



Our December was full of celebrations! We returned from **our November training** just four days before we **welcomed Kelli's parents** back for a three-week visit. Together we **visited Noh Poe** refugee camp to host a Christmas party and hosted over one hundred of our neighbors for a Christmas dinner! Our **community Christmas** didn't go quite as we had planned, but God truly blessed it and allowed us to give out 140 presents to the children & adults in our neighborhood.



Amidst Christmas with friends here in Mae Sot, visiting family, celebrating over Skype, and with our neighbors, there was much to do and so much more to be thankful for. We've linked to our blog above so you can see more stories & photos and see **Stephen's two newest videos** for Partners!

Wishing everyone a very blessed & happy new year!

the spurlock



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We have begun a new year, and it is already proving to be a full one.

We have just booked tickets to return to the States on furlough on 1 March! Kelli will be speaking on development at the **Marked OKC conference**, and we'll be sharing about Partners and our work here throughout our trip. We'll also be in Arkansas for Stephen's sister's wedding in early June.

Kelli has been writing economic curriculum with her Social Development team this month. This will be finished while we are in the States, but the research is already keeping her busy!

Stephen has been managing IT within our office and helping local staff learn a variety of computer skills. He is also helping with a project called *Storylines*, aimed to share the stories of people throughout Burma. We'll keep you posted as these are available.

Stephen's mom, Gena, and family friend, Karen, have just arrived to spend a couple weeks with us! They are enjoying a taste of our lives here, and, as always--we are loving having family here!

Please continue to pray for grace as we will be quite busy until we head home in early March. And, please pray now for our community while we are away for three months in America--that they would be safe, healthy, and cared for. Pray that we would study faithfully and that our language learning would continue to improve even while we travel.

turn your eyes upon Jesus  
look full in His wonderful face  
and the things of earth  
will grow strangely dim  
in the light of His glory & grace





While we make plans to visit different cities and states, we'd like to put the word out:

**We would love an opportunity to share about Burma.**

Burma has been in the news, with changes and economic opportunities and starting a peace process. While so much of this is true, it is only one side of the story. On the other side are ethnicities still fearful for their lives, or migrants still struggling to survive after sixty years of civil war and no home to go back to.

We would really love a chance to share about the **relief** that is still needed and the **development** that is only beginning.

If you have any venue you would like us to speak in—your church, small group, school, or just over dinner with you!—please let us know. We would really love to share why we are here, what we do, and what God is doing in Burma.

Also, please note that our primary goal is not to raise funds. God is providing through so many of our friends and family faithfully giving month after month, and we believe He will continue to provide. While we want to give people an opportunity to give to support us or Partners, we also simply want to give a voice to the voiceless.

Please email us!

**[stephen.spurlock@partnersworld.org](mailto:stephen.spurlock@partnersworld.org)**

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As you read this, we are in flight--on our way to spend three months in the States!

The past month has been full of great opportunities, including a vision trip to Rangoon.

We were able to spend time getting to know the city and meeting some of Partners contacts there. Stephen was able to get some photo & video footage for his projects, and Kelli taught two short training courses to Bible school students. We really enjoyed being in a city full of Burmese culture, and we are hopeful to see the small changes throughout Burma.

And now, we are nearly stateside! We are so thankful for the opportunity to see family and friends, share stories, and hopefully rest. Continue to stay updated through our *blog*.



*While we are in the States, please pray for*

*Rest:* We want to cherish this time, and rest among family, friends, and familiarity!

*Sharing & Support:* We want to share stories from the Thai-Burma border with those around us, and we pray for clear words. Pray for us to share openly, honestly, and with hope. Please pray for this time to reconnect with supporters as well as see God's continued provision.

*Our Community in Mae Sat:* Please pray for the many families that we have come to love so much. We have a friend that will be visiting our home a few times a week to play with the kids and check on medical needs. Please pray for their needs to be met, and for the community garden to continue to flourish!

*Language Learning:* We are going to keep up our studies as best we can! Please pray for diligence and effective self-study.

