

Happy New Year!

We saw 2015 to a beautiful end and had a lovely Christmas season in Mae Sot. We included a countdown of events on the blog (linked below), where you can read about:

**our community meal for 350 on Saturday**

**our bilingual candlelit carols night on Sunday**

our busy days of packing gifts on **Monday** and **Tuesday**

**our Wednesday of baking Christmas bread**

**our Christmas Eve** of doctor visits, Flour & Flower deliveries, and a Christmas play  
& then **our Christmas** delivering around 200 gifts!

Each year, it is so fun to see how much our relationships have grown in the community as we pick out gifts for friends. It's amazing to think this is our fifth community Christmas and we're beginning our sixth year with these neighbors on our street! Pray with us for all that God has in store for this year.

Oh, are we're still studying language. While we do get credit for the fact that we are still studying week after week, please do keep praying for effective communication and the deeper relationships that can bring!



Volume 53 :: January 2016

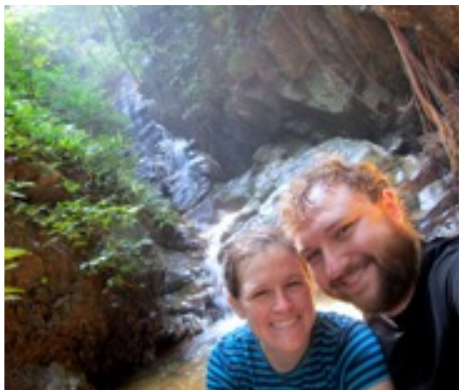


Earlier in 2015, we launched **The House Collective** with a vision to love our neighbors as Christ loves us. Our little house in Mae Sot has been open—literally and figuratively—to integrate our ministry and friendships. Within The House Collective, we have different areas that we focus on, and we want to help you see and understand those as well. Look to this space for the next few months as we try to highlight different areas of our day-to-day and show you the names and faces and stories that are our collective!



It has been a great start to the year!

This month brought the coldest week of weather in over a decade in northern Thailand, and it certainly was cold! We have no heat sources, so our houses leak in every bit of the 50 degree weather. However, our neighbors' shanty-like homes were even colder, so we delivered blankets throughout the community. You can read more about this opportunity [here](#).



We are continuing with our weekly House Church, now walking through the stories of the Gospels until Easter. We are all praying together for Aung Moe's sight to improve, and we'd love to have you praying with us! You can read more about [House Church](#) on the blog, where there will also be an update on Aung Moe in the next few days.

We are also still baking bread every Thursday and delivering both bread & flowers every Friday. We have just expanded into tortillas, and if we can continue to maintain this level of orders, we will be adding a new community member soon. That will bring us to four community members benefitting financially from our little Flour & Flower deliveries!

We hosted our monthly OneHouse worship night, which continues to bless us in so many ways. Stephen is working on expanding this into multilingual worship opportunities, which we'll share more about in coming months. You can read more [here](#).

Oh, and we're still studying language. That will probably always be true! (Did you know you have a solar plexus? Apparently our Burmese teacher can teach us English, too! Read the story [here](#).)

We've recently been praying over James 4:13-15,

"Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit'—yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, **'If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.'**"

This has become our prayer for 2016, and we've laid out our goals for the year with this above it. We'd love for you to join us in praying this over our lives here.



*Over the next few months, we'll be highlighting different areas of The House Collective. See the next page for a look inside Playhouse!*





This is where we first got to know this community: in play.  
In a neighborhood full of instability, we want to provide a safe place for creativity,  
learning, and fun.

This takes on many forms:

in a playground outside, which we added late last year  
a game of Memory on the porch on any given day  
Legos in the morning before the school bus comes to the “bus stop”—our house  
soccer ball practice against our wall  
after school play with puzzles, coloring, dolls, and trains

Every Tuesday, we are also joined by another expatriate family, who come to play and bring special activities—Tangrams, color by numbers, and more.

During the day, a few of the kids are unable to go to school for different reasons. The most common is older children, mostly girls, having to watch the youngest siblings. Just this month we started a new little activity of providing them with schoolwork during the day, trying to encourage learning despite the circumstances. You can read more about this little endeavor [here](#).



We also try to just have an open space as needs arise. Sometimes that means our doors are suddenly open when we hear fighting across the street, so we can welcome in the kids and distract them from the reality of arguing parents and neighbors. Other times kids will stay late to avoid a drunk parent; giving them a safe place to be until drunkenness leads to passing out. And just this week, it meant welcoming the kids in during a rare cold front, giving them a warmer place, blankets to bundle up under, and a warm lunch of rice and curry. (You can read the blog [here](#).)



Although Playhouse is mostly targeted to the neighborhood children, we also want to give fun to the adults! We have recently started hosting regular Bingo nights and movie nights, just to bring light-heartedness into the community, even hope!

