salli Lamponen	1980-1982
Rev. Christopher Woie	1982-1983
Ms. Salli Lamponen	1983-1984
Ms Norlys Nilsen	1984-1986
Rev. Christopher Woie	1986-1987
Ms. Salli Lamponen	1987-1989
Rev. Svein Nybo	1989-1991
Rev. Tapio Karjalainen	1991-1993
Rev Eivind Hauglid	1993-1994
Mr. Markku Ala-Uotila	1994-

Appendix 4:

**CHAIRPERSONS OF THE JOINT BOARD FOR
THAILAND 1981 1994**

Rev. Seikku Paunonen	1981-1982
Rev Egil H. Eggen	1982-1983
Rev Seikku Paunonen	1983-1984
Rev Egil H. Eggen	1984-1987
Rev Seikku Paunonen	1987-1989
Rev Egil H. Eggen	1989-1991
Rev Seikku Paunonen	1991-1993
Rev Thomas Schaeffer	1993-

Appendix 5:

**CHAIRPERSONS OF THE THAI LUTHERAN
COMMITTEE 1987 1994**

Rev. Thaveep Oiwan	1987-1990
Rev. Anant Likhitvitayanoont	1990
Rev Banjob Kusawadee	1991-1992
Rev Suk Prachayaporn	1993-1994

Appendix 6:

**MISSIONARIES OF THE NORWEGIAN
MISSIONARY SOCIETY IN THAILAND**

Name	Thailand	Singapore
Arsheim Eli	1976-1977	
Arsheim Emil	1976-1977	
Kjetsa Bj0rg	1976-1980	
Kjetsa Nils Peder	1976-1980	
Oye Ase	1977-1981	
Bjerkreim Liv Turid	1977-1982	
Breivik Astrid	1977-1988	
Breivik Helge	1977-1988	
Haaland Berit	1978-1979	
Haaland Per Arnar	1978-1979	
Nilsen Norlys	1979-1993	1993-
Haugeland Sidsel	1980-1981	
Woie Christopher	1981-1989	
Woie Solvi	1981-1989	
Hvarregaard		
Marit Larsen	1981-1988	
Sandvik Astrid Ersland	1981-1993	
Sandvik Kjell	1981-1993	
HaugHd		
Alfhild Steinsbo	1982-	
HaugHd Eivind	1982-	
Kristensen Jan Helge	1983-1991	
Kristensen Mariann	1983-1991	

Fintland Elise	1984-1990
McDonald Gregory	1984-1986
McDonald Magnhild	1984-1986
Nybo Svein	1984-1995
Nybo Tone Tvedt	1984-1995
Jorgensen Peder	1984-1988
Jorgensen Ruth	1984-1988
Hersvik Magne	1986-
Hersvik Ragna Thime	1986-
Havorstad Odd Arne	1986-1991
Haugland Arve Hansen	1988-
Haugland Astrid Marie Weydahl	1988-
Inger Homstvedt	1990-1993
Win Karin Kristiansen	1993-
Hadland Gerd Anny	1994-
Hadland Leif	1994-
Gran Karl Johan	1994-
Haug Kari Storstein	1994-
Borgersen Mona	1994-
Sandland Heidi	1995-
Sandland Morten	1995-

Appendix 7:

**MISSIONARIES OF THE FINNISH EVANGELICAL
LUTHERAN MISSION IN THAILAND 1978-1995**

Name	Thailand	Singapore
Kakko Raija Marja	1978-	
Lamponen Salli Helena	1978-1989	1989-1993
Konni Kaisu Anneli	1979-	
Makela Jaakko Juhani	1979-	
Makela Maija Riitta Inkeri	1979-	
Kuisma Ulla Maija Sinikka	1980-	
Laaksonen (Laukkanen) Aila Ruut Inkeri	1980-1984	
Alanne Liisa Marjatta	1981-	
Karjalainen Heikki Tapio	1981-1994	
Karjalainen Kaija Anneli	1981-1994	
Rantanen Anne Maarit	1981-1993	
Rantanen Pauli Kalervo	1981-1993	
Kuronen Seija Leena	1982-1990	
Ala-Uotila Markku Tapani	1983-1995	
Ala- Uotila Seija Charlotta	1983-1995	
Kosonen (Huikko) Kirsti Elisabet	1983-	
Pajula Hanna Liisa Mirjami	1983-1990	
Paul (Tuimala) Raili Marita	1983-	
Saynevirta Tarja Helena	1983-	
Kiviluoto Heikki Olavi	1985-1988	
Kiviluoto Raija Anneli	1985-1988	

Harju-Hiltunen Pirkko Paivikki	1986-
Hiltunen Pekka Yrjana	1986-
Kosonen Vesa Kullervo	1986-
Kayhko Paivi IrmeH	1988-1995
Kayhko Tuomo Rafael	1988-1995
Halmesmaa Ritva Aili	1990-
Laitinen Sisko Terttu Marjatta	1990-
Paul John Terence	1992-
Haakana Pauli Kalervo	1993-1995
Haakana Leena Sinikka	1993-1995
Poussu Annikka Minna-Helena	1993
Helle Jukka Antero	1995-
Helle Leena Tuulikki	1995-

Appendix 8:

**MISSIONARIES OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN
CHURCH OF HONG KONG AND THE LUTHERAN
CHURCH IN MALAYSIA AND SINGAPORE 1988-1995**

Name	Thailand	Singapore
Chan, Anita (Wai Ling)	1988-	
Leong, Rickson	1994-	
Leong, Tan Pei Pei	1994-	

Appendix 9:

**Constitution of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand**

PREAMBLE

CHAPTER 1. NAME

CHAPTER 2. CONFESSIONAL BASIS

CHAPTER 3. PURPOSE

CHAPTER 4. MEMBERSHIP

CHAPTER 5. MINISTRY

CHAPTER 6. ORGAIZATION

CHAPTER 7. PROPERTY AND FINANCES

CHAPTER 8. REGISTRATION AND RELATIONSHIP

CHAPTER 9. BY-LAWS

CHAPTER 10. AMENDMENTS

PREAMBLE

God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit has an unchanging intention to bring justice, redemption and love to humankind. In order to fulfill His mission, the Triune God has established His Church, where His gifts of salvation are shared with the people. Humankind is saved not by any merit of his own but by the grace of God through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church and all power belongs only to Him. The Church, as the body of Christ, is universal, but it also appears as regional churches and local congregations.