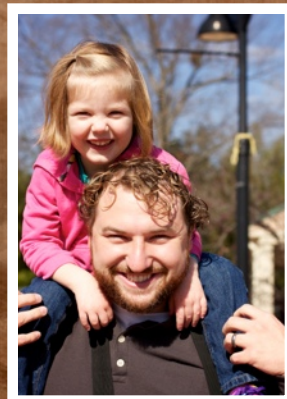


*With many thanks,  
the Spurlocks*

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*Christ is risen from the dead  
trampling over death by death  
come awake, come awake  
come & rise up from the grave*



We are so thankful to be writing to you from America, in the midst of cherishing a few months here!

We arrived into Oklahoma City on 2 March and spent just over a week there. Kelli was able to speak at MarkedOKC and share about her work in social development. We were also able to visit friends and mentors while we adjusted to the time changes, cultural shifts, and cold weather.

We then went on to Little Rock, where we have been able to enjoy time with family, including movie nights, family dinners, and outings with our nieces, nephews, and siblings. We are also doing our best to catch up with friends & family as much as we can.

And we're only a month in! We still have trips planned to Iowa, Illinois, Tennessee, Texas, & Idaho. We still have a wedding to celebrate in Stephen's family, and so many people to see. Meanwhile, we are missing our community in Mae Sot and the normality that life there has become. We would ask that you'd be praying for this time--that we would cherish the time with family and friends, while we continue to study language and keep up with our projects with Partners. Pray for the health & safety of our neighborhood while we are here, as well as the relationships to grow even fonder with distance! Pray for our marriage and spiritual lives as we adjust to an entirely different life & schedule. And, probably most importantly--pray for wisdom and direction as we plan to return to Mae Sot in June.

We are so thankful for the support of so many that make it possible for us to be here on furlough and to return in June. We still have many people to see, so we might not have caught up with you yet! If you would like to be sure we catch you for lunch or coffee, please send us an email and we'll do our best to arrange a time.

*Stephen & Kelli*

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We have remained in the same country, but April has taken us through five states to visit family and friends! In a recent blog, Kelli described our time in the States this way:

*Whoa.*

*We haven't really done furlough before, and this is just a whole new ball game.*

*It's not vacation; it's not work. Vacation should be much more restful and less chaotic; work would be more structured and I would feel more accomplished at the end of every day.*

*There are meetings and giving presentations; there are birthday parties and wedding showers and doctor appointments. There are road trips and shopping trips. There are so many conversations, and a particularly large percentage that I understand, that I never have the time to process or think through before we are talking to someone else.*

*This is what I would imagine an out-of-body experience being like.*

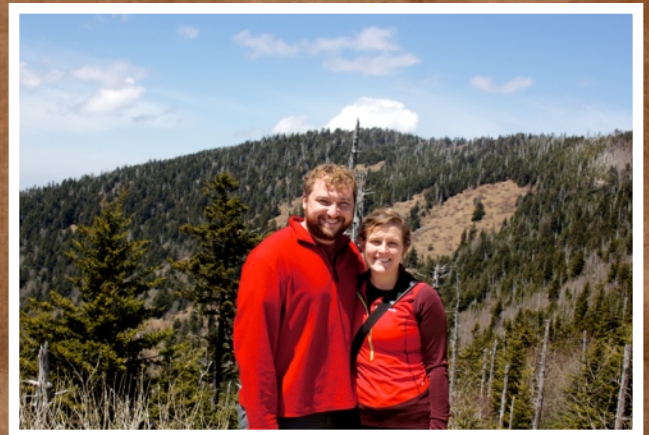
*Or perhaps if my life was a science fiction movie and aliens just picked me off our planet and placed me on another.*

*{You can read the rest of this blog [here](#).}*

We are so thankful for our time here, and particularly April has been filled with cherished times with family, each other, and dear friends. It has been full in many ways.

We are thankful for one more month, and we are also very ready to be in Mae Sot and living our "normal" lives with children at our doorstep and hospital visits. We do still ask for prayers upon prayers--for beautiful memories here in America, for direction in returning to Mae Sot, and for our relationships on every corner of the globe. And, for language--we will always ask for prayers for language!