As with everything in our lives here, it is always changing. Our goal stays the same: to show life abundant, to show the love and hope of Christ, and to love well.

In the coming year, we hope to begin hosting events specifically for the youth, such as game nights and movie nights. We'd like to provide an opportunity for the older siblings that often get so much responsibility put on their shoulders, as well as a safe place for teenagers to have fun.

We are also praying for additional help that would enable us to have Playhouse open every day after school, which we can now only manage a few days a week. Join us in praying for our Playhouse!



**I think we could say this is the best it's ever been in our community.**

It has been incredible to see Housewares happen every week, with bread and flowers delivered around town, conversations had, and three families benefitting from the profits. It has been incredible to see families growing and babies born and to *know* these families like they are our own. It has been incredible to see OneHouse worship nights grow every month, hear friends tell us it is ministering to them, and **hear our neighbor kids singing songs** to Jesus throughout the week. It has been incredible to see House Church meet every week, to see the kids remembering stories of the Bible, and **to see them praying for each other**. It has been incredible to see the doors God has opened through the messy, desperate nature of House Calls. It has been incredible to see kids play safely, to help kids grow, and to love them like they are our own in our always-open Playhouse. It has been incredible to be able to bless and encourage families On the House when they need it most.



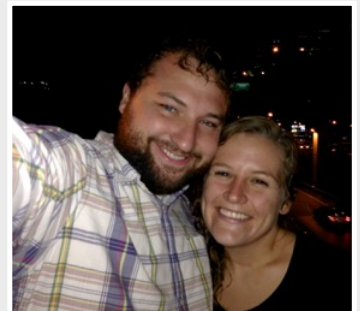
It has been so good!

And yet I could also say it is the most difficult it has ever been in the community. This is so far beyond us, so far beyond our capacities, and **it's messy**, to say the least. We want you to know the stories, both the good and the bad, **the fun youth nights and the domestic disputes**. We want you to know how much we need help!

Thankfully, God has led people to give generously, and He has provided for us to continue living here. But our biggest ask—yet, again!—please pray for this community. Take a minute now, or write it down somewhere; set off a reminder every day. Pray for The House Collective, pray for us, pray for our marriage, pray for our language study, pray for these families; pray for direction. If you'd like a photo of family or individual to pray for, send us an email and we'd love to make that possible. We really do want to cover this house, this road, and this community in the prayers of the Church.

**Thank you for praying with us!**

*Each month we're highlighting different areas of The House Collective.  
See the next page for a look inside House Church!*







In June of last year, we started what we call House Church. With the help of Kelvin, Laura, and three Burmese high school students, we have been walking through the stories of the Bible. Each Wednesday, we meet with three Burmese teenagers from a local children's home, and discuss the Bible story with them. They then return on Thursday to help us translate it to the community. After an hour of Bingo to bring everyone together, we review questions from last week (with prizes, of course) and tell a new story. We ask for prayer requests, pray together, and then have a snack.



Last year we worked our way through the Old Testament, building up to the Christmas story on Christmas Eve. This year we have been going through the Gospels, and we are just arriving to the Easter story, which we'll share over Easter week. It has been incredible to see how God has worked out the details and given us great opportunities to share our faith with our neighbors. Recently, we had the opportunity to teach on the parable of the sower, and then we each planted seeds in "good soil." We also talked about Jesus feeding the multitudes, and we shared two fish and five loaves for a snack—it helps to have a bread business!

There is another church in town that comes to get the kids for children's church every Saturday, and every week, the kids of a few families are not permitted to go. This week, I asked a thirteen-year-old, They They, why she didn't go. She told me her grandmother & grandfather, her primary caregivers, don't allow her to. And yet, she comes every week to our House Church and remembers all the stories, because her parents know and trust us. Later that afternoon she brought her plant by to show us the growth! This is precisely the opportunities we are praying for—that even families who are devout Buddhists or Muslims will see Christ in us and feel his presence in our home.



### **We are desperate for your prayers over House Church!**

Please pray with us for this coming Easter season, as all through March we are sharing the stories of the Passover, crucifixion, and resurrection.

Please pray with us for Aung Moe, as we have been praying for him every week as a community. **Read his story here** and pray for his sight to be restored.

Please pray with us for the next season of House Church. In April, we will finish this overview of the Bible, and we are praying for what the next season will look like. We need the Lord to lead us!

Please pray for the adults in our community, that they would be drawn to spiritual discussion. Pray for us to have wisdom of how to reach them.

Please pray for the kids that come each week—and the adults that loiter outside the window! Pray for them to memorize the Scriptures, to remember the stories, and for the truth to fall on good soil!



In mid-March, our dear friend, Daw Ma Oo, was arrested at a local night market where she was selling flowers. It is a complicated situation: she is illegal by national standards but pays a bribe locally to “legally” sell flowers. While this is acceptable with local police systems, there was a surprise visit by national soldiers and truckloads of people were arrested. At the time she was with her 15-year-old son who was not arrested, and had to return home to tell the family. She was told she would be in prison for 45 days, and they would not accept bribes.



