



# Buddhism in Southeast Asia

Interserve Canada  
July - September 2016

## A Letter from Richard Piet National Director

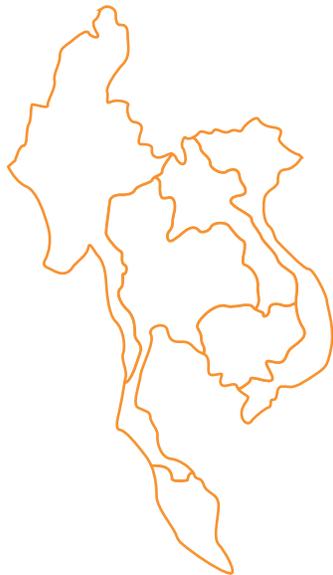
The sights and sounds of South East Asia are permeated with spirituality. At sunrise young Buddhist novice monks are making the rounds barefoot, collecting offerings and chanting prayers. Spirit houses (small shrines) sit outside of homes, offices, restaurants, and places of business with food and incense to keep the spirits happy. Amulets hang on rear view mirrors in taxis. People release fish that have been caught, hoping to live a longer life. Ornate temples are found at every corner and drums, chimes and bells sound regularly.

Talking to South East Asian people about spiritual matters is easy. Unlike Western cultures, there is no need to convince them that there is more to the world than what we can see and touch. The people are searching, but have yet to find the Truth, the Life and the Way.

When my family left Thailand, a country that is 98.6% unreached, I felt there was a huge unfinished task. Even my local friend said there is no point in telling people they need Jesus, they do not know who you are talking about. Most of the people have no access to a follower of Jesus, and no opportunity to hear the Good News.

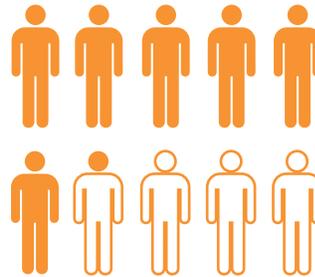
Interserve persists in this task and will not give up on sharing the Good News of Jesus. Frank & Sue are Thai-Canadian and our newest Partners. After coming to Canada, successfully planting a Thai church, discipling overseas Thai workers and sharing the Gospel here, Frank & Sue have responded to God's call and will go to Thailand soon. Their plans include planting a church in an area of Bangkok where there is no church presence. They will bring the news of Jesus to their own people.

# Mainland Southeast Asia



Southeast Asia is a subregion of Asia and spans 1,700,000 sq mi.

Mainland Southeast Asia consists of 5 countries: Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam.



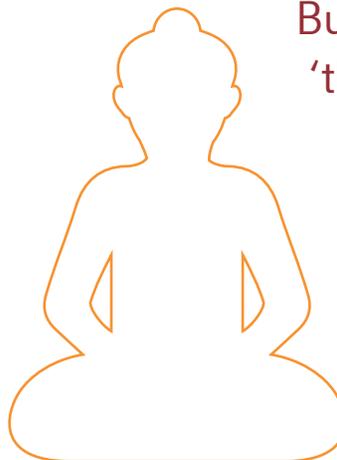
Southeast Asia has a population of 613,975,000 people.

Over 50% of the population is considered unreached.

76% OF PEOPLE IN CAMBODIA ARE BUDDHIST.  
ONLY 1.6% ARE EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANS.



People live in fear of spirits and use gifts to appease them.



Buddhists follow Buddha 'the enlightened one'.

They seek to eliminate suffering by gaining merit through feeding monks, donating to temples and going to worship services.

THAI PEOPLE BELIEVE BEING THAI AND BUDDHIST ARE ONE AND THE SAME.



Nevertheless, Southeast Asia could be on the verge of a breakthrough of church growth. Already 65% of ethnic Thai church members are first generation believers and others are responding in significant numbers.

# God at work in Southeast Asia

Our Partners living in Southeast Asia are living out their faith and are making deep connections with the people they come in contact with on a daily basis. We continue to pray God will use these interactions to further His Kingdom and reach these people looking for the truth.