CHAPTER 1. NAME

The Church organized according to this Constitution shall be called "Sapha Khristchak Lutheran Nai Prathet Thai". The English name shall be "The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand" (hereafter called "this Church").

CHAPTER 2. CONFESSIONAL BASIS

This Church acknowledges the Holy Bible as the revealed Word of God and as the basic rule and standard of faith and practice. It confesses the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed, and it accepts the unaltered Augsburg Confession and Luther's Small Catechism as true expositions of the fundamental teachings of christian Faith.

CHAPTER 3. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Church is to worship God, the Father through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit, to proclaim the Gospel to all human beings; to build up the body of Christ, the Church; and to serve others in love. In order to fulfill this purpose this Church shall emphasize:

- 3.1 the preaching and teaching of the Word of God and the administration of the Sacraments;
- 3.2 the equipping of God's people through such means as: training for different ministries, discipleship training and christian education;
- 3.3 the proclamation of the gospel to non-Christians in Thailand as well as undertaking mission work in other countries, and;
- 3.4 Diakonia work, in order to bring love, justice and restoration to the world.

CHAPTER 4. MEMBERSHIP

A congregation is a fellowship of believers who confess their faith in words and practice. This Church shall be organized with the local congregations, as it's basic unit.

- 4.1 A member of this Church shall be a person who has received the Sacrament of the holy Baptism in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and has been enrolled as a member of a local congregation of this Church, or of a preaching place under the Church Council.

4.2 These members are organized as local congregations and preaching places. They are united in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand (ELCT). The congregations and preaching places accept the Constitution, By-laws and Regulations of this Church as the rule and norm in their life. They participate faithfully in the common work of this Church with prayer, personal service and offerings.

CHAPTER 5. MINISTRY

- 5.1 The members of this Church shall serve God as "a holy priesthood" (1.Pt.2:5) and according to their different gifts given by the Holy Spirit (Rom.12; Eph.4; 1 Cor.12).
- 5.2 In order to fulfill the purpose of this Church (as stated in the Constitution Chapter 3), there shall be an ordained ministry (pastor) and other ministries in the areas of evangelism, mission and Diakonia (See By-laws).

CHAPTER 6. ORGANIZATION

In order to fulfill its purpose, this Church shall be organized and administrated locally and nationally in the following manner:

- 6.1 The Annual meeting of the congregation
The congregation shall hold an annual meeting. The purpose of this meeting shall be to:
- 6.1.1 Provide for fellowship and spiritual nourishment, through which members are encouraged to take part in the life and ministry of the congregation and to be equipped for the proclamation of the Gospel;
 - 6.1.2 Discuss and approve annual budgets as well as long range plans and budgets for outreach ministry, Christian education and Diakonia, and;
 - 6.1.3 Elect the Congregation Committee and appoint auditors.
- 6.2 Congregation Committee
The Congregation Committee shall promote outreach ministries, Christian education, Diakonia work and the development of the spiritual life of the congregation.
- 6.3 General Assembly

6.3.1 Purpose

The purpose of the General Assembly of this Church shall be to promote the work of this Church in order to fulfill the purpose stated in the Constitution, chapter 3. "Purpose".

6.3.2 The General Assembly shall be the highest authoritative body of this Church.

6.3.3 The General Assembly shall be composed of delegates according to the regulations established in the By-laws. The pastors working in this Church and the evangelists in charge of a congregation or of a preaching place shall be delegates ex officio. In addition there shall be observers according to the regulations established in the By-laws.

6.3.4 The quorum for the General Assembly shall be two-thirds (2/3) of the total delegates present in the meeting.

6.3.5 Extraordinary General Assemblies shall be called according to the regulations established in the By-laws.

6.4 Church Council

6.4.1 The Church Council shall be the Executive Body of this Church; shall carry out the actions of the General Assembly; and shall administer routine affairs.

6.4.2 The General Assembly shall elect the members of the Church Council. The Church Council shall consist of: the Bishop, the Secretary of the Church, the Treasurer of the Church and three (3) additional members. The Bishop and the Secretary of the Church shall be pastors serving in congregational ministries (full-time or part-time in a congregation, preaching place or evangelization team). The Treasurer of the Church shall be elected from among persons nominated by the Church Council or from among the delegates present at the General Assembly. The three (3) additional members shall be elected from among the delegates present at the General Assembly.

6.4.3 The quorum for the Church Council shall be two-thirds (2/3) of its voting members.

6.5 Officers

6.5.1 The officers of this Church shall be: The Bishop, the Secretary of the Church and the Treasurer of the Church.

6.5.2 The qualifications, terms of service and duties of these officers shall be according to the regulations established in the By-laws of this Church.

6.5.3 During the period of time when the Bishop is on an approved leave of absence, the Secretary of the Church shall serve in his stead and shall have the full authority and responsibilities assigned to the Bishop by the Constitution and the By-laws.

6.5.4 In the event that the Bishop dies, resigns, or is otherwise unable to carry out the duties which are outlined in the Constitution and the By-laws, the Church Council, having decided that such is the case, shall call for within sixty (60) days an extraordinary General Assembly of this Church for the stated purpose of electing a new Bishop. If a regular General Assembly falls within the sixty (60) days, an extraordinary General Assembly shall not be called.

6.6 Departments

In order to fulfill the purpose of this Church, the General Assembly shall establish departments to function in different areas of the work. The departments shall be administrated by Boards according to the regulations established in the By-laws.

CHAPTER 7. PROPERTY AND FINANCES

7.1 All members belonging to this Church, moved by their understanding of Christian Stewardship, shall share in fulfilling the financial obligations of this Church as well as those of the local congregation and preaching place. This Church is committed to the principle of financial self-reliance.

7.2 Procedures for budgeting and financial administration shall be as outlined in the By-laws. Two auditors, appointed by the General Assembly, shall audit the financial records of this Church. A written report shall be submitted annually to the General Assembly.

7.3 The Lutheran Christian Foundation of Thailand

7.3.1 The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand shall register it's property with the Lutheran Christian Foundation of Thailand.

7.3.2 All fixed property, purchased on a permanent basis, belonging to this Church or to the local congregations shall be owned by the Lutheran Christian Foundation of Thailand.

