

# TIDINGS FROM THAILAND

## (HOME ASSIGNMENT EDITION)

*Karl & Sun Dahlfred - Missionaries to Thailand*

**JUNE 2017**

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### Prayer Points

- Grace City Bangkok church
- Pakistani Christian refugees in Thailand
- More funding for expenses in Scotland

### Praise God

- Scholarships for 1st year tuition of Ph.D studies
- Good meetings with churches and partners

### Calendar

6/24-25 Teaching and preaching at Lord's Grace Christian Church, Mountain View, CA



Dear Family and Friends,

We've been enjoying a good home assignment in the U.S., with about 3 months down and 3 months to go. Our time here has been busier than expected but it is great to see so many of you and to share in churches. Between now and the end of August, we'll speak a few more churches, share about Thailand at a VBS, and meet up with a number of more people. Please pray for those meetings, that people would be encouraged and challenged by the Word of God and by what He is doing in the world.

Though we are physically present in the U.S., our thoughts are pulled towards two other places: Thailand and Scotland.

#### Grace City Bangkok church

Grace City Bangkok church is going through a transition as one of the elders will be transitioning back to the States with his family. Last year, there were 4 of us serving as elders there and in month's time, there will be only two. Please pray for Pastor Natee Tanchanpongs, elder Tim Mills, and other leaders in the church, as they make decisions, share responsibilities, and care for God's people. Pray also for the church's on-going outreach.

#### Pakistani Christian Refugees

We are also concerned for Pakistani Christian friends in Bangkok, who have fled Muslim persecution and been seeking asylum through the United Nations office in Bangkok. At least one family we know has been sent back to the Immigration Detention Center after their appeal for asylum was refused. They will be deported back to Pakistan soon. Pakistani refugees in Thailand don't get much attention in the media but they too are in a very difficult situation. Please contact us if you would like to know more or are interested in helping one of these families.

#### Ph.D in Edinburgh

Even as we try to stay abreast of events in Thailand, we are also thinking ahead to Edinburgh, Scotland, where I (Karl) will begin a Ph.D in World Christianity this coming September. As we work out the logistics for this



next step, one big praise is God's provision of a grant and a scholarship which will cover tuition for at least the first year of studies. This is a fantastic answer to prayers, yours and ours. Please keep praying though, because we've been crunching the numbers and we will likely be short \$700/month for living expenses in Edinburgh, aside from some one-time expenses.

In the next few months, we'll be working out more logistical details of our move to Scotland for a few years, so please pray for

- 1) sufficient finances,
- 2) preparing for yet another move
- 3) homeschooling
- 4) community and friends for us all, both in the U.S. and our upcoming time in Scotland.
- 5) a good church in Edinburgh for our family to worship and minister

I am sure that a number of you have questions about my upcoming Ph.D studies and how this fits into our ministry in Thailand, so I have prepared a brief "Ph.D FAQ" on the next page. Please read it and feel free to contact us if you have further questions.

We appreciate your prayers and support and will continue to need them in the next phase of our journey.

by Christ's grace,  
Karl & Sun Dahlfred

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# PH.D FAQ

## **Why are you studying for a Ph.D?**

I want to improve my teaching at Bangkok Bible Seminary, and to improve my writing as well. I have answered this question in greater length on my blog. Please see "6 Reasons I am Pursuing a Ph.D" on [dahlfred.com](http://dahlfred.com).

## **What area are you studying?**

I will study for a Ph.D in World Christianity, with a dissertation focused on Thai church history.

## **How long is the program?**

Three years.

## **Where will you study?**

I will study at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, and the majority of the three year program will be spent in Scotland. During the second year of studies, however, I (Karl) will be making some research trips abroad, including about 6 months in Chiang Mai, Thailand where there is a university archive of Thai church and mission history. The whole family will go to Chiang Mai, but I may make some other shorter research trips by myself.

## **Is a Ph.D really necessary?**

I could continue to teach at Bangkok Bible Seminary without a Ph.D but I want to make the best possible contribution to the Thai church and to the missions community over the long haul. Doctoral studies are a means to that end. Just as professionals of all fields invest in on-going education for greater performance and productivity, a Ph.D will help me to do better those jobs that I am already doing.

## **How are you paying for it?**

Praise God that I've received a couple of scholarships that will cover tuition fees for at least the first year of studies. One of the scholarships is automatically renewable for up to three years. The future of the other scholarship is less certain and I will need to reapply for it for my 2nd and 3rd years of study. For living expenses, we are relying on the current support that we receive from donors through OMF.

## **Do you still need my financial support?**

Yes. Even though we have funding for tuition, we still need your financial support to cover our living expenses in Scotland, together with costs for health insurance, airfare for research & visa trips, and other necessary expenses. You can continue to send your donations to OMF International, who will then send the money to us according to an agreed upon budget for our time in the U.K.

## **Are you leaving the mission field?**

No! Studying for the Ph.D is merely an extended time away from Thailand, not quitting the mission field. We are deeply

committed to ministering in Thailand and Ph.D studies are a means to the end of enhancing the contribution we will be able to make to Thai churches when we return to Thailand.

## **What is your dissertation topic?**

My proposed dissertation topic is "Modernism in the American Presbyterian Mission in Siam (Thailand) from 1893-1941." I want to find out how theological trends towards religious pluralism and higher criticism of the Bible affected missionary work in Thailand during the first part of the 20th century, and what lessons we can learn from that for missions and ministry in Thailand today. If you'd like to know more, please ask. I am also happy to send you a electronic copy of my dissertation proposal (4 pages, not including bibliography).

## **Are you going back to Thailand?**

Yes! During our time in Scotland, we'll make some trips to Thailand for research and ministry. In 2018-2019, we'll be in Chiang Mai for about 6 months. When I finish the Ph.D in 2020 (Lord willing), our whole family will return to Bangkok to continue church planting and teaching at Bangkok Bible Seminary. We hope to minister in Thailand for another 20-25 years or more after doctoral studies are done.

## **Why Scotland?**

In choosing a Ph.D program, you need to look for a scholar who has expertise in your area of study and is willing and available to supervise your studies. After looking many places, I have connected with Dr. Brian Stanley, who has agreed to supervise my research. Dr. Stanley, an established scholar who has done much work in 19th and 20th century mission history, directs the Centre for the Study of World Christianity at the University of Edinburgh. The University of Edinburgh requires Ph.D students to be in residence in Scotland (research trips notwithstanding)

## **Why not stay in Thailand and do distance studies?**

The scholar that will supervise my studies is at a school that requires me to be in residence in Scotland. Also, studying full-time away from Thailand will enable me to focus on my studies and get the degree done quickly rather than drag it out over 6-7 years, having my attention divided between ministry and studies, likely giving proper attention to neither.

## **Will you keep homeschooling in Scotland?**

Yes. Sun will continue homeschooling the children while we are in Scotland (and Chiang Mai for research). We hope to take advantage of our time in the U.K. and expose our children to some of the cultural riches of Europe. This will be a great bonus to their education. Joshua has told us he wants to see Roman ruins and aqueducts.