

## THE WOODEN GATE – August 2007

"Pass through, pass through the gates! Prepare the way for the people. Build up, build up the highway! Remove the stones. Raise a banner for the nations....See, your Savior comes!" (Isaiah 62:10-11)

18All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. 20We are therefore Christ's ambassadors... 2 Cor 5:18-20

Peace to you from the Wood Family!

11 August 2007

Two days and counting!!! It is Saturday night here and school begins on Tuesday at 8:00am. Preparation for it has all but consumed our lives this last month. We are excited and nervous and greatly anticipating what the Lord will do this year at Grace International School (GIS).

### Teaching / Ministry

The shift in our ministry is now complete. Monday through Thursday of this past week we were involved in orientation meetings - for new staff and then all returning staff. Yesterday, we returned from an overnight retreat for staff and their families - 150 people were in attendance. It was a great time of setting our focus on the Lord and getting to know one another. Mike had an opportunity to share his heart for the Spiritual Direction of the school and we also sang as part of the worship team.



We wanted to give a little history of the school and why we feel so privileged to be a part of this work. The school began officially in 1997 with a core of about 18 staff and a little over one hundred students. Five mission organizations, of which the Christian & Missionary Alliance is one, got together with a common goal to create a school that would have the following distinctives as its foundation: a strong Christian witness, high quality education, responsiveness to the needs of missionary families and strong accountability to the Lord. This accountability means that tuition must stay

affordable for missionaries. In a world where the cost of education at international schools can be astronomical, GIS had a different vision. Teachers at GIS raise their own support from churches, individuals and mission organizations back home. This has kept tuition costs down so missionary families can afford to send their children to school. It also allows people all around the world the opportunity to be a part of the great work God is doing in the lives of young people (western & Asian) here in Thailand.

GIS opens this year with over 500 students and almost 100 teachers, support staff, Thai staff and administrators. I know it seems like it would be hard to fill positions when the teachers are not paid by the school, but it is a faith-building miracle to see God provide exactly what is needed for staffing each year. The only remaining position that has yet to be filled is an elementary music teacher...but the year hasn't started yet! (photo: Wendy's classroom is on the first floor of this building, right side, behind the tallest palm tree!)

Mike's role will be as the Spiritual Life Director, organizing weekly chapels, coordinating student outreaches and special events, mentoring students, being a resource for staff, and teaching two sessions of Theology to the 11-12<sup>th</sup> graders. He's feeling a bit overwhelmed but is looking forward to the challenges ahead. From his very small office he is gathering together a group of students, staff and parents to help with the chapel program. Amidst the bustle of this new role, he is continuing to study for his ordination exam set for the first week in October in Seattle . **Please pray for Mike's Theology class (7 students in one class, 13 in the other) and his preparation for ordination.**



Wendy has been in her new 3<sup>rd</sup> grade classroom almost daily getting the last finishing touches on decorating and planning. Last year she was a volunteer helping out in the afternoons with Reading and Social Studies. This experience is helping give her greater peace of mind as a teacher for this year. She spent the first week of August in a 30 hour workshop learning how to teach the Language Arts program. She is still a bit intimidated by it but will tackle it one day at a time. Her class size is nice and low but there are many of her students who have special needs to be addressed. **Please pray for Wendy as she begins the school year and for her**

**relationship with the students.**

Thank you for praying for us as we led worship at our church last month. The Lord blessed that time and those who worshipped with us. Also, thanks for your prayers for our secondary principal and her family after the sudden passing of their daughter. They never were able to determine what caused her death but are thankful that they were in the country at the time and had just been able to spend much time with her. (photo: Gene and Linda Fisher sharing with the staff at the retreat.)



### Family Life

For the first time since we moved to Thailand , our family now shares the same school and work schedule at GIS. Before, Mike and Wendy taught on the Thai school calendar with very few days off, while Ethan was on a more American school schedule. Since transitioning to our new jobs this summer we've been able to spend more time together as a family. Ethan kept up with his TaeKwonDo and played on a little league baseball team, too. Once in a while, Alex went with his best friend, Jemma (age 2 1/2) to her preschool and had a great time. One of our summer projects with Alex has been teach him to ride his bike without training wheels. We're making a little progress, although he's still a bit shaky on the whole balance thing. We did have a few small outings to a local river park and to the zoo, too.

Our new address and phone numbers are:

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Living in Chiang Mai

As we log onto the internet and check the latest Dow Jones Industrial averages we are reminded of something that someone once told us: When the US economy is strong domestically, the US dollar is often weaker abroad. This worked in our favor when we arrived here in 2004 when the US economy was weaker and the dollar was stronger. One US dollar then bought us 41 Thai baht. Today, however, it only buys us 33 Thai baht. That's about a 19% drop in buying power. A liter of milk used to cost the equivalent of \$1.58. Today it costs us \$2.12, taking into account the normal rise in the price of milk over 4 years, as well. Ahhh, the joy of living in a world economy!

Praise God for:

- A great staff retreat and a strong sense of unity among the staff
- An unexpected gift that really helped boost our faith when we needed it most (a new mobile phone)
- For the Lord carrying us through these weeks of preparation to work at GIS
- For healthy, happy boys who are very excited about school starting (can you believe Alex is starting Kindergarten?)
- Wendy's Grandma's 100th birthday this month!

Please Pray for:

- The new school year and grace to meet it head on, for all of us
- Emily from our Alpha course, who has fallen away from her commitment to the Lord
- Our leading worship in music at church on Sept. 2
- God's continued provision for our finances, our relationship with God, and relationships with others

We are sooooo thankful to those of you who currently give sacrificially to partner with us here in Thailand . We continue to trust our Savior for your needs as well as ours.

Amazed by His Goodness,  
Mike, Wendy, Ethan and Alex Wood  
Serving the Lord in Chiang Mai , Thailand

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