CHAPTER 8. REGISTRATION AND RELATIONSHIPS

- 8.1 This Church shall be registered with The Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand.
- 8.2 This Church shall seek ways of fostering relationships with Lutheran Churches and Missions in Asian countries as well as in other parts of the world.
- 8.3 This Church shall build and maintain positive relationships with other Christian bodies in Thailand.
- 8.4 This Church shall cooperate with the Lutheran Mission in Thailand according to an approved agreement signed by the Church and the partner organizations of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand. Regulations in this Agreement shall be used in conjunction with the regulations in the Constitution and the By-laws of this Church.

CHAPTER 9. BY-LAWS

This Church, through the General Assembly, shall adopt by-laws as needed, and which are in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution.

CHAPTER 10. AMENDMENTS

- 10.1 This Constitution, with the exception of chapter 2. (Confessional Basis, which shall not be changed), and the By-laws of this Church, may be amended by the General Assembly of this Church. If an amendment is required, the reason for this shall be presented, in writing, to the Church Council of this Church at least sixty (60) days prior to the General Assembly. This amendment shall be discussed at the General Assembly upon the approval of one-third (1/3) of the delegates present in the meeting. It shall be adopted if approved by two-thirds (2/3) of the delegates present in the meeting. The amendments to the Constitution must be approved by two consecutive General Assemblies in order to be in effect.
- 10.2 The most recent approved Constitution and By-laws shall be the rule and norm for this Church.

Appendix 10:

**By-laws of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand**

PREAMBLE

CHAPTER 1. MEMBERSHIP

CHAPTER 2. CONGREGATIONS, PREACHING PLACES
AND EVANGELIZATION TEAMS

CHAPTER 3. ANNUAL MEETING OF THE
CONGREGATION

CHAPTER 4. CONGREGATION COMMITTEE

CHAPTER 5. THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THIS
CHURCH

CHAPTER 6. THE CHURCH COUNCIL OF THIS CHURCH

CHAPTER 7. FUNCTIONS OF THE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH
COUNCIL

CHAPTER 8. FUNCTIONAL BOARDS

CHAPTER 9. ORGANIZED MINISTRIES

CHAPTER 10. THE MINISTRY OF DIAKONIA

CHAPTER 11. PROPERTY AND FINANCES

CHAPTER 12. RELATIONSHIPS

Note 1. Chart of organizational structure of ELCT

PREAMBLE

These By-laws are accepted by the General Assembly of this Church according to the Constitution Chapter 9. "By-laws", and may be amended according to the procedure outlined in the Constitution Chapter 10. "Amendments".

CHAPTER 1. MEMBERSHIP

1.1 Members

A member of this Church shall be a person who has received the Sacrament of the holy Baptism in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and has been enrolled as a member of a local congregation of this Church, or of a preaching place under the Church Council.

- 1.2 A member shall be a person who has been received into membership through one of the following: baptism, transfer of membership from a congregation of another denomination, or restoration of membership according to the By-laws 1.9.6.

1.3 Associate members

Associate members of congregations and preaching places of this Church are members of other Lutheran Churches outside Thailand who are resident within the territory of this Church. While retaining membership in their own Church, they associate themselves with this Church and thereby have the same privileges and duties as the members, except that associate members cannot be elected as the congregation's delegate or observer to the General Assembly. Associate membership shall be accepted by the Congregation Committee.

1.4 The rights and duties of the members shall be

- 1.4.1 to regularly receive the Word of God, both privately at family devotions and at worship services of the congregation or preaching place;
- 1.4.2 to frequently participate in Holy Communion in order to renew their faith and spiritual life;
- 1.4.3 to proclaim the gospel by words and deeds to those who do not yet know Christ, and to lead them to the church;
- 1.4.4 to bring their children for Holy Baptism in early infancy and to provide for their nurture and instruction in the Christian Faith, both in their homes and within the congregation or preaching place;
- 1.4.5 for those persons baptized as infants or children, to attend confirmation class and to affirm their faith through the Rite of Confirmation, which shall be, normally, at the age of fifteen (15) years;
- 1.4.6 to receive the ministrations of the congregation or preaching place in connection with different ceremonies, for example baptism, marriage ceremony and funeral service;

1.4.7 to lead a christian life; to bear witness to Christ; and to show forth the fruit of faith by living in love, humility and peace. The members must respond to God's call to serve Him in their daily work and in all relationships; be active members of the Thai Society; and seek the welfare of the Thai nation;

1.4.8 to promote the unity and mutual concerns of the Church; to edify one another; to participate in the activities of the congregation or preaching place in fulfillment of the purposes of the Church; and faithfully obey the rules and orders of this Church, and;

1.4.9 to support the work of the congregation or preaching place regularly, contributing to the congregation in proportion to their ability thus express their gratitude to God in acknowledgment of the fact that everything they have is a gift from Him.

1.5 Church register

Each congregation and preaching place shall keep a roll of the members in accordance with the regulations of this Church. The congregation/preaching place shall also keep a register of members who have moved out, have been removed from the membership roll or have died.

1.6 Voting members

A roll of the voting members of the congregation shall be maintained and be confirmed by the Congregation Committee one month prior to the Annual Meeting of the congregation. The roll shall consist of adult members who are at least twenty (20) years of age.

1.7 Transfer of membership

(These regulations in chapter 1.7 shall also be used by preaching places.)

1.7.1 If any member moves permanently to another location, the present congregation shall inform the local congregation in the new location. The member shall be encouraged to become a member of that local congregation. Once the new congregation confirms the transfer, the member's name shall be removed from the membership roll of the former congregation. If there is no congregation in the new location, the member shall be encouraged to open his/her home in order to start a new preaching place.

1.7.2 A person who wishes to transfer from another congregation, preaching place or church, must present a letter of recommendation from his present congregation to the person in charge of the congregation for which he/she is applying for membership.

1.7.2.1 In the case of transfer from another Lutheran congregation, the person in charge, after having received the approval of the Congregation Committee, shall perform the ceremony of transfer. Within two weeks after the procedure is completed, the person in charge shall send a report to the church from which the membership was transferred.

1.7.2.2 In the case of transfer from a congregation of another denomination, the person in charge shall provide Lutheran instructions, and after having received the approval of the Congregation Committee, shall perform the ceremony of transfer. Within two weeks after the procedure is completed, the person in charge shall send a report to the church from which the membership was transferred.

1.8 Removal of membership

A member's name may be removed from the membership roll by a written notice of resignation from that individual. The removal must be approved by the Congregation Committee.

1.9 The following steps shall be taken in the order as outlined, in the case of a member who denounces the Christian faith or whose life contradicts the Christian faith:

1.9.1 The pastor/evangelist in charge shall give counseling to the member.

1.9.2 The pastor/evangelist in charge together with one member of the Congregation Committee shall give counseling to the member.