This was very trying for the family, as she is the main wage-earner for a household of seven. She also sells & delivers flowers with us every Friday with our Flour & Flower deliveries. As always, God used a sad situation to give us more ways to love this family. We were able to give them needed rice and helped the family continue to deliver flowers on Fridays. We also hired Daw Ma Oo’s daughter-in-law to help us with bread baking on Thursdays, and another daughter-in-law to make sausages for House Church snacks.



Yesterday, the police accepted a bribe and Daw Ma Oo was able to return home after 12 days. We are so thankful she is back, for the family and for her own health.

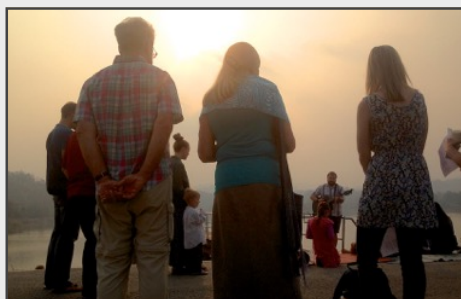
And now, we continue to pray for wisdom going forward. Since we arrived over five years ago, things have consistently been inconsistent. The situation is always changing along the border, whether it be seasons of fighting, seasons of arrest, and seasons of silence. With most of our neighbors being illegal, we are praying through our role—what risks to take and what the future holds. Please pray for wisdom in all these decisions—big and small, today and in coming months.

One of our goals for The House Collective this year was to celebrate Easter well—as a couple, in our neighborhood, and in the expat community.



We used a homemade version of Resurrection Eggs at House Church, where we had a number of bags with different items inside to tell the story. We also did it outside in hopes of including more adults in the story, and concluded with a large snack of sausages—a local favorite.

Later in the weekend, we had our monthly OneHouse worship night, followed by a sunrise Easter service at a nearby reservoir. It was great to see Stephen able to use his musical talents to bring people together in worship.



At House Church this week following Easter, we shared the story of the ascension and of Jesus sending out the disciples to the ends of the earth. Kelli was able to share how we feel God has sent us to Mae Sot to this street to love these neighbors and share truth with them. Pray with us for all of these families, that they will see God’s love for them in all the day-to-day time with us.



We had so much fun welcoming back our friend, John, who we met in Mae Sot almost four years ago.

He was great with the community and a hit among the kids!





Most aspects of our lives here came out of little opportunities that grew larger than we imagined. The idea of Housewares is that we all create and produce, and we want to do that collectively. How could we use economic development and skills to further relationships?

Two years ago, half of our neighbors were forced off of their land and put in a tight financial position. One family began selling flowers in the neighborhood—mostly to us!—to make extra money. An idea blossomed that their might be other foreigners in town who wouldn't want to tread the central market, but enjoy beautiful bouquets delivered to their homes weekly. Flower deliveries started, visiting five to ten homes each Friday with a carload of beautiful flowers.

The following year, two friends were in debt. The wife took a job working 12 hour days on her feet at a local factory, while pregnant, for \$4 a day. Shortly after they learned she was pregnant, she was fired; they planned to split up, with her going back to the village to have the baby and him working double-time here. We proposed the idea of a



bread business—she could make some money; they could continue to live together; and we'd help them make a plan for their debt. And a bread business was started, hiring two more women in the community!

We now have Flour & Flower deliveries stopping at about 20 homes or offices every Friday. We still deliver beautiful flower bouquets, but now also sell three types of bread and tortillas. It assists four women and their families.

Everything is baked in our kitchen on Thursdays, and the women pay us cost for ingredients. Profits go directly to the women in two forms: they are paid a good wage every week, and the excess is put into a savings account for them, to be given at the end of the year. One woman also started saving with us, giving us about \$6 of her earnings each week. She now has saved over \$100!



In all, we are now able to help four different women, all mothers, each week! We hope they are able to learn how to interact with foreigners, the basic finances of business, savings, and simply just to share life together. We find that the times over baking and time in the car gives us time to talk about everything from church to husbands to our families to debt to domestic abuse.

We are still exploring how to expand Housewares. We hope to find more ways to incorporate the skills this community has to offer into Mae Sot and even into your communities. Pray for Housewares, particularly for:

- additional expats to make growth possible
- funds to initiate new projects
- the details of working with illegals
- wisdom in balancing business & relationships



One of our Flour & Flowers employees, Pyo Pyo, had her baby this month! Meet Aung San, the chubbiest Burmese baby we've met yet. You can read more about this amazing family and growing friendship [here](#).



