

THE EFM WORLDWIDE MISSIONARY GATHERING

Chiang Mai, Thailand; November 1-6, 2013

Report prepared by Dan Cammack

For the first time in EFM's 35-year history our missionaries came together in one place along with their coaches, the executive committee of EFM, and EFM staff. Also present were the superintendents of five yearly meetings/regions in North America and some of the missionaries who serve under those regions. Altogether there were 78 people representing 14 countries: Mexico, the United States, Ireland, Hungary, Russia, Rwanda, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, China, Thailand, Cambodia, and the Philippines.

These fellow servants in Christ came together for fellowship, teaching, worship, and discussion of EFM's mission statement. Try to picture missionaries serving in different countries, many of different nationalities as well, eating together, singing together, and even playing together. It was so much fun to watch this diverse group mingle with one another. Who would have ever imagined the conversations that took place during this gathering?

Each day began with a time of open worship, focusing on the Lord Jesus in our midst. Then Kent Walkemeyer, professor and director of the Friends Center at Azusa Pacific University, took us on a tour of what the scriptures teach about the Church and what that means for us today. Ron Stansell, former missionary to Bolivia and retired missions professor at George Fox University, led us through some of the history of the expansion of the Friends movement. He told us stories about Friends like Mary Fisher, Arthur Chilson, R. Esther Smith, William Abel, Everett Cattell, and pointed out some of the lessons that we learn from their lives and ministries. In the evenings Dan Cammack, Executive Director of EFM, and Matt Macy, Associate Director of EFM, shared their stories and passions with the gathering. John Williams, superintendent of Evangelical Friends Church-Eastern Region, brought a challenging message midway through our time together.

The open worship, teaching, and preaching laid the foundation for discussing EFM's mission statement during the last two days of the gathering. The EFM Board has been working for the last couple of years on defining more clearly who we are, our core convictions, and what the Lord is calling us to do. The Board was eager to present this work to the missionaries and to receive their input. During the discussions there was a sense of unity about the basic content of the mission statement, and many helpful suggestions were made to strengthen it.

Chuck and Cheri Luciano of Northwest Friends in Arvada, Colorado, traveled to Chiang Mai to video and photograph this historic event. They also did interviews with all the missionaries. Be on the lookout for their excellent work in the months to come.

Who wants to leave a gathering like this one? None of us were anxious for it to be over. Many wished for a couple of more days to be together.

One of the theme songs for the gathering was a children's chorus that originated in South America. The lyrics go like this, "There are storms, there are storms, there are storms everywhere I look (repeat). God is strong, I am weak; I grab His hand and hold on tight (repeat)." As we parted we knew that many of us were headed back to face storms of various kinds: persecution, political instability, hard soil, economic need. Little did we realize that Typhoon Haiyan was gathering strength even at that very moment to strike the central part of the Philippines two days later. But we returned to our places of ministry, much like Mary Fisher, trusting in God to carry us through the storms that await us.