1.9.3 The Congregation Committee shall give a warning to the member.

1.9.4 The member shall be excluded from the Sacrament of Holy Communion for a period of time decided by the Congregation Committee. During the period of time that the exclusion is in effect, that member does not have the right to vote, cannot hold any position, or be elected to any position in the congregation or this Church.

1.9.5 If a member continue to denounce the christian faith or his/her life contradicts the Christian faith, the Congregation Committee shall remove that members name from the membership roll.

1.9.6 If the person re-affirms his/her faith, or his/her life is changed to be in accordance with the Christian faith, he/she shall be restored to membership after the approval of the Congregation Committee.

CHAPTER 2. CONGREGATIONS, PREACHING PLACES AND EVANGELIZATION TEAMS

2.1 A congregation of this Church must fulfill the following requirements:

2.1.1 Have at least fifteen (15) voting members;

2.1.2 Have regular worship services;

2.1.3 Have regular offerings and a selfreliance plan approved by the Church Council;

2.1.4 Have its own book-keeping and follow the financial guidelines established by this Church;

2.1.5 Have an established Congregation Committee, and;

2.1.6 Have been approved by the General Assembly of this Church.

2.2 Preaching places.

A fellowship of believers, which does not yet fulfill the requirements for a congregation, shall be called a preaching place. A preaching place shall be under the administrative and economic responsibility of either a local congregation or the Church Council. In order to be a preaching place of this Church, it must fulfill the following requirements:

2.2.1 If under the responsibility of a congregation, this preaching place must be approved by the Congregation Committee. Membership shall be held in the congregation approving the preaching place. Information about opening new preaching places shall be given to the Church Council;

2.2.2 If under the responsibility of the Church Council, this preaching place must be approved by the Church Council. The members of this type of preaching place shall be registered with the preaching place itself;

2.2.3 Have regular worship services;

- 2.2.4 Have regular offerings and a selfreliance plan approved by the Church Council;
 - 2.2.5 Have its own book-keeping and follow the financial guidelines established by this Church, and;
 - 2.2.6 Have as a goal to be established as a congregation.
- 2.3 Evangelization team.
- 2.3.1 The Church Council shall establish evangelization teams according to the need.
 - 2.3.2 The evangelization teams shall emphasize the work of establishing and building up new preaching-places and congregations.
 - 2.3.3 The co-workers of the team shall be members directly of the Church, and shall have the same rights and duties as coworkers in a congregation.

CHAPTER 3. ANNUAL MEETING OF THE CONGREGATION

- 3.1 The purpose and functions of the annual meeting shall be:
- 3.1.1 To provide for fellowship and spiritual edification where members are encouraged to take part in the life and ministry of the congregation and to proclaim the Gospel;
 - 3.1.2 For receive and act upon the annual report from the Congregation Committee. This written report shall be forwarded to the Church Council of this Church at least one month prior to the General Assembly of this Church. The annual report shall also include a financial report. This financial report shall have been checked and signed by the auditors of the Congregation;
 - 3.1.3 To receive the financial reports of the congregation, and to release the treasurer from his/her responsibility for the financial records for that period;
 - 3.1.4 To discuss and decide upon long range plans and a long-range budget for outreach ministry, Christian education ministry, Diakonia and also proposals to establish new congregations. Proposals with reference to the establishment of new congregations shall be forwarded to the Church Council and the General Assembly of this Church for approval;
 - 3.1.5 To elect the Congregation Committee and the officials of the congregation. The candidate for any office shall lead a Christian life; bear witness to Christ; and be a voting

member (According to By-laws chapter 1.6 "Voting members"). The candidate must have been a member of the congregation for at least one (1) year. Only one (1) member of the family unit (husband and wife) shall be elected to serve in any office (3.1.5.1 to 3.1.5.3) at the same time.

3.1.5.1 To elect the Congregation Committee, The term of office shall be two years. The Committee members may be re-elected for one additional term. After being out of this position for one full term, he/she may be re-elected;

3.1.5.2 To elect the first and the second substitute for the Congregation Committee. The term of office shall be two (2) years. The substitutes shall function when a member is unable to attend a meeting;

3.1.5.3 To appoint two persons and one substitute to audit the accounts of the congregation. The term of office shall be two years;

3.1.6 To elect the delegates and observers to the General Assembly of this Church;

3.1.7 To decide upon the budget of the congregation. The budget, in writing, shall be forwarded to the General Assembly of this Church, through the Church Council, for information, and;

3.1.8 The congregation shall strive for financial self-support, and shall also contribute to the common tasks of this Church. If there is a need for financial support, the congregation must submit a detailed approved budget and an application for this assistance to the Church Council.

3.2 Convening of the annual meeting of the congregation.

The congregation shall hold its annual meeting by the 31st of January. The chairperson of the Congregation Committee shall convene the annual meeting. Notice of the annual meeting shall be made by the chairperson of the Congregation Committee at least thirty (30) days prior to the meeting date. Announcement shall be made verbally at worship services and by written notification to all members of the congregation. If there is no Congregation Committee, the person in charge shall convene the first annual meeting. Minutes of the proceedings of the meeting must be recorded, and a copy sent to the Church Council of this Church.

3.3 Members of the annual meeting.

All members of a congregation have the right to be present at the annual meeting. Voting members are members according to paragraph 1.6 "Voting members".

3.4 Elections and motions.

Elections shall be held by secret ballots. Motions shall be carried by simple majority, except where other regulations are established in the Constitution or the By-laws.

CHAPTER 4. CONGREGATION COMMITTEE

4.1 Purpose.

The Congregation Committee shall promote outreach ministries, Christian education, Diakonia work and the development of the spiritual life of the congregation.

4.2 Members of the Congregation Committee.

The Committee shall consist of five (5) members: a chairperson, a vice-chairperson, a secretary, a treasurer and an additional member. If the congregation has its own pastor or evangelist-in-charge, he/she shall be the chairperson of the Committee.

4.3 Meetings of the Congregation Committee.

4.3.1 The Congregation Committee shall meet once a month. The chairperson shall convene the meeting and prepare the agenda. The minutes of the meeting shall be accepted by the Congregation Committee, and made public to the congregation. The minutes that concern long-range planning, elections and other matters related to the this Church, shall be sent to the Church Council for information.

4.3.2 Extraordinary meetings of the Congregation Committee.

If required, extraordinary meetings may be called by three (3) members of the Congregation Committee.