*Stephen & Kelli*



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After wrapping up furlough with Stephen's sister's wedding, we have returned to Mae Sot! While we weren't able to see everyone, we did see so many friends and supporters, and we are so thankful for that.

Somewhere amidst packing our bags and switching planes, we had a conversation about how it was actually much harder to leave America this time. This took us by surprise: we had thought that having a home to return to, a neighborhood waiting for us with open arms, and a job waiting for us would make it feel more comfortable to return. We know the culture more than we did; we know more language. We have so many things to return to that we didn't have when we left in 2011.

But this time, we *know* the challenges. We *know* how much we will miss family, how many big events we will miss out on. We *know* just how hard and lonely the road ahead is.

And we still boarded the plane. We believe we're supposed to be here in Mae Sot, but we have no idea how long or what it will look like. The next two years will likely be full of as many surprises and challenges as the past two.

And thus, we just want to take this newsletter to ask for prayer.

**Please pray for our transition back to Mae Sot. Pray for wisdom with the relationships in our neighborhood, and for our work with Partners--that we would have a clear vision.**

**Pray for relationships--for our marriage to be strengthened in trials; for friendships in Mae Sot and around the world; and for our families as we are so far from them.**

**Pray for fluency in language; that we would be faithful to study and that we would see miraculous results.**

**Pray that we would be faithful to seek Christ. Pray that we would be trusting in the unknowns; that we would not be fearful. And pray that we would not be in Mae Sot a day more or a day less that God has called us to be.**

Thank you for your prayers. Thank you for blessing us with wise words and encouragement whether we are in America or here! We do thank the Lord for all of you.

*Stephen & Kelli*

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*even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil, for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.*

*Psalm 23:4*

In many ways, we are so thankful to be back in Mae Sot. We received the most wonderful welcome from our neighborhood, and many things returned the same: we still have mothers and sick children showing up at our door each day; we still play dolls and Memory with the children; they still come in to play with magnets on the kitchen floor. Other things have become much better. We are seeing more and more of the adults, seeing relationships grow and barriers break down. **In some ways it seemed being away showed all of us how much we needed and loved each other.** The past month has showed us we are so thankful for the community around us--they are still are best friends, we are still seeking to show them Christ's love, and they are still showing us Christ in the most unique way.



In other ways, this month has been a challenging transition back. We are seeking the Lord and praying through a number of challenges, and we would just like to ask you to pray more and more for us! We continue to enjoy our work at Partners, we continue to study languages, and we can be found spending as much time with our neighbors as we can. **Please pray for our ministry, our communication, our marriage, and our friendships, for He is faithful.**



As always, you can find more *stories* and *photos* on our *blog*. This month you can hear about *26 people sleeping on our living floor, a cockroach infestation,* and see *a beautiful video* Stephen made of our neighborhood!

Thank you for the continued support, financially, prayerfully, and other avenues!  
These things surround us and equip us--**thank you!**

*Stephen & Kelli*





farther along we'll know all about it  
farther along we'll understand why  
cheer up my brothers, live in the sunshine  
we'll understand this, all by and by  
"farther along," josh garrels

It's much easier to write updates when things are wonderful, when we can share the prayers being answered and we are flourishing.

It's much harder to write on days like today, or months like this month, when we are unsure of so many things. It has been a month of asking questions, seeking counsel, and praying prayer after prayer.

We went to Chiang Mai, a city about five hours away, for ten days to visit a counselor and spend some time away. We returned to Mae Sot amidst **severe flooding**--as much as seven feet around our neighbors' houses and over fifteen feet along the Thai-Burma border. While the waters have receded, the entire city is without clean water for washing and showering; relief is still being delivered to those in the worst situations.

We do want to rejoice in some small, yet significant celebrations in the community over the past month. Without fail, God continues to show up and to bless these relationships. We were invited over to a neighbor's house for a birthday party, and our conversations are getting further. We started shifting around our furniture to create a community space at the front of our house, and this has been a wonderful way to invite everyone into our home while still maintaining boundaries with the kids. Through the blog, you can read a few **fun stories about the kids**, the adventure of **setting up the community space**, **the effects of contagious infections**, and **some of our reflections** on it all.