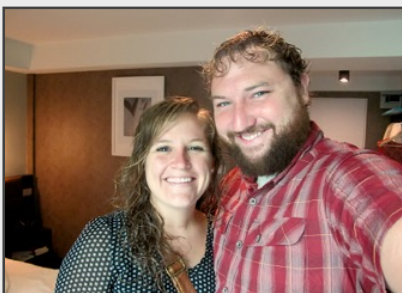
We are two weeks into our first summer program! Two days a week we are teaching English, math, songs, and Bible verses with the help of four teenagers from a nearby children's home. Despite the well-over 100 degree weather, we have about thirty kids from the community participating, and they are surprisingly excited to study over their school holiday. You can see more photos of the summer program [here](#).



We continue to bake bread and roll tortillas every Thursday, to be delivered with flower bouquets every Friday. Kelli is usually the one in the kitchen overseeing hand-washing, quality control, and helping to roll countless tortillas while Stephen has the opportunity to love on these families in other ways, like helping with the crying babes. It is pretty incredible to see what doors God opens as we just do life alongside our neighbors. You can read about this moment [here](#).



And sometimes we just watch clothes wash and learn about how machines work! This little guy fell in love with our washing machine this month and learned about headlamps. You can read about our washing machine adventures [here](#).



We would love to have your prayers for us in the coming month! We will be finishing up this season of House Church and praying through the next opportunity. We also continue to be aware that most of our work in our neighborhood is entirely beyond us: we need Him leading us, equipping us, and working in the hearts of our neighbors. Please pray with us! You can read more about our prayers for this [here](#).





Of all the aspects of life in this community, House Calls is likely the most unpredictable. It takes on new forms each day, and involves, but is not limited to:

- providing paracetamol for fevers, creams for infections from the water, and rehydration for diarrhea; any routine illnesses
- bandaging up children after stepping on glass or falling; bandaging up wounds from bicycle accidents; providing regular dressing changes after major accidents
- taking children and adults to the clinic for routine needs, baby checkups, and vaccinations
- emergency trips to the hospital or clinic for difficulty breathing, burns, accidents, or domestic abuse
- rides to the clinic for women in labor and return trips with new babes!
- teaching about basic healthcare

We usually take multiple trips a week to the local clinic, and the doctors certainly know us. This month, this included **two trips for two new babies being born!** We were able to get them there in time, visit them in recovery, and help them get home.

Sometimes House Calls have been more messy: **we've now had three stabbings and a number of domestic dispute injuries.** We've helped to transport a few already-deceased elderly, which isn't my favorite task.

Honestly, House Calls is challenging. It isn't our skill set or training; we only offer what we have learned simply growing up around medical development—how to treat minor symptoms and how to evaluate when it is a major issue, how to clean a wound and change a bandage, and most importantly, how to drive a car to get to someone who knows more! Beyond that it is unpredictable and literally the *messiest* aspect of our lives.



We might choose to eliminate it altogether if we could.

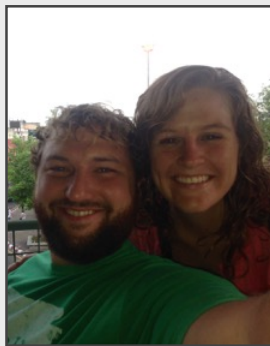
But in reality, we all get hurt. We all get sick. And often, this is when we are weakest. Despite the horrible stories and scars that come from House Calls, it is also where we have made the most connections with our neighbors. Some of the most closed people are much more open in desperation. Some of the most skeptical people find it easier to trust when you are willing to help them take care of their sick child.

So we keep our doors open for House Calls. We will answer knocks to our bedroom window in the middle of the night and move things around to make another trip to the clinic. It isn't likely to go away anytime soon, but it is likely to provide wide open doors into a new family or another broken situation.

Pray with us for House Calls!

- **Pray for Aung Moe**, for his vision to continue to improve. We are all praying for it as a House Church, and we would love to see him healed and able to work!
- Pray for wisdom in every medical situation that arises, as we are minimally trained. Pray for someone to join us that has more medical knowledge & experience.
- Pray for the horrible things we often see through House Calls. Kelli, in particular, has dealt with some nightmares and other issues after some of the more tragic experiences. Pray for healing from what has been seen and for continued strength to love each person and give thanks in every circumstance.





As I look over photos and blogs from the last month, I'm exhausted even thinking about it all. It was a full month—full of so many good things! God is really growing so much here in our neighborhood! We'll tell you highlights here, but if you'd like to know more of the stories behind it all, **click here to visit our blog.**



We completed **our first summer program** with flying colors. It was so much fun to spend the time with the kids and encourage them. Kelli also had the opportunity to teach one little boy how to do basic addition!

We also completed our **House Church** program, where we spent a year walking through the Bible story by story, laying a foundation. We have now **connected with our local Burmese church** and we are so excited to see things unfolding. Our pastor & his wife are now visiting the community weekly to host a small program for the children as well as picking up everyone for Sunday School. We are so thankful for their willingness to invest in our neighborhood and support God's work here. Pray with us for more adults to be interested in our faith!