4.4 Functions.

The Congregation Committee shall have the following functions:

4.4.1 Plan, coordinate and develop various activities, such as but not limited to Sunday services and Sunday school, music, ministries to the youth, women and men, Diakonia ministry, with the main emphasis on outreach and spiritual nourishment;

4.4.2 Ensure that an effective program of christian education, for all ages, is conducted within the congregation;

4.4.3 Seek ways of promoting self-support of the local congregation; consider the annual budget, which has been

prepared by the chairperson of the Congregation Committee in consultation with the treasurer of the congregation, and forward it to the Annual Meeting of the congregation for approval; supervise the financial administration of the congregation; and ensure that the use of financial resources is in accordance with the decisions and regulations of this Church and the local congregation;

4.4.4 To prepare long range plans and budgets for outreach ministry, educational ministry, Diakonia, prepare proposals for the establishment of new congregations, which are to be forwarded to the Annual Meeting of the congregation;

4.4.5 To encourage and support the pastor/evangelist in his/her duties, take part in visiting the sick and those who have become indifferent; care for the poor and distressed; and maintain a vigorous program of outreach into the community;

4.4.6 Seek to maintain the spirit of harmony within the congregation, and, if differences arise, to seek to restore harmony and goodwill;

4.4.7 To be responsible for proper leadership during sickness or in the absence of the pastor/evangelist in charge;

4.4.8 Be responsible for the use and maintenance of all property, facilities and equipment, and, in no situation, shall permit their use for programs or activities not in harmony with the principles of christian witness, and;

4.4.9 Take part in the calling of the pastor for the congregation in accordance with the regulations of this Church.

4.5 Quorum

Two thirds (2/3) of the Congregation Committee members shall be required for a quorum. Motions shall be carried by simple majority, except where other regulations are established in the Constitution or the By-laws.

CHAPTER 5. THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THIS CHURCH

5.1 Purpose

The purpose of the General Assembly of this Church shall be to promote the work of this Church according to the purpose stated in Constitution chapter 3 "Purpose".

5.2 Members

The General Assembly shall be convened with delegates and observers from the congregations, the preaching places, the evangelization teams and the departments of this Church.

5.2.1 A congregation, which is self-reliant, shall send one member for every twenty (20) voting members as delegates to the General Assembly. A congregation shall not send more than five (5) delegates in addition to those who are delegates ex officio (According to By-laws chapter 5.2.6).

5.2.2 A congregation, which is not yet self-reliant, shall send one member as a delegate to the General Assembly in addition to those who are delegates ex officio (According to By-laws chapter 5.2.6).

5.2.3 A preaching place may send one observer to the General Assembly.

5.2.4 The person in charge of an evangelization team shall be a delegate to the General Assembly of this Church, and other co-workers of an evangelization team shall be observers to the General Assembly of this Church.

5.2.5 Each department of this Church shall send two observers to the General Assembly.

5.2.6 All the pastors working in this Church, all the evangelists in charge of a congregation or preaching place, and the members of the Church Council shall be delegates ex officio to the General Assembly.

5.3 Convening of the General Assembly

5.3.1 The General Assembly of this Church shall meet once a year by the 30th of April.

5.3.2 A written agenda shall be distributed at least two weeks prior to the meeting. Proposals to the General Assembly must be received, in writing, by the Church Council by the 28th of February. Exceptions may be made by approval of the General Assembly. All the congregations, preaching places, departments, the Church Council and delegates have the right to make proposals to the General Assembly.

5.3.3 The Bishop shall be the president and the Secretary of the Church shall be the vice-president at the meeting. The General Assembly shall elect two secretaries to prepare the minutes. The minutes are to be signed by the president, vice-president and the secretaries of the General Assembly. The General Assembly shall elect two delegates to count the

votes. The Church Council shall act as nomination committee for these elections.

5.3.4 Convening of extraordinary General Assemblies may take place when

5.3.4.1 requested in writing by two thirds (2/3) of the congregations of this Church. The request shall be made by the Congregation Committee of the congregation.

5.3.4.2 called by the Church Council of this Church.

5.4 Functions:

5.4.1 To provide for spiritual fellowship;

5.4.2 To receive and act upon the annual report of the Bishop as well as of the congregations, preaching places, evangelization teams and the departments;

5.4.3 To receive the financial reports from the Treasurer of the Church, and to release the Treasurer of the Church from his/her responsibility for the financial records for that period;

5.4.4 To discuss and act upon long-range plans for this Church, proposed by the Church Council, and to make recommendations and assignments to the Church Council;

5.4.5 To approve the establishment of new congregations;

5.4.6 To approve the annual budget for this Church;

5.4.7 To elect the Bishop, the Secretary of the Church, the Treasurer of the Church and the other members of the Church Council. The Bishop and the Secretary of the Church shall be pastors serving in congregational ministries (full-time or part-time in a congregation, preaching place or evangelization team). The Treasurer of the Church shall be elected from among persons nominated by the Church Council or from among the delegates present at the General Assembly. The three (3) additional members shall be elected from among the delegates present at the General Assembly. The term of office shall be three (3) years. One person may not serve in the same position (Bishop, Secretary of the Church, Treasurer of the Church or other member) for more than two consecutive terms (altogether six (6) years). After being out of this position for one full term, he/she may be re-elected;

5.4.8 To elect from among the delegates present at the General Assembly the first and second substitute for the Church Council. The term of office shall be three (3) years and;

5.4.9 To appoint two auditors with first and second substitute for the purpose of auditing the financial records of this Church. The term of office shall be three (3) years.

5.5 Quorum

The quorum of the General Assembly shall be two third (2/3) of all the delegates. Decisions shall be by a simple majority with the exception of constitutional and by-law matters. The method of voting for personnel matters shall be by secret ballot. All other policies in the proceeding of the General Assembly shall be according to the acceptance of the General Assembly.

CHAPTER 6. THE CHURCH COUNCIL OF THIS CHURCH

6.1 Purpose

To be the instrument in fulfilling the purpose of this Church, according to the Constitution chapter 3. "Purpose". The Church Council, receiving its authority from the General Assembly, is the highest executive body of this Church.

6.2 Term of service

The Church Council shall serve for a period three years. The term shall commence at the end of the General Assembly at which it is elected, and continue through to the end of the General Assembly at which a new Church Council is elected.