While it has been a difficult month, we are thankful to be here. We are praying, and many of you are praying with us. And **farther along**, we'll understand it. For now, please do continue to pray for wisdom for us, specifically:

- managing stressful aspects of our work and finding solutions
- sustaining relationships with family & friends over an ocean
- building community & friendships with other foreigners here
- faithfulness to language learning & encouraging results
- loving our neighbors well in challenging & changing circumstances

Thank you for all the love and support you give! It is particularly in months like this, when updates may be more difficult to write, that we are keenly aware of our need for those walking with us!

*Stephen & Kelli*

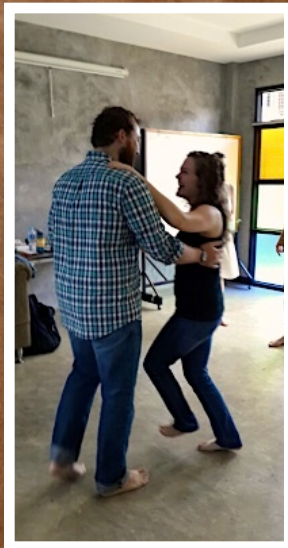
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*“this is my story,  
this is my song:  
praising my Savior  
all the day long”*  
*blessed assurance*



It has been a full month: full of work, full of grace, full of sickness, full of confusion, full of joys. Our story is very messy right now, but it is still true: it is still a story of us doing all we can to praise the Savior and let Him write the story.

His writing isn't always what we expected.

At the beginning of August, we were still without water from the floods and had some problems with electricity. For over two weeks we had to use brown well water for all our laundry, cooking, and bathing. The neighborhood also dealt with quite a bit of sickness from the flood, so we have had many kids with high fevers, pneumonia, impetigo, and more.

Amidst the flood recovery, Kelli started a three-week training. It went well overall, despite many surprises and challenges along the way! It was a very full three weeks of teaching all day, but the students graduated this weekend and will return home to re-teach the curriculum to their communities.

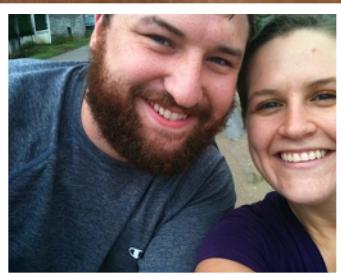
Currently, Stephen is battling an upper respiratory infection with very high fevers. You can read more about our trip to the hospital for him, and please keep praying for him as he continues to recover.

In our community, we have had to make some very complicated, challenging decisions over the past couple weeks. As the story is nothing we can fully convey here, we'd encourage you to read this blog post. We also had some very wonderful times with the community this month, including a sewing night with the kids and a sweet gift to Kelli from one of the little girls.

Amidst all of this, we are facing some challenges with work and praying for direction. **Please join us in prayer!** The fullness of the past month has shown us grace in a new way. We have needed to extend grace to neighbors and coworkers and friends, but also ask for grace as we try to handle the challenges around us.

Thank you for your grace to us, and for continued prayers!

*Stephen & Kelli*



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Our work continues! We traveled for a training in the jungle in mid-September, quickly followed by a trip to Chiang Mai. Stephen has been busy working on a Christmas video for Partners and you can see some of his photography work in Partners latest magazine, which can be downloaded here.

While these things continue on, we began working from home in early September with approval from Partners leadership. We will continue working with Partners and will maintain the same responsibilities, but we have requested this for the next four months. Many of our challenges over the past few months have been difficulties within our organization. We want to be respectful of other staff and the wonderful work that is still being done, but we also want to be honest. Our goal is to take this time to really be in prayer together about our roles within Partners and what God has for us in Mae Sot. We felt that we needed to be removed from our daily routines to seek this clarity. During this time, Partners has also provided for us to go to counseling each month in Chiang Mai. We are hopeful that we will be able to continue working with Partners, but we want to be sure that this is what the Lord has.

