

Judy Cook

Celebrating life in all its fullness

April 2024

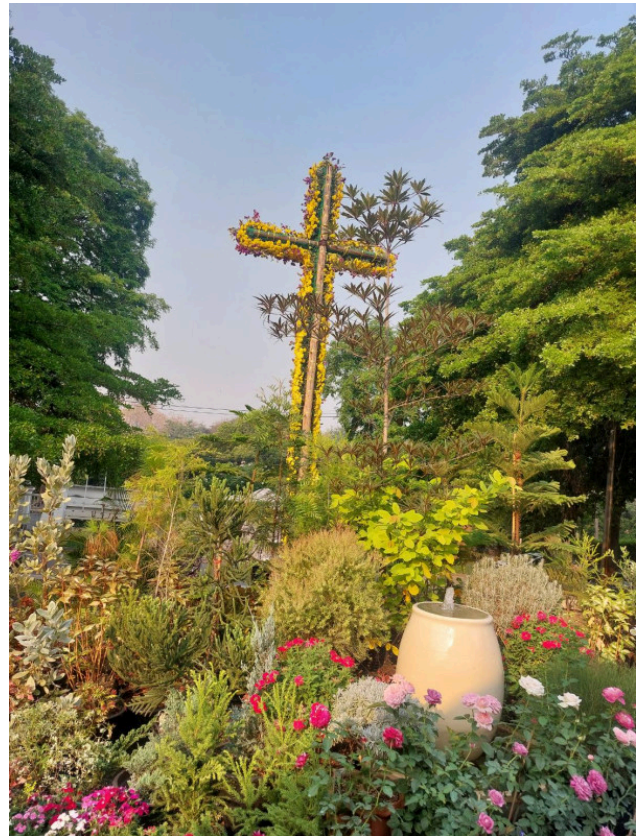
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April is the time of year when our minds and hearts cherish the gift of eternal life and our salvation as we contemplate the Easter story anew. Also in Thailand April is their New Year celebration (Songkran) and the Thai people celebrate life in their families and renew relationships. Songkran traditionally also comes with a lot of water play as well as water blessings. Here in SDSU, Hope Home and the international church we attend we have rejoiced together in this wonderful season focusing on the work of Jesus on the cross and His resurrection.

This year for Easter at Hope Home we have enjoyed having time with all the children home and off school. The morning devotional times with staff and children and the Bible teaching times in the day have opened opportunities to tell the staff and children the good news of Easter and help them understand a bit more about the extent of God's love for them. We were also very blessed to have the international church youth group come and hold an Easter activity morning. The young people were amazing and activities included a short play depicting the Easter resurrection scene, foot washing, Easter art and craft activities and the inevitable Easter egg hunt. This culminated in an uplifting time of joint worship between Hope Home and the youth party. The youth did so well, and adapted all their activities and interactions appropriately to suit and meet the needs of our special children. We trust this experience for the youth will encourage them to continue to seek new ways to interact more freely with people who are different from them and not be afraid.

During Songkran, the Thai New Year there is a mixed time of frivolity and water play in the streets all over town, as well as the more serious side of recognising and blessing / honouring our elders or those in authority. Many of the staff at Hope Home request time off so they can return to their parents and bless them in the traditional way.



At Hope Home we too will be holding a blessing ceremony when the children will show honour to their 'mothers'. A similar event will be taking place at SDSU once the staff are back from the Thai holiday period and we will show our respect to our leaders as a team. I find this aspect of Thai culture very heart warming and love to hear and see how the younger generation of Thai people continue to recognise the impact and importance of their elders, and in mutuality their elders take time to encourage and bless those younger than them. It is at this time that the strength of relationships in family (or its equivalent) is emphasised. I thank God for my own family but also for the many family ties He has blessed me with here in Thailand.



The staff at the Social Development Services Unit have been busy in the last month and ongoing for the next few months too completing agricultural projects before the seasons change. They have been instrumental in helping rural village communities set up solar energy sourcing so that water pump systems for irrigation of crops can be maintained. Projects like these are carried out by not only SDSU staff but also with the input for labour from local church and community members and the whole community benefits from sustainable agriculture through the year. This in turn means families who were previously struggling to grow enough food for not only consumption, but as an income source for daily living costs, can face a brighter future.

The SDSU staff are all Christian and they see their role within the wider church body as very practical and seeking earnestly to promote sustainability of life for vulnerable people within the Thai society, and helping families seek ways to begin to break the cycle of poverty through practical interventions. Alongside this the SDSU staff in all training and all activities offer spiritual support alongside the local churches that they partner with, and encourage all beneficiaries or project participants to link with the local church where there is one.

Both aspects of SDSU ministry are vital and as important as each other. Pray with us as we seek God's will in future project planning so we can continue to be His 'hands and feet' in these areas, and follow His guiding rather than our own thinking.



Praise God for opportunities to share the Good News of Jesus through the sharing of the Easter story.

Pray for Thai families and their strengthening relationships, and for many more Thai's to come to know Christ as their Saviour.

Pray for the ministry of SDSU and their partnership with the local church, and for wisdom in the planning of new ministry areas.

Thank you for your support and your encouragement and above all for your prayers. Your partnership with BMS is so special and together we can continue to reach out to vulnerable people across the world in practical and spiritual ways.

May we together continue to seek to lead others to the source of living water.

John 4: 10 Jesus said "If only you know the gift God has for you and who I am, you would ask me, and I would give you living water"

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