6.3 Functions:

6.3.1 To carry out the decisions made by the General Assembly;

6.3.2 To organize and coordinate activities and relationships between the congregations, preaching places and departments of this Church;

6.3.3 To deal with personnel matters;

6.3.4 To prepare and oversee finances, financial planning and fund raising of this Church;

6.3.5 To prepare the agenda for the General Assembly of this Church;

6.3.6 To prepare the budget proposal and long range plans of this Church to be forwarded to the General Assembly, and;

6.3.7 To establish working committees as the needs arise.

6.4 The Church Council shall meet at least once every two months. If required, the Bishop or a majority of two thirds (2/3) of the members of the Church Council may call extraordinary meetings.

6.5 Quorum

The quorum for the Church Council shall be two-thirds (2/3) of its voting members. Motions shall be carried by simple majority. In case of a tie, the person presiding at the meeting has the deciding vote.

CHAPTER 7. FUNCTIONS OF THE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH COUNCIL

7.1 The bishop shall have the following duties:

- 7.1.1 To serve as the spiritual leader of this Church and of the workers of this Church;
- 7.1.2 To serve as administrative leader of this Church
- 7.1.3 To guide this Church according to the provisions and confessional statements of this Constitution;
- 7.1.4 To visit the congregations, preaching places, evangelization teams, and departments of this Church;
- 7.1.5 To be the official representative of this Church;
- 7.1.6 To call and chair the annual meeting of the General Assembly;
- 7.1.7 To make a detailed written report to the General Assembly concerning his work, the work of the Church Council, and the condition of the Church;
- 7.1.8 To call and preside at meetings of the Church Council;
- 7.1.9 To prepare the agenda for the meetings of the Church Council, and;
- 7.1.10 To be responsible for all records, correspondence and statistics of this Church.

7.2 The Secretary of the Church shall have the following duties:

- 7.2.1 To serve as Acting Bishop in the absence of the Bishop or when receiving responsibilities from the Bishop;
- 7.2.2 To oversee all records, correspondence and statistics of this Church at the direction of the Bishop;
- 7.2.3 To serve as the Bishop's secretary;
- 7.2.4 To serve as the Recording Secretary of the Church Council, and be responsible for administration duties as assigned by the Bishop, and;
- 7.2.5 To distribute the minutes from the meetings of the Church Council to the committee members, congregations, preaching places, evangelization teams, and departments of this Church.

- 7.3 The Treasurer of the Church shall have the following duties:
- 7.3.1 To receive and disburse the funds of this Church at the direction of the Church Council;
 - 7.3.2 To be responsible for the financial records of this Church;
 - 7.3.3 To prepare the annual budget proposal to be forwarded in writing to the Church Council, and;
 - 7.3.4 To make an annual report about the finances of this Church to be forwarded in writing to the Church Council and the General Assembly.

CHAPTER 8. FUNCTIONAL BOARDS

8.1 Purpose

The various functional boards are the executive bodies of the respective departments. They shall implement the decisions of the General Assembly and the Church Council, and carry out routine affairs.

- 8.2 The guidelines for the various departments shall be accepted by the Church Council of this Church.

CHAPTER 9. ORGANIZED MINISTRIES

9.1 The ordained ministry / the ministry of pastors

9.1.1 Responsibilities of the pastor

The pastor shall be responsible for the ministry of the Word and Sacraments, and shall "prepare all God's people for the work of Christian service, to build up the body of Christ (Eph.4:12)". The pastor shall be the leader of the congregation according to the provisions established in the Constitution and By-laws of this Church.

9.1.2 Requirements

Requirements for ordination and other details about this ministry shall be decided by the Church Council of this Church.

9.1.3 Call and appointment

9.1.3.1 The call of a pastor for a self-reliant congregation shall be done by the Congregation Committee of the congregation after approval from the Church Council.

9.1.3.2 Call of a pastor for a congregation which is not yet self-reliant, shall be done by the Church Council after consultation with the Congregation Committee.

9.1.3.3 The Church Council has the right to call a pastor for service in preaching places and activities concerning the whole Church.

9.1.3.4 The Church Council shall arrange for and approve all employments and changes of employments of pastors in congregations and preaching places of this Church.

9.1.3.5 When a local congregation or a preaching place desires a change of the pastor, it shall inform the Church Council, in writing, stating the reasons.

9.1.3.6 When a pastor of a congregation or of a preaching place wishes to resign, the pastor shall inform the Church Council, in writing, stating the reasons.

9.1.4 The office of the Bishop

One of the pastors of this Church shall be installed as Bishop in order to be the leader of this Church. The Bishop shall be elected and shall function according to the regulations set forth in the Constitution and in the By-laws of this Church.

9.2 The ministry of evangelists

9.2.1 Responsibilities of the evangelist

The evangelists shall emphasize evangelistic outreach, establishment of new congregations and, if responsible for a congregation, lead the congregation according to the Word of God and the provisions established in this Constitution and By-laws.

9.2.2 Requirements

Requirements and details about the ministry of evangelists shall be decided by the Church Council of this Church.

9.2.3 Call and appointment

The regulations for call and appointment shall be the same as that for pastors.

9.3 The ministry of missionaries

The following persons shall be called missionaries:

9.3.1 He/she shall be a person who, in order to accomplish the task of this church, has been sent to people of a different culture and language, or to a foreign country. The requirements and details about this ministry shall be decided by the Church Council of this Church.

9.3.2 He/she shall be a person sent by sister churches in order to work in this Church. These missionaries shall work according to the approved agreement.

CHAPTER 10. THE MINISTRY OF DIAKONIA

This Church shall have a ministry of Diakonia, which shall be carried out through the congregations, preaching places and departments of this Church.

CHAPTER 11. PROPERTY AND FINANCES

11.1 Property

- 11.1.1 Fixed property purchased on a permanent basis shall be registered with the Lutheran christian Foundation of Thailand.
- 11.1.2 The Bishop and the Treasurer of this Church shall be the Chairperson and the Treasurer of the Lutheran christian Foundation of Thailand.
- 11.1.3 The Church Council of this Church shall elect the other members of the Board of the Lutheran christian Foundation of Thailand.
- 11.1.4 Fixed property purchased on a temporary basis shall be registered in the name of the NMS Company Ltd., or any other company approved by the Church Council.