Here is a story about \*Joseph, one of our Partners working among a buddhist community:



Dawa was almost seven years old when his parents sent him to the monastery to become a monk. For three years he was a novice monk in training, learning how to read and write the alphabet. The monastery had seven different Buddhist schools: philosophy, logic, debate, medicine, art (for tanka painting and mandala making), printing, and a special one for meditation.

When he became a full-fledged monk Dawa tried the art school first; but he was not talented in reproducing the quality of tankas that had made his monastery famous. His first drawing of the multi-armed Green Tara goddess looked more like a green octopus. The bright colors of red, blue, green, white and gold fascinated him. Yet, he simply could not create his ideas on the canvas. His monk tutors consequently suggested that he try a different pathway.

After many hours of chanting, he memorized some sutras. He unfortunately could not understand the meaning of the Buddhist sutras', so he knew that philosophy was not a good option. He tried debating; but he wasn't quick enough to defend his arguments. The debating tutor poked fun at his feeble defenses of ordinary Buddhist doctrines. After each debate class was over he would eventually

think of good points to say; but in the midst of class he was too tongue-tied to speak clearly.

After two decades of trying to be a good monk and gaining merit for his parents, Dawa had a dream. The dream reoccurred every three or four weeks for the next three years. In the dream he would see the back of a man teaching from a book. The man's robes were sparkling white, not maroon like his robes. The unknown man read the same passage in every dream. He read this in his language: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me to preach Good News to the poor."

When Dawa woke up he asked his tutor, "Who is the teacher in my dream? And what is this new teaching?". His tutor didn't know. No one in the monastery could tell him who the teacher was or what the teacher meant by "good news".

One day Dawa was in the market place buying butter and roasted barley and he met a foreigner who was speaking his language. The foreigner's name was Joseph.

The next night Dawa had the dream again. As he had done so many times before, the teacher had his back to Dawa and he read from the book, giving the same message. At the end

of the message he turned his head to Dawa and said, "Ask Joseph, he will answer your questions."

When Dawa woke up, he went to the market place looking for the foreigner named Joseph who could speak his language. He found Joseph and said:

"I had a dream. Can you tell me what it means?" Then he proceeded to tell Joseph his dream and asked if Joseph knew who the teacher was, and what the good news was that the man taught to the people.

It was the first time Dawa had heard the name of Jesus. Joseph told him that he had a book with the good news in it – written in Dawa's language. The Gospel of Luke had just been published. Joseph opened the book to the fourth chapter and he told Dawa to start reading from verse 18 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim release to the captives, recovering of sight to the blind, to deliver those who are crushed and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." Luke 4:18-19 WEB After he read verses 18 and 19 Dawa exclaimed: "This is the man! He is the teacher from my dream. I will follow him."

# What's New

Interserve invites you and a friend to our North Africa Event on August 2, 2016!



Come for a North African inspired dinner and hear from our Partners about their ministries and how God is working in amazing ways.

Time: 5:30 - 7:30 pm

Location: Interserve Offices  
10 Huntingdale Blvd.,  
Scarborough, ON  
M1W 2S5

Cost: Dinner is free, though we will take up a free will offering to support the ministries in North Africa



Please RSVP to Candice Little  
[communications@interservecanada.org](mailto:communications@interservecanada.org)

Interserve

Interserve Canada invites you to our event:

A Human Resources Workshop for Churches and Para-Church Organizations

This workshop will provide helpful insights, tips and best practices for HR leaders in churches and para-church organizations.

Lorinda Lee, the speaker at the event has worked in the area of HR for the last 20+ years and currently holds the role of Director, Human Resources at a downtown teaching hospital in Toronto. She has a BA in Psychology; a BA in Adult Education, Training, and Development; a Masters in Intercultural Communications/Cultural Anthropology, and she is currently working on a PhD in Applied Management and Decision Science. Finally, Lorinda holds the Certified Human Resources Leader designation.

This will be a full day event on September 24, 2016. Please RSVP to Candice Little at [communications@interservecanada.org](mailto:communications@interservecanada.org).

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