

November 2013

Dear Friends,

On Monday mornings after worship, the chaplaincy staff of the Office of Spiritual and Community Life at Payap University, here in Chiang Mai, Thailand, get together for our “cell group” time. I introduced the group to “Immanuel Prayer.” It starts with gratitude—remembering a time when we felt particularly close to God, and sharing that memory with a friend, and then praying and thanking God in detail for God’s goodness in that past experience. This usually helps us connect emotionally and spiritually to God, at which point we can open ourselves further to God’s presence by asking Jesus if there is anything he would like to help us with at the moment, and then noticing whatever comes into our awareness and talking it over with him.

As I remembered with gratitude God’s goodness that morning, and felt connected to God, and asked Jesus to show me anything he wanted to help me with, our chaplain came to mind, along with some disappointment I’d felt toward him. I brought our relationship to Jesus and asked him to show me Rev. Mana’s heart.

The following week, Mana was leading morning worship and he shared about our prayer time the week before and told us about a memory when he felt especially close to God. He was in 4th or 5th grade, a poor kid who lived in the country. He and his brother had the job of catching field mice in traps they would set each evening and check each morning. He was speaking in the northern Thai dialect which is a delightful language full of passion and poetry, and we could picture his joy as he described the crisp cold of the winter morning, walking along the dikes in the rice paddies in his flip flops, delighting in the beauty of the nearly ripe rice waving in the fields, the beauty of the rising sun, and the joy of two little boys checking the traps and loving it when they lifted them and felt the weight of a trapped mouse that would soon be made into a delicious spicy dish to go with their sticky rice that day. His joy in the beauty of God’s creation was palpable, and as I listened I thanked God for showing me the beauty of Rev. Mana’s heart. It was a sacred moment and a healing moment.



Rev. Mana leading new nurses out of Luce Chapel

“To pray is the greatest thing we can do: and to do it well there must be calmness, time, and deliberation; otherwise it is degraded into the littlest and meanest of things. True praying has the largest results for good; and poor praying, the least. We cannot do too much of real praying; we cannot do too little of the sham. We must learn anew the worth of prayer, enter anew the school of prayer. There is nothing which it takes more time to learn.” From E.M. Bounds in *Power Through Prayer*.

Our office has declared November a month of prayer and fasting for Payap. We have a new board of trustees whose first job is to find us a new president—pray that God will provide just the right

person for this challenging time in our history. Pray that we will have clarity and courage for the changes we need to make to fulfill God's purposes for us at this time. Thailand is suffering deep political tension, and we are called to develop leaders for real peacemaking.

Some signs of new life in prayer include the restart of a prayer time for teachers the first Friday of the month over the lunch hour. About 15 teachers have come over the past three months. We've shed tears together praying for family and friends suffering from cancer, and shared joy in answers to prayer. During November we are opening our small chapel daily over the noon hour for people to come and pray. We've posted prayer points around the room to assist people in their prayers. We are also seeing students come for prayer to deal with significant emotional struggles—and they are meeting with Jesus and receiving his help and joy. Pray that the Lord would multiply this ministry and that many hurting students will find restoration and joy in Christ.



Over 200 Christian students gathered for worship, and hearing God's word, and praying for Payap. Philip, the president of Payap's student government (for almost 6000 students), was a key organizer. I wrote about his leadership in my May letter, too. He led the worship team and the prayers, and his mom, Ajarn Ooy, spoke to the students and challenged them that God dreams big, and God is inviting us to partner with him in ministry. This is no shabby invitation—this is the Lord of creation including us in his work of sharing his love and salvation. Ooy was compelling, and the students were listening. Pray for Philip and our students, that God will use them to spark a revival at Payap.

A mission partnership exploration team from First Pres, Santa Barbara, was in the room experiencing first-hand what God is doing at Payap. They have come to see, share, listen, learn and pray and to seek how God might be dreaming big for them in partnering more deeply with the Thai church and its ministries here. I am so thankful for First Pres, and all of you who accompany me through your prayers, letters, and gifts.

God is dreaming big for you, too. I'd love to hear how he is at work in your life. And please prayerfully consider how God may be calling you to strengthen your partnership in my ministry through prayer, regular communication, and financial support.

Esther