Through connections with another organization in town, the young girls in our community were gifted 20 hand-sewn, locally-made **dresses**! It is amazing to see how God provides from every direction in our lives.

**Flour & Flowers** continues to grow—we now have three young mothers baking bread and one mother selling flowers. We have **expanded our bread menu** to include four types of bread each week in addition to tortillas, our most popular product; and we're adding cinnamon rolls once a month starting this Friday! Sales continue to grow and friends continue to make it all profitable every week!

While some of our dear friends were kicked off their land this month, we were able to help them find a home and it has opened new doors for us. We are currently painting and reorganizing to expand the community area in our home—we're officially making a community center, to begin being open two days a week. (The "community area" will now be *most* of our home!) We were given three computers and are currently in search of sewing machines. We hope to open the area in July and begin with a few computer and sewing classes. The mother of that family will now be working as a manager of the community center. On the blog, you can read more of **the ins and outs of their story** and how **we're jumping into a community center!**





On the House is really On the Church—it is our opportunity to bless because we've been blessed. It is our opportunity to show our neighbors what life abundant could be. It is our way to show them that God sees them and provides in big and small ways. This looks different from week to week, month to month, and family to family.

Weekly, it includes food for our blind neighbor, Aung Moe. He is unable to work, and yet we want him to know that God ensures he will be fed, just as God looks after the sparrows and lilies! Often, we use On the House to host a community meal for everyone in the neighborhood.

For a season, we went to the tea shop weekly. This opened countless doors in our community by giving us an uninterrupted hour to talk, learn & practice Burmese, and get into the lives of our neighbors. It led to the start of Flour & Flowers and initiated relationships with two of the women currently making bread.

Sometimes On the House includes unexpected gifts. I might buy a snack for the kids while we wait for their mom at the clinic; or a balloon for the child who came with me alone because their parents didn't want to. One day we bought shoes for a child who didn't have any. Another day we bought a charcoal stove for a woman at the end of her rope. For a few months we provided food for a family after the husband was hurt on the job and unable to walk or work.

For about a year we have been hosting Bingo every week before church, using On the House to provide prizes—snacks, laundry detergent, soap, toothbrushes & toothpaste.

This month, when some friends of ours were forced off their land and had to take down their hut, we helped them find temporary housing. We provided one month of rent to help them make ends meet. And even today, we welcomed a new baby into the community and gave a gift to the family. We are working to make births a joyous, celebratory occasion, and this is a small way we can show our love and excitement.

Really, we love On the House. This allows us to love our neighbors as Jesus has loved us. We love looking for little opportunities to change someone's day and make them feel loved, just as he loves us and gives us good gifts!





Housewares is continuing to grow! We are really thankful we are able to financially assist four women each week, and we also have a savings account accumulating for the three women baking bread! We offer cinnamon rolls once a month, and that was this week: we made 13 loaves of bread, 100 tortillas, & 118 cinnamon rolls with icing, delivered around town with flower bouquets! We are so thankful God continues to make this work!



Early this year, we began attending a local Burmese church. It is entirely in Burmese, which has a higher-level language in formal settings, so we are the only foreigners and we've been floundering to follow along and participate and get to know people.

Recently, we met with the pastor & his wife to talk about partnering with the church in our community. We wanted to ask them about helping with a bible study. In addition to starting a bible study, they went above and beyond what we could have asked or imagined—because they serve the God we do! They started a bible study on Saturday evenings at 5pm at our house. They bring all the materials, sing songs, memorize verses, and share stories.

Miraculously, there are adults attending and listening.

There are also some children coming that are not allowed to attend church, but are allowed to attend things at our house. During this time, the pastor spends time with Aung Moe, the blind man in our neighborhood. It is so exciting to see these relationships and opportunities unfolding before us.

On Sundays, the church comes every week in the afternoon to pick up the children for Sunday School.

The pastor then drives everyone back home, and returns in the evening at 6pm to pick up adults that are interested. So far, we have one family! This family actually lived about two kilometers away from us and we met them in a few medical situations. They recently moved into an open hut across the street & are Christians excited to attend church with us!

This month, the church also came to host an eye clinic at our house. They spent an entire day checking fifty-three adults in the community and provided 50 free pairs of eyeglasses! This was provided for Burmese & Thai throughout the neighborhood and further.

We really couldn't be more excited for how God has provided through this church. They have been such an encouragement to us and have been so supportive of our work in the neighborhood. We are so excited to see where God is taking House Church: in our house & down our street!



We spent the beginning weeks of June renovating the front area of our house, and we have a community center officially set up! We hope to have regularly open hours and put some classes into place in July for computers and sewing. Please pray for the details of this unfolding & for funding in these expanding projects.

