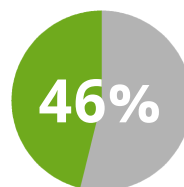


JOURNALS POSTED ON OCTOBER 3, 2018

Experiencing the Church Body



ALISE & MARK JUANES



SUPPORT PLEDGED



THAILAND

I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers, because I hear about your love for all his holy people and your faith in the Lord Jesus. I pray that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective in deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ. Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the Lord's people. (Philemon 1:4-7)

Greetings from Ohio!

Philemon 1:4-7 were my devotional verses this morning and it was so appropriate for where we are right now. Alise and I are at the end of a ten day trip which has included security training, church visits, meals with new friends, and speaking at a regional gathering of pastors. Honestly, usually when I read the opening of letters like this, I usually fly through it to get to the "meat" of the letters and dismiss the introduction as rhetoric. Today, however, I read these verses and paused, then read them again thinking about all the new people we have met this past month and how thankful I am for all the people God has put us together with on this journey.

What I am so thankful for is seeing how many people are taking part in God's mission to the lost in this world in different ways. I'm encouraged because it shows me that we are not alone – we are just one small part of God's big plan. I'm also encouraged by the people who affirm our own message and calling. As Paul mentions in his letter to Philemon, at the base of it all, what connects us together, what encourages me the most, is the love I have seen and experienced in people. I wanted to share a few of the ways we have experienced love and encouragement:

- We have shared at two churches this month and people at both have really connected with what God is doing in Thailand. But most of all, it has given us the opportunity to experience how loving and diverse the church body is.
- At our latest training, we met several missionaries and shared stories with each other. Especially moving, were five young women who recently graduated from college and are heading overseas to serve. Seeing people in their early 20's who are willing to follow God's call overseas is amazing to me. Their maturity and spiritual depth blew me away.
- Remember [our post last month](#) about how our daughter, Sydney, stepped out of her normal comfort zone at the World Missions Conference? One of the friends Sydney made at WMC went back to her home church in Iowa, spoke about what God is doing in Thailand, and raised \$359. For a 9 year old who was moved to partner and take the initiative to get her church involved... wow.
- After sharing about our calling at a church in Ohio, a man who has been a longtime advocate of the House of Love and House of Blessing in Thailand walked up to us and without saying a word gave us a huge hug. There was so much emotion in that embrace, Alise and I were both brought to tears.
- We had dinner with more advocates for House of Love and House of Blessing and heard their stories of how God has moved them through their involvement in Thailand. One of my favorite quotes has been by the singer Bono: "don't ask God to bless what you are doing, seek what God is doing and join that because He is already blessing it." Hearing the testimony of people who are a major part of House of Love and House of Blessing over the years confirms to me that God is blessing those ministries along with so many of the lives they continue to touch globally. We are excited to be a part of what God is already doing there.
- The past two days we have been at the American Baptist Ohio Regional Gathering. We were the missions speakers at the evening banquet and people responded! We had conversations

with other missionaries, pastors, people who have been to Thailand, and many other people who love God. What moved us the most, was not just that people wanted to talk with us, it was the excitement they had when they spoke with us! God used our story and heart for Thailand to encourage others. They also took the time to share their stories with us – their stories resonated with us, and their love was apparent. One person even said that we are a part of the Ohio church family, and we genuinely felt that way. God is so good!

This was a simple post to share some of what we have experienced this past month. Even though we aren't in Thailand yet, we have seen God at work! We are already in the mission field, and God is moving in churches and individuals. This trip wasn't just about visiting churches and sharing our story – it was about connecting with brothers and sisters in Christ and mutually encouraging each other. To borrow from Paul; as we meet and speak with you, *your love gives us great encouragement and you continually refresh our hearts*. We are thankful and encouraged for each and every one of you.

Trying to follow,

Mark & Alise



Our homeschool adventure has begun!

Sydney and Gavin are now official homeschool kids! After one month they are starting to settle into a routine. What stands out so far is how connected to each other they have become. They are really learning to work well together as a team on projects – especially video recording each other's science experiments. The curriculum we have chosen encourages us to have conversations with them about what they are learning – in the Bible, in history, science, etc. To keep them connected socially they have group activities such as bible, math, and science clubs, Tae Kwom Do lessons, and rock climbing classes. Kolin is still at preschool but looks forward to joining his brother and sister soon!



