

# OVERSEAS FIELD REPORT



A publication dedicated to making known the ways in which God is showing Himself strong on the behalf of those who serve Him.

Volume 1, Issue 2

Written by Joshua Steele

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## Pressing Toward the Mark

Philippians 3:14

Isaac Mazur and Kurt Hein stand just outside Lard Yao Prison in Bangkok.

We had been in the country of Laos for several days when we finally arrived in a small tourist town called Luang Prabang. Coming to Laos had been a nice vacation, but also quite necessary in order to renew our visas. As usual, upon arriving in a new town in southeast Asia, the seven single students and I began scouring our *Lonely Planet* guide for possible guesthouses to stay in.

Soon, we were noticed by one of the numerous guesthouse representatives riding a motorcycle who, like everyone else in this town, was only too ready to es-

cort us to “the best lodging available.” I remember that when I lived in Europe, it was much easier to blend in. But here in southeast Asia, a group of eight white guys wearing backpacks and reading a guide book seems to scream, “Attention all Asian entrepreneurs: The rich American dummies have arrived!” And so we were soon whisked away to the best guesthouse one can reserve for \$3.00 a night.

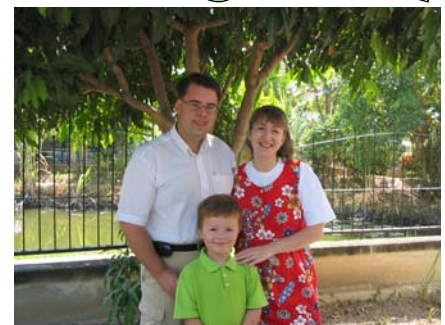
Once we arrived and got settled in, I noticed this guesthouse had a small library consisting of some novels, a few *Lonely*

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## How YOU can Pray...

- Pray that God will continue to guide and protect the believers serving here in Thailand.
- Pray that God would give wisdom to those in leadership at NTI.
- Pray that God would send laborers into His harvest.
- Pray for Jerry Balding and the men serving in the prisons (see article “A Ministry Reborn” on pg. 2)
- Praise the Lord for His direction regarding Ukraine, and pray for His wisdom and guidance as I prepare to return to that country.

## Meet the Balding Family



Jerry Balding, his wife Marilyn, and their son Golan.

When Nations Training Institute began in September of last year, the Baldings left their home in Northern Ireland to come to Bangkok as student missionaries. Jerry is originally from the

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Bringing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to those under the power of darkness and proving to the world that God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

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Planet guides, and also a book that T.J. Slayman had once highly recommended to us. The book was written by an Australian man who spent twelve years in a Bangkok prison for heroin trafficking. So, since I had some extra time on my hands, I picked up the book and began to read. I read over half of it in the first sitting, and was shocked by this man's account of the brutality and torture that he endured. The book was basically one horrifying story after another of how this man lived in fear and agony every single day of his life for those twelve years. While this is not a book to read for Christian edification, it sure was an eye-opener. Little did I know at the time, that I would soon be going to one of the very same prisons he wrote about.

**A Ministry Reborn**

Although Thailand is not an English-speaking country by any stretch of the imagination, there is a unique door of service here open to English speakers. There are literally hundreds of prisoners incarcerated in Bangkok from countries like Australia, Great Britain, Liberia, and even the U.S. All these people speak English, and

very few have any friends or relations in Thailand. A few years ago, Tom and Kathy Slayman from the Church at Cane Creek began visiting these men, and found them very open to the Gospel. Just the fact that someone still cares enough to come and visit is a big encouragement to them.



*Kurt Hein and Hank Thompson try to blend in with the natives in Laos.*

Unfortunately, Tom and Kathy had to leave Thailand some time ago due to serious health issues. When we came here in September to begin the missions school, we were aware of the potential in the prisons, but none of us had any significant experience. Then, after about two or three months, Jerry Balding felt that God would have him to go to the prisons and try to make contact with some of these men.

There were many unknowns, and we have learned somewhat by trial and error, but Jerry has done a phenomenal job with this ministry, and we are now seeing the fruit of his labors.

The procedure is actually quite simple. Jerry was able to obtain a list of names of English-speaking prisoners at the Lard Yao prison. Depending on the person's crime, there are only

certain days when he can receive visitors. We have to go to the prison on that day, and submit a request form with his information (name, building #, etc.) We then have to wait usually about thirty to forty minutes, at which time we are called into the visiting area. "The visiting area" is really not much more than a glorified chicken coop. The building is long and narrow, with a wall down the middle separating the prisoners and the visitors. We have to speak through a metal screen so dense, that one can just make out the form of another person on the opposite side. We are allowed twenty-five minutes to speak (in the same room with fifty other people), and then the guard whistles begin to blow and the inmates are hustled back to their cells. Most prisoners can be visited only twice a week, and no more than once on any given day.

So how, you may ask, does one carry on a serious ministry under such limitations? The answer lies

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*One of the many ornate buildings inside the Royal Palace in Bangkok*

*This newsletter was written by missionary Joshua Steele, currently serving in the Kingdom of Thailand. joshua\_m\_steele@yahoo.com  
Sending church: Family Bible Fellowship, 211 Old Steele Creek Ct., Azle, TX 76020 Subscription is free upon request.*

**3** "But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts."

## overseas field report

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primarily in correspondence courses. You see, while we can only speak verbally with these men for twenty-five minutes, we can write letters. They are allowed to have Bibles in the prison, and let me tell you: no one has more questions than a man who is stuck with hours upon hours of free time and a Bible to read.