We were so excited to welcome visitors for two weeks at the end of June! Kelli's sister & brother-in-law came to visit us, and we loved showing off our little town and community in Mae Sot. We also made visits to Chiang Mai and Bangkok, which was a fun respite and full of adventures. We do love visitors, so let us know if you're up for a day of baking and an elephant ride :)







The last area of The House Collective we want to highlight is OneHouse. It is likely the most obscure or indirect, but perhaps what we're most passionate about. OneHouse is the idea of a unified church—one body worshipping one God in one Spirit.

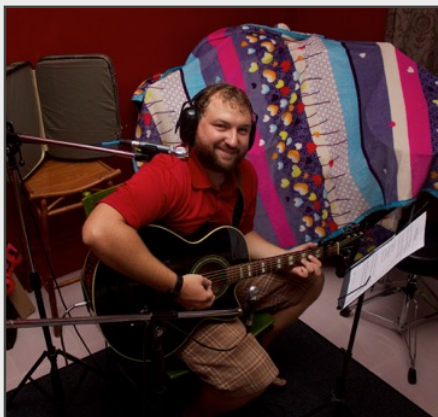
We live in a very diverse area, and this is something God particularly placed on Stephen's heart a few years ago. He would like to be a vessel for unification, using his particular gifts in music and recording. Through the Kingdom Mission Fund, we received a grant in 2015 to begin this project. The grant is helping to fund the first album—which we hope to release early next year—which will be translated into at least three local languages. We hope the English version helps to fund distribution of local languages into local churches around us.

Beyond this first album, the goal is much broader: first, we hope to expand to additional albums, including traditional hymns, modern worship music, and local music. Second, we hope to expand to multiple languages. With Stephen's knowledge of recording and access to the original music, adding new vocals in another language is relatively easy. We hope to reach more people groups with accessible worship in this way. And lastly, Stephen's vision is to equip the local worship leaders. He wants to make all the music & chords available, so that local leaders are equipped to lead worship in their own language and particularly in multi-lingual settings. Like I said, it's broad. It's full of dreams and ideas and hopes. For now, it looks like recording sessions and finding translators.

And, it also looks like worship among expats in our community. In Mae Sot, we felt there was so much disunity among the church. In mid-2015, we began hosting a monthly worship night in our home to bring multiple cultures, backgrounds, and churches together. Currently it is led in English, but Stephen is working with contacts to add additional languages, particularly as the OneHouse albums expand. It has been an amazing blessing to relationships in Mae Sot, and we are seeing twenty to forty people enter our home each month! This includes the neighbors, which absolutely love Stephen's singing. It is so exciting to see Stephen in his element and using his gifts to serve so many.

Please pray with us for OneHouse. It is ambitious, and it is often a side project to the immediate needs for medical attention or other crises. Pray with us:

- for multi-lingual translators and musicians.
- for instruments and technology needed! Stephen is currently building his own electric drum set (to make it affordable and good quality)—and that is no small feat in a little border town!
- for the first album to successfully reach many churches and bring unity between languages
- for the vision God has for OneHouse





There are too many good things to share, and that is a very good challenge to have!

We have officially opened our community center! We are still sorting out the kinks, but we are hoping to have the doors open from 4-6 on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, & Saturday. The kids come for homework help, to read books, or to play games. They are learning and absolutely love Sorry, Pass the Pigs, & Uno! We also have two



computers available with very basic programs—a Word equivalent, a math practice game, a typing practice game, & an art program—for the community to learn & practice their computer skills. We are currently working on training everyone on the basics and rules, and then they'll be able to sign up to use them in 30 minute slots. All of this is coordinated and possible with the help of Thida, who comes to the open hours. She is lovely and so willing to help. She helps us keep the kids sorted, particularly as Stephen and I are helping with homework or teaching a computer skill. It also allows us to come and go as needed, so that the house can be open even while we are traveling. While things are still unfolding, it is the beginning of something good, and we are excited!

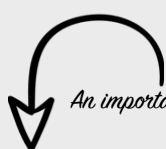


Our Burmese church has been such a blessing to us! They are coming each Saturday, at the end of our community hours, and providing a bible study for the kids and some adults. They also come on Sunday afternoons to pick up the kids for a Sunday School program. On Sunday evening, we go for an adult service, followed by a shared meal. For two weeks in row we have had large groups—thirteen & sixteen people piled in our car—to join us for church! We are really thankful for the time with these families and for the opportunity for them to know other Christians, particularly that speak their own language.



We continue to host a worship night once a month in our home, and we had such an amazing evening this month. We had nearly fifty people crowded into our home, of so many ethnicities and backgrounds; and we have all come to Mae Sot in different ways. We were able to sing a some songs in both Burmese & English, which is just such a beautiful way to worship!