11.2 Finances

- 11.2.1 The fiscal year of this Church shall be January 1st through December 31st.
- 11.2.2 The financial expenditures of this Church shall not exceed the annual budget. In case there is a balance at the end of the year after the settlement of the accounts, this amount shall be transferred to the following year's receipts.
- 11.2.3 Each congregation and preaching place is responsible for all of its expenses. This also includes as follows:
 - 11.2.3.1 Investment and maintenance expenses for all property belonging to the congregation or preaching place, as well as property trusted to the Lutheran christian Foundation of Thailand;
 - 11.2.3.2 Salary and fringe benefits of all paid co-workers of the congregation or preaching place. These salaries and fringe benefits shall be according to the regulations of this Church, and;
 - 11.2.3.3 Support for the common work of this Church. This support shall be fifteen (15) % of the total

income of the congregation or the preaching place, and shall be remitted monthly.

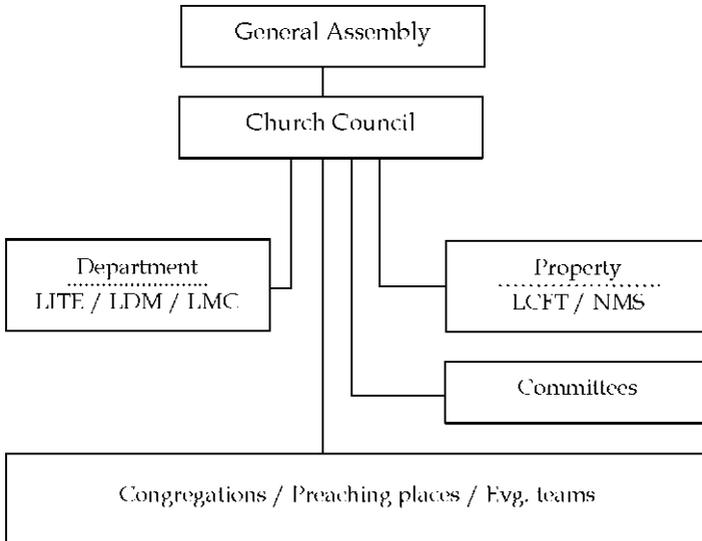
11.2.4 The Church Council and the auditors of this Church has the right to check all the book-keeping of the congregations, preaching places and departments of this Church.

11.3 The Church Council shall appoint a Church Property Committee to function according to the guidelines accepted by the Church Council. At the end of the calendar year, or as the Church Council deems necessary, a report regarding the property of this Church shall be prepared by the Church Property Committee and presented, in writing, to the Church Council and the General Assembly.

CHAPTER 12. RELATIONSHIPS

12.1 This Church shall apply for membership in the Lutheran World Federation.

Note 1. Chart of organizational structure of ELCT



Appendix 11:

**Agreement between
the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand
and Lutheran Mission in Thailand**

PREAMBLE

CHAPTER 1. PARTNERS IN THE CO-OPERATION

CHAPTER 2. AREAS OF CO-OPERATION

CHAPTER 3. ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE OF THE CO-
OPERATION

CHAPTER 4. PERSONNEL - MISSIONARIES

CHAPTER 5. PERSONNEL - THAI CO-WORKERS

CHAPTER 6. FINANCES

CHAPTER 7. PROPERTY

CHAPTER 8. AMENDMENTS AND TERMINATION

Note 1. Administrative structure of the cooperation between ELCT
and LMT

Note 2. Number of representatives from the member organizations of
LMT

PREAMBLE

The Norwegian Missionary Society (NMS) and the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission (FELM), which sent their first missionaries to Thailand 1976 and 1978 respectively, are Lutheran mission agencies with the chief aim of bringing Christ's Gospel, as understood in the Lutheran tradition, to those who are not yet Christians. In 1982, The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong (ELCHK) joined this mission co-operation, followed by The Lutheran

Church in Malaysia and Singapore (LCMS) in 1988. The cooperation between these agencies is carried out under the name of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand (LMT).

The main purpose of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand was "to bring Christ's Gospel through proclamation and service to the peoples of Thailand, and to establish local congregations which shall be united in one evangelical Lutheran Church". As The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand (ELCT) has been established in 1994, the partners of the Lutheran Mission in Thailand shall continue its cooperation by taking part in the work of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand according to this agreement. See also Preamble of "Constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand".

CHAPTER 1. PARTNERS IN THE CO-OPERATION

- 1.1 The co-operating partners are the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand (hereafter also called "the Church" or "ELCT") and the Lutheran Mission in Thailand (hereafter also called "the Mission" or "LMT").
- 1.2 The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand (ELCT) is represented by its General Assembly as the highest authoritative body of the Church, and the Church Council as the executive body.
- 1.3 The Lutheran Mission in Thailand (LMT) is represented by the Joint Board for Thailand (JBT), as an agency acting on behalf of the Homeboards of the Missions and Churches that are members of LMT. The Field Committee (FC) of LMT is acting on behalf of the JBT according to "Agreement on Mission Co-operation in Thailand".

CHAPTER 2. AREAS OF CO-OPERATION

- 2.1 ELCT and LMT shall work together in order to fulfill the purpose stated in the Constitution of ELCT chapter 3. "Purpose.
- 2.2 LMT shall provide personnel to primarily work in the areas of evangelism, the establishment of new congregations, the ministries of christian education and Diakonia, and according to the need of the Church.
- 2.3 LMT shall provide financial support for the work according to budgets approved by both partners.

CHAPTER 3. ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE OF THE CO-OPERATION

- 3.1 The partners in this agreement recognize each others Constitution and regulations.
- 3.2 General Assembly of the Church.
 - 3.2.1 The members of the Field Committee of LMT shall be delegates to the General Assembly. The Field Committee of LMT shall consist of the field representative of each LMT member.
 - 3.2.2 In addition to the members of the Field Committee, each member organization of LMT shall have the right to send delegates to the General Assembly as follows:
 - 3.2.2.1 Member organizations with five (5) or more missionaries on the field at the time of the General Assembly, shall have the right to send one (1) additional missionary as a delegate.
 - 3.2.2.2 Member organizations with ten (10) or more missionaries on the field at the time of the General Assembly, shall have the right to send three (3) additional missionaries as delegates.
 - 3.2.3 A missionary who is the person in charge of a congregation, a preaching place or an evangelization team, shall be an observer to the General Assembly.
 - 3.2.4 The delegates from the member organizations of LMT can not be elected by the General Assembly as members or substitutes of the Church Council.
 - 3.2.5 The delegates to the General Assembly from the member organizations of LMT shall not have the right to vote in elections of members or substitutes to the Church Council.
 - 3.2.6 The treasurer of LMT shall be a consultative member of the General Assembly. He/she shall have voice, but no vote.
 - 3.2.7 The members of the Joint Board for Thailand have the right to be observers at the General Assembly of the Church.
- 3.3 The Church Council
 - 3.3.1 Three (3) members of the Field Committee (FC) of LMT shall be ex officio members of the Church Council of ELCT.
 - 3.3.2 The treasurer of LMT shall be a consultative member of the Church Council. He/she shall have voice, but no vote.
- 3.4 In addition to the Thai secretary of the Church Council, the Church Council shall appoint one of the LMT members of the Church Council to function as English language secretary of the

meetings of the Church Council. The minutes from the meetings of the Church Council, both in Thai and in English, shall be signed by the Bishop. A copy of the minutes, both in Thai and the English, shall be sent to each member organization of LMT. A copy of the minutes in English shall be sent to JBT.

