

Leave Your Comfort and Join the Adventure

Interserve Newsletter
Spring 2019

A Letter from Jonathan Tao Leadership Team

Earlier this year, I visited South East Asia. This was to be a 3-week exposure trip to visit a few countries. There were three reasons for the trip: First, my orientation to the dynamic Kingdom work that Interserve is part of. Second, to visit and encourage our faithful Partners who pour themselves into their communities and consequently do phenomenal work. Third, to better understand the cultures and contexts in which our Partners serve, to get a better glimpse of what God is doing, and how He is already at work in South East Asia. I have not been to this part of the world and my initial thoughts were highly inaccurate.

You might think this would be an incredible, eye-opening, exciting, once-in-a-lifetime adventure! It was all of that, but for the months leading up to this trip, I was certainly not excited. To be honest with you, I was gripped with nervousness, worry and fear. My mind filled with 'What ifs' and every imaginable 'worst case scenario' a traveler could possibly experience: getting sick, bitten, detained, and even lost! I am not much of a traveller, and don't often travel outside of North America, so

my plane ride there was filled with lots of prayer. But I had lots to pray about! **I prayed for my perspective, attitude and heart to change.** I prayed that I would figuratively and literally step out of my comfort zone and step into the story God was already writing. I also prayed to shift my focus off from myself and what I would be "losing", and instead onto who God is, what I would be gaining, and what He is about to show me, and let me tell you. He did show me!

None of my fears or worries was anywhere to be found. God orchestrated an immersion experience for me, into new lands, cultures, and spiritualities. I now have an enlarged picture of our neighbours (from a little further away), who are also made in His image, and who need the love of Jesus, no more and no less than you and me. God revealed to me how tightly we/I hold onto what is comfortable, familiar and preferred. However, **when we are able to look beyond ourselves and the uncertainties ahead, and embrace what God wants for us, and who we were created to be, we discover peace, joy, and purpose.** This is when we are able to join the adventure and partner with God in His mission, making Jesus known where he has never been introduced.

"Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." Matthew 16: 24 - 25



The people are full of laughter and smiles and are eager to learn English. The culture is easy going and laid back. In the rural countryside, dusty roads, and cattle crossing the roads are normal sights. However, though many of these areas are still quite under developed, these countries' economies are emerging and advancing very quickly.

The urban centres are densely populated, and rapidly developing. The city skylines grow each year. Tourism and technology have drastically made an impact, boasting some of the cheapest

data plans and some of the most visited tourist sites in the world. With these countries striving to modernize and to advance technologically, come the struggles we know all too well here in the West. In conjunction with the effects of the majority religion, and the need to appease the spirits, **the people live not in freedom, but in fear.** It is not hard to find a Buddhist temple, and on every property is a prominent and decorated spirit house. Awareness of spiritual forces is typical and encounters with evil spirits are common. **Pray for the hundreds of millions of unreached people**

in South East Asia to hear the Good News of the Gospel and to encounter the freedom that comes from knowing Jesus Christ.

Although the majority religion in these nations is still Buddhist (+85%), with fewer than 2% of the population professing to be evangelical Christians, churches are spreading and multiplying. Governments are becoming more accepting of churches and Christian activity. **There are currently more churches in these nations than ever before in history,** and many are coming to know Jesus as the one, true God.



God is deeply and powerfully at work. I saw this through our Partners and the many individuals who commit their time and energy in working somewhere different, loving their neighbours, and introducing Jesus. This happens in different ways and in different places, including new church plants, farms, after-school programs, orphanages, English classes, medical training centers, soccer programs, cafes, salons, jewelry shops, drug rehabilitation programs, book stores, egg farms, community centres, and other small businesses.

We met with many Partners and other international workers, learning about how they ended up where they were. I was amazed to discover the common thread. **Each Partner and international worker was led to serve and work in a place they would have never imagined they would be!** It was never a place they envisioned or expected to work. Yet each was led by God in unique and profound ways to serve

using the skills and experiences they were already given. **These are ordinary Christians with a heart for God's Kingdom, realizing and following their calling.** In addition to investing time to learn local language, and understanding the local people's life and culture, they faithfully serve and work in communities, and share their lives with people.