Next week, Kelli will begin attending a 10-week sewing training with three Burmese women—one is a good friend of ours from bible study and two are friends from the community. They will all be learning the basics of sewing & mending, as well as learning five projects. The two women from our community will then continue working with us, sewing one day a week at our house. We hope to provide an economical way for our neighbors to have clothes fixed or made, as well as make a few products for the States. We are excited for another opportunity to pour into two more families with additional income, particularly working with young mothers that struggle to work full-time jobs. With four women benefiting from Flour & Flowers, one woman paid to work in the community center, and two women sewing—that is seven families we are able to help in a practical, financial way as we deepen relationships with them! We are so excited for these opportunities that continue to unfold.



*An important business note below!*

Continue to pray for all the opportunities God is putting before us!  
And continue to pray for us, that we would be wise in what we do.

*Stephen & Kelli*



Our stateside organization, Every Nation, is in the process of joining with their sister organization, Beautiful Feet. While nothing will change for us—the leadership remains the same & their commitment to us continues—it does mean **there will be a few changes for our financial supporters.**

In the future, if you would like to donate to our work here, visit [beautifulfeet.us](http://beautifulfeet.us). You can donate to 0328 - Stephen & Kelli Spurlock under Individual Support, which will go into our personal account. You can also give to 0340 - The House Collective under Special Projects, which will go into our community fund—covering food for our blind friend, salaries for the community center workers, medical needs, and the new sewing program.

Checks can still be sent, but now need to be made out to Beautiful Feet and sent to:  
3720 South Hiwassee Road, Choctaw, Oklahoma 73020

Please put our individual number, 0328, or The House Collective number, 0340, in the memo line.

For those who have online donations already set up, they will be automatically transferred to Beautiful Feet and very little should change. At the end of this year, you will receive a donation report from two different organizations.

For those who are giving by check, they will need to be sent to the new address. However, they have arranged for things to be forwarded for a season, so not to worry.

If you have any questions at all, please don't hesitate to email us at [thespurlocks@thehousecollective.org](mailto:thespurlocks@thehousecollective.org).

We are sorry for any inconvenience this causes, but we're also so thankful we are partnered with such an organized crew! They have worked so hard to make this doable and easy for us, as well as support us in any way they can. We are also so thankful for the many who give to us month after month and year after year to make our lives here possible. Thank you for making each community day, every conversation in Burmese, and every trip to church possible!

*Stephen's 30th birthday is just around the corner*

on 17 September, and I would love for him to see how celebrated he is,  
even living on the other side of the world!

Since we do live way over here, it takes some time for mail to make its way.

**Can all of you take a minute *this week* to jot a birthday note to Stephen  
and pop it in the mail?**

**PO Box 157  
Mae Sot, Tak 63110  
Thailand**

Here's to hoping he doesn't read the final edit of this update!

Thanks for sending him some love, *Kelli*

In January of this year, we booked a holiday to go to the beach in southern Thailand. The tickets were a ridiculous price, and we managed to buy two flights for each of us, both ways for under \$100. But this required us to guess at a random date in the future to go: so we chose Stephen's 30th and assumed we'd need a rest by the time September hit.

About two weeks ago, we looked at each other and said something along the lines of, "We were so close in guessing. But just a few weeks too late..."

Because you see, we're writing this out of exhaustion. We hit our wall: the wall where we run out of energy to live in this neighborhood. The lowest parts of our lives here—the endless trips to the clinic, the requests for money and jobs, the hungry kids, the constant desperation that surrounds you—begin to slap you in the face day after day.

I can't really describe it except to say that it is blinding. We are in the midst of so much good—so many things I know are blessed and growing and amazing! I am in awe of how much God is doing right in front of us and simultaneously wanting to wake up anywhere else each and every morning.



Our community center—or Open House—is going so well. The kids are visibly improving on math and typing; they are loving the games and activities. We are able to help with homework and see great improvement in their English. They are learning new games and poring over books. They have a safe place to go after school.

The sewing training we started this month is going wonderfully, and we've each already made a pair of shorts, a bag, and we're mid-way through a shirt! Kelli is also really enjoying the time with the women as they are all students and she is able to just spend an afternoon with

friends each week. They are learning so many skills, and we have already been able to place one of the women in a full-time job at a great-paying local organization!



Our neighbors continue to go to church with us! We are consistently making two trips each week and squeezing in 10-20 friends to join us. This is absolutely mind-blowing, and we are praying for God to meet with them. And while sometimes our church experiences are surprising, we couldn't be more thankful for the church partnering with us in this community.

Flour & Flowers is at an all-time high, and the women are thrilled! We are selling enough each week to pay four people (and thus benefit four families!), while also putting away money in savings for them at the end of the year. This is absolutely incredible and far more successful than we ever imagined.

Our OneHouse worship nights on the last Saturday of each month are filling our home. We are consistently having over forty people crowd in to worship, and it's beautiful. The neighbor kids also love this and have even memorized some of the songs. (And while we are still working on the concept of a tune, it's a beautiful sound!)



As we consider all of this, it is evident that God is here and he is moving in this community. We are so thankful to see him meeting needs and answering prayers and providing ways for us to love these families. He is a good, good Father and He is here with us; rejoice with us for what He has done and is doing!