3.5 The Functional Boards of the departments

The Church Council shall appoint at least one (1) missionary of LMT to the Board of each department of ELCT. The number of LMT representatives in each Board shall not be more than 49% of the total number of members in each Board.

3.6 Lutheran Mission in Thailand shall be registered with the Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand (EFT), and shall be responsible for the administration of the visa quota.

CHAPTER 4. PERSONNEL - MISSIONARIES

4.1 The Church Council shall present the request for missionaries to the Joint Board for Thailand.

4.2 The Field Committee of LMT shall inform the Church about possible missionaries coming to work in the Church, and shall present the necessary documents and information about the missionaries.

4.3 Upon receiving the necessary documents and information about new missionaries and missionaries returning to a new period of work in this Church, the Church Council shall send a letter of invitation to the missionary concerned.

4.4 Placement of missionaries involved in work of ELCT, shall be decided by the Church Council.

4.4.1 The Church Council shall establish and approve a job description for each missionary.

4.4.2 For each placement, a three party contract shall be signed by the missionary, the sending agency and ELCT. The contract shall include a job description, the place of work, the position and the contract period.

4.5 Missionaries and their children shall be associate members of a congregation or preaching place of ELCT, and have the rights, privileges and duties as the other members, but they can not be elected by the congregation or preaching place as delegates or observers to the General Assembly.

4.6 The partner organizations within LMT have the right to assign their missionaries to necessary work for their own organization, such as it's own field administration and schooling for children.

The organization shall inform the Church Council about particular assignments.

CHAPTER 5. PERSONNEL - THAI CO-WORKERS

LMT has the right to employ Thai co-workers whenever necessary for its own administration. The employments of these Thai co-workers shall follow the regulations of ELCT.

CHAPTER 6. FINANCES

- 6.1 ELCT shall strive for financial self-reliance. LMT shall give financial support according to what has been agreed.
- 6.2 All financial support for work connected with ELCT, both for investment and for running expenses, shall be channeled through the treasurer and book-keeping of LMT and ELCT.
- 6.3 Support from LMT for running expenses of ELCT shall be given monthly according to a budget accepted by both partners. Support for investment shall be given according to an agreement in each case.
- 6.4 ELCT shall give quarterly financial reports to the treasurer of LMT and to the Joint Board for Thailand.
- 6.5 The Joint Board for Thailand through the Field Committee of LMT has the right to request details of the book-keeping of the ELCT.

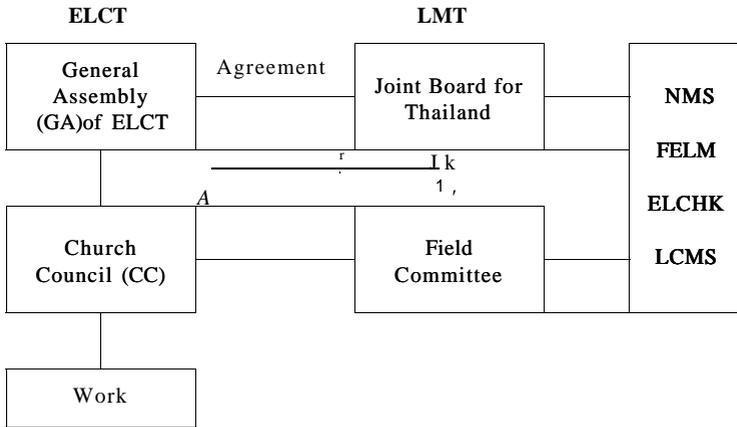
CHAPTER 7. PROPERTY

- 7.1 The Church Council shall appoint at least one (1) missionary of the LMT to be LMT's representative (-s) to the Board of Directors of the Lutheran Christian Foundation in Thailand. The number of LMT representatives in the Board shall not be more than 49% of the total number of members of the Board.
- 7.2 The Church Council shall appoint at least one (1) missionary of the LMT to be LMT's representative (-s) to the Board of Directors of the NMS Company Ltd.. The number of LMT representatives in the Board shall not be more than 49% of the total number of members of the Board. Both LMT and ELCT has the right to use NMS Company Ltd. according to the need.

CHAPTER 8. AMENDMENTS AND TERMINATION

- 8.1 Amendments to this agreement must be accepted by both partners.
- 8.2 This agreement may be terminated by any of the partners after notice has been given 5 years in advance. If agreed by both partners, the termination may be executed sooner.
- 8.3 This agreement shall be reconsidered in 1998.

Note 1. Administrative structure of the cooperation between ELCT and LMT:



Note 2. Number of Representatives from the member organizations of LMT:

Number of missionaries on the field	Members in the Field Committee (and delegates to GA)	+	Additional delegates to the GA	=	Total delegates to the GA
Less than 5	1	+	0	=	1
5 to 9	1	+	1	=	2
10 and more	1	+	3	=	4

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In *From Pioneer Mission to Autonomous Church*, Marika Bjorkgren-Thylin studies the Lutheran mission in Thailand and the birth of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand. Bjorkgren-Thylin explores the development from the arrival of the first Lutheran missionaries in 1976 to the founding of an autonomous church in 1994. She places particular attention on the fields of action, the working methods and the mission principles of the Lutheran mission.

Marika Bjorkgren-Thylin examines the Lutheran mission in Thailand within a larger national and international context, as well as in relation to other Christian churches and organisations. Finally, she also focuses her attention on the encounter between monotheistic Christianity and Thai Buddhism with its strong nationalistic connections and influences from animism.

Photo: Tero Norjanen



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Abo Akademi University Press

ISBN 978-951-765-502-6