Our Partners have beautiful opportunities to connect (with people) and open doors for the Gospel: creating jobs, working in partnerships, teaching English, teaching skills, running businesses and orphanages, and joining running clubs. Sharing work, life, and meals, and also literally opening their doors to their neighbors, our Partners are present, available and befriended. And it's through prayer, and being available to those around, that these opportunities become friendships that are displays of Jesus' love among people who have never met a Christian. Though it sometimes happens in mysterious, profound, miraculous ways, often it's just through **the simplicity of loving people and walking with people through everyday life.**

Late last year, I heard Sue share about the church in Bangkok that she and her husband, Frank, helped plant. I knew about the people in that community who have encountered Jesus. Now, however, it was wonderful to meet them in person and to see their love poured out into the children's after-school program. Many of the working population in the surrounding community work in factories for long hours, not returning home until the night, and therefore unable to take care of the children when the school day is over. When the children step into the church, they receive a snack, and are met by Frank, Sue, and some of the parents who have, in their own profound ways, come to know the freedom that Jesus brings. It was encouraging to see the children praying together and singing songs of worship and praise. On other nights of the week, the children have prayer meetings and learn music.

I've also heard Anne recap her nine years of work, serving in South East Asia. To see it first-hand and meet some of the youth was another highlight of mine. **It is a testament to God's faithfulness and His ability to use His people for purposes we are not yet made aware of.** I saw first-hand how Anne and her ministry team pour themselves into the community and develop relationships and open doors for the Gospel. What began a decade ago with a simple orphanage and 5 children, now houses over 40 children, and has branched out in response to many of the needs that surfaced. Partnerships with schools, other neighbouring communities, and churches are blossoming and **the reach of the Gospel is rapidly spreading.**



God is already at work and is reaching those who are stuck in addictions, poverty, debt, trafficking, and spiritual darkness. **Pray for more workers to put their faith into action and join the adventure.**

It became evident to me that there is a great need for English teaching. Many children desire to learn English, but there just aren't enough teachers. I've come to realize that we Canadians have a valuable gift -- the ability to read, write, and speak in English -- and that we don't often engage with the opportunities that abound. **Pray for more labourers, volunteers, and ordinary Christians to respond and share the skills that they already have been given to a generation that is hungry to learn**

4 Ways to Get Involved.

We are all called to put our faith into action and make Jesus known.

Go

Join the Adventure.

Interserve is looking for English teachers, engineers, social workers, medical professionals, agricultural experts, and other obedient followers devoted to making Jesus known in Asia and the Arab World. Learn about our **short-term and long-term opportunities** to serve!

Try something new and work somewhere different, even if it's only for a season. We would love to discern with you and walk with you in your journey, and to discover how we can each be engaged in the exciting adventure of God's mission.

Email us at <connect@interservecanada.org>.

Pray

Seek God's power.

We continue to participate at mission conferences across Canada and we've been encouraged to meet so many passionate and eager individuals. These conferences have featured many passionate speakers, shared some truly inspiring stories, and have helped create some meaningful connections.

Pray for more people to devote themselves to the Gospel and hear and respond to God's call to join in and be involved in His mission. None of this work is possible without the urgency and power of prayer. Ask us how you can pray more.

Give

Support the work.

Our Partners serve in Asia and the Arab World, where people have the least access to a representative of Jesus. Some Partners are in the world's most fragile countries. They journey a difficult path of service, filled with cultural differences, language barriers, and various other daily challenges. Each Partner is supported by a team of **generous givers, ready encouragers, and relentless prayer warriors**. The vitality of the mission requires those on the front lines, as well as the supportive home base who is just as active in the journey.

We are in search of more faithful supporters, generous givers, encouragers and passionate individuals to join these sending teams and prayer groups. Support the work through your care and prayer. Contact us to see how you can support God's work from where you are.

Learn


Discover what God is doing.


If you are reading this and want to learn more about God's mission, or would love to **receive newsletters from some or all of our Partners**, then we would love to share them with you.


Our hope is that you would be encouraged by what God is actively doing, that your picture of missions would be enlarged, and for your prayers to be more informed. Let us know what we can provide for you. Email <communications@interservecanada.org>.

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