There is one man there named Michael Jones from Liberia. Michael and I are the same age (24), and he is in jail for a visa violation. I have known Michael for maybe a month and a half now, and I can hardly keep up with the man. He comes up with questions about the Bible that I have never thought of. For example, recently he wrote me a letter and told me that he had read the account of the man in the Old Testament who was caught gathering sticks on the Sabbath Day. The man was stoned for violating the LORD'S Sabbath. Michael pointed out that as Christians, we are commanded to love each other and not to kill. He wanted to know if the men who stoned this guy were Christians.

That is just one example. Another man whom I visit regularly in the prison sat down across from me one day, and when I asked him if he had any questions he asked, "How does a man find Jesus Christ?" How many people have you spoken with recently who ASKED you in sincerity how to

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*Kurt and Jerry sign in to visit an inmate at Lard Yao.*



*Nathan Day and James Pratt teach English at a local Methodist church to a group of Thai children.*



*Twenty-first century Bible classes: "Good morning class. Please scroll with me to the book of Romans..."*



*The most versatile cargo vehicle in southeast Asia: the 100cc Honda motorbike.*

*MEET THE BALDINGS*  
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United States, and Marilyn is from Northern Ireland. They first heard about NTI through the No Greater Joy magazine, and felt that God was calling them into full time service overseas.

During their time here in Thailand, all of us have been greatly blessed by their servant's hearts, their commitment to the Lord, and their eagerness to do whatever they can to reach the lost.

After only a few months here, Jerry is the one who took the initiative to restart the prison ministry. (see *A Ministry Reborn*, pg. 2) Under his leadership, we are seeing excellent results among the prisoners, and the younger students are learning a great deal through this very practical, hands-on outreach.

Marilyn also has her hands quite full trying to fulfill the many responsibilities of wife and mother in a foreign country. For all you ladies out there who are sometimes ready to pull out your hair from the daily adventures of Supermom, let Marilyn be an inspiration to you. She does all that in a country where almost no one speaks English!

The Baldings plan to stay in Thailand for at least two years. I know I speak for everyone here when I say that this family has been an example and an encouragement to all of us. I believe that God is honoring their obedience to His call, and I would ask you to pray for them as they serve Him. ♦

*This newsletter was written by missionary Joshua Steele, currently serving in the Kingdom of Thailand. [joshua\\_m\\_steele@yahoo.com](mailto:joshua_m_steele@yahoo.com)  
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find Jesus? I find it to be pretty rare, and consider it a privilege to have the opportunity to teach these men. Please pray for them, and for missionaries like Jerry who have dedicated their lives to bringing Jesus Christ to those who are seeking Him.

### NTI Goes to Ukraine

Ever heard the phrase, "God works in mysterious ways?" The longer I live, the more I see the truth in that statement. It was only about four months ago that I sat in my apartment in L'viv, writing the last Ukraine Report with the news that I was relocating to Thailand. All I understood at the time, was that this was God's will. Most people in Ukraine couldn't understand why in the world I would do such a thing, and I was certainly one of them. My heart has long been for the people of that country, and when God called me to move to Bangkok, it was quite difficult. It was only about a month ago that God showed me the next step in His plan, and I understood one of the main reasons why I am here.

Since the inception of the school here in Bangkok, we have encountered many problems, most of a logistical nature, but one in particular which seemed quite significant. The problem was the broad age span among the

students. We have one young man who is sixteen years old, and we also have a father in his early forties who has I think seven children. Now as you can imagine, the things that will be great training for teenagers, are not always applicable for married men, and vice versa. Our dilemma has been how to provide real, hands-on, practical training in missions, which will accommodate both ends of the spectrum.

One day, during an impromptu staff meeting, we were discussing this problem, and it was as though



God opened my eyes and I suddenly saw for the first time why I had to come to Bangkok. The bottom line is this: NTI is being divided into at least two, possibly three parts. One of those will be based in L'viv, Ukraine.

Beginning in the summer of 2004, most of the young, single men who apply for missions training through No Greater Joy will be sent to Ukraine. I will be returning there myself after this school year is over in order to make preparations.

One of the primary reasons for this step, is that young men will



*Every day at NTI begins with morning Bible reading at 6:10am.*

learn to be missionaries best by getting out everyday, spending time with the people, and being involved in a real and active way in the ministry. Because of my experience in Ukraine, it is a much easier place for me to provide such an environment for young, aspiring missionaries. Although my time in Bangkok has been good, it has been much more difficult to lead the men in ministry opportunities with the Thais, simply because I never had the chance to learn the language and the culture. In Ukraine, that will not be a problem. I will write more about this ministry next time, but for now, as usual, I ask for your prayers as we prepare for this next major step.

I am so glad that I serve a God who fulfills visions. In 1997, when I was 18 years old, God gave me a vision to win Ukrainians to Jesus Christ, and since that time, I do not cease to be amazed at the awesome ways in which God is making that vision a reality. This is His work, and I am overjoyed that He has allowed me to be a part of it.

**To God be the Glory**