As we have shared, the past few months have not been easy. However, we are seeking Him and can already see how God is pulling things together. His faithfulness has not ceased, and we have seen evidence of that day after day. He is faithfully blessing our relationships with our neighbors, He is blessing our marriage, He is blessing our language studies. He has provided wise counsel for us through a couple mentoring us over Skype, mentors here in Mae Sot, and other friends walking with us. He is using these times to shape us, and we are thankful for that.

***We would ask that you please pray with us,  
and we cannot ask this enough!***

- **Trust.** Please pray that we would trust the Lord with everything that is coming our way and that we would be trustworthy in all that we do and say. Please pray for us to be people of faith in every day encounters.
- **Wisdom.** There are more and more decisions in front us, and we need guidance! Please pray that we would be wise.
- **Our neighbors.** Please continue to pray for them to see Christ in us, for relationships to deepen, and for their needs to be met daily.
- **Language study.** He has answered many prayers for communication, so we would like to give thanks *and* continue to ask for a miraculous capacity to learn and communicate.
- **Our marriage.** We are so thankful for each other and even how God has used recent events to draw us together in prayer, discussion, and dependence. Please do keep praying for protection over our marriage and continued blessing.

Thank you for walking with us in each stage that comes our way. You are a blessing to us!

*Stephen & Kelli*



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It's almost November, but we are sending this one out early, as we will be out of town this weekend. After a month full of highs and lows, we are ending on a high with a weekend to celebrate our fourth anniversary!

Early this month we had a man in our community, Aung Moo, admitted to the hospital with meningoencephalitis, and he has been in the hospital for over two weeks now. While he is miraculously still alive, we are continuing to pray for his mental healing and how to handle each step of the situation. Amidst other trips to the hospital for other families, it has felt like we have spent a good portion of the past month there.

We continue to pray that God uses each of these opportunities to show his love and care for our neighbors. While Stephen currently continues to make videos and work on photography at Partners, we have been discussing some new role options with Partners leadership. Amidst a time of transition, they have encouraged Stephen to pursue a different role that fits his passion to be working with people.

It has been a chance for us to consider Partners as an organization and what we are envisioning for the next steps of our lives. With prayer, we feel like God has opened doors for us to continue with Partners for the next stage, and we are currently setting up meetings and taking steps forward for this new role. Our greatest request would be that you continue to pray for us in the meetings, decisions, and planning ahead of us, particularly as we work to balance our personal lives, work with Partners, and our friendships within our neighborhood.

We are excited for the new horizons that November and December will bring with our work, and we are also looking ahead to a time of rest. After a very challenging year, we have booked tickets to visit England over the holidays! Kelli's sister & brother-in-law live in Sheffield, so we will be going to visit them for four weeks. We are very hopeful for a time of rest and recuperation in an English speaking country where it will be just slightly colder than Mae Sot!

Again, thank you for your prayers. We have been ruminating on Romans 15:1-2 throughout this month--the times in our lives we are strong bearing with the weak, and the times we are the weak asking others to bear with us! One day can find us both strong and weak, and this year has seen us weak in many ways. **Thank you for bearing with us, whether in prayer, financial support, encouraging words, and more.**

*In Him,  
Stephen & Kelli*



*We who are strong  
have an obligation to bear  
with the failings of the weak, and not  
to please ourselves. Let each of us  
please his neighbor for his good, and  
not to please ourselves.  
Romans 15:1-2*



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We spent much of November traveling, and we are so thankful to be home!  
We'd love for you to read more of our adventures on the blog, including:

**the highs & lows of our time in the jungle**

**Stephen's latest video for Christmas!**

**the snake stories**

**how thankful we were to be home**

**the blessings and challenges of our community**

**Kelli's first Thai 5k**

*(Click any of the lines above to link to these blog posts.)*

We are so thankful for a few weeks at home to celebrate the Christmas season  
with our neighbors and Mae Sot community before we head out to England for the holidays!

We hope you have a very merry Christmas season--  
wishing you all a refreshing and life-giving holiday!

*Stephen & Kelli*