Also, we want to ask you to pray with us this month. Pray for our ten days away from the community, that we would find deep rest. Pray for miracles. Pray for wisdom in the messy, complicated situations. Pray that amidst the suffering we would carry the incredible hope of Christ.







## Thank you SO VERY MUCH

to all who sent cards and packages for Stephen's birthday! We had so much fun celebrating on the beach and it meant so much to him to read your kind and encouraging words.



You can see more photos from our trip to Phuket in [this blog post](#)!



## Open House continues to Thrive!

We are seeing so many kids and adults in and out of our house each week. Even the adults are loving a chance to play Uno! It has opened up so many doors for conversations and deeper relationships, as well as learning new skills. It also is a very fun way to be involved in the community amidst some of the sad situations.



As many of you know, our ministry here is simple: we open our doors and live life with our neighbors, and we see where that takes us. And as simple as that is, it is often very complicated. Kelli wrote a couple blog posts this month that capture some of the challenges really well. One was written while we were on vacation; the other upon our return to a few messy situations in the neighborhood. Take a few minutes to read about challenges we are facing and saying a prayer for us as we deal with the broken situations around us.



## A NEW CAR!

An expat family in town is moving back to the States in October and has gifted us their car! Our current car — affectionately called Zuk—has allowed us to expand our ministry in incredible ways. We have been able to start Flour & Flower deliveries, now continuing over two years. It has made countless trips to the clinic and brought home many new babies safely! Right now it makes two trips to and from church each week. We have felt the need for a more reliable and larger vehicle, but we weren't sure exactly how to go about it in an affordable and wise way. We are so thankful for this gift, and it couldn't have come at a more opportune time! We are now the proud owners of a Toyota Sport Rider, an 7-seat diesel SUV with 4-wheel drive, leather seats, and a much better engine than our little Zuk! We are really thankful for this gift, and it has also allowed us to give Zuk away to another expat family in need of a second car. It's amazing to see how God continues to provide for all of us!



This is a picture of our last Flour & Flowers delivery in Zuk— three adults, two children, 23 loaves of bread, 160 tortillas, and 11 bouquets of flowers!

So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three;  
but the greatest of these is love.  
1 Corinthians 13:13

Amidst so many broken marriages and families, Stephen plays a really unique and important role in this community. That has never been more clear than this season. The community has the opportunity to see him provide for us, to see him care for me, to see him love the children in an upright and respectable way, to see him sober, to see him not abusive. I have had more conversations than I could count trying to explain why he doesn't beat me and why we do love each other so much. He plays a vital role to break into domestic disputes and defend the kids against various kinds of abuse.



Will you pray for him this month? Pray for this incredible opportunity he has to show the Father's love in a truly unique way. Pray for the respect & leadership he has in the community. Pray for the young boys to see him as an example, and for the young girls to see what they deserve and how they should be treated. Pray for his language skills to expand so he can pastor these families in more ways. I feel like God has placed Stephen here for such a time as this amongst these families, and we need people praying faithfully amidst such brokenness.

I had the idea of having a newsletter typed up and ready before [our trip to Bangkok](#) or we discussed putting together a video for something different. And now it's over a week into November, and I have none of these things put together! Instead, we leave today—in a few hours—for a trip to Burma, where will be visiting friends and visiting the towns where most of our neighbors are from.

Instead, I will admit this past month has swallowed us—with both heartache and opportunity! It has been [full of deep sadnesses](#), that have also brought the joys that you appreciate so much more in their light! As there is too much to share it all, I'll link to the blog in a few places, where Kelli has included more photos and stories.

:: In an extremely close and heartbreaking [domestic violence situation](#), Kelli's relationship with the woman has grown incredibly. We are secretly giving her money weekly to buy food right now, as her husband isn't providing enough for her and the kids; and this week God began opening the doors for her to work! We are working out the details of her sewing in our home as an outsourced role of another local ministry. This allows her to be in our home regularly, to bring her baby with her work, and to earn a living for herself. We have also started the process of replacing the tooth that was knocked out, which gave Kelli the chance to be a [dental assistant](#) this week!



:: After one of our 11-year-old friends [moved to Bangkok](#), we were able to see her this past week! It was quite a journey, but [we found her](#). And it meant more to all of us than we could say!

:: [Open House](#) continues to thrive, bringing so many kids and even adults into our home for [fun and games](#). It is quite a sight to see four mothers and grandmothers gathered around playing Go Fish on the floor!

:: Flour & Flowers is also growing exponentially, and we are praying for what the next season holds! We have had some difficult conversations recently, but have had the opportunity to do real life with these four women and show them God's love, both in kindness and honesty, helping and asking for help. We are praying God continues to grow these relationships and lead us, as this is far beyond us.

Please continue to pray with us! We are excited for the upcoming holiday season, which is so much fun in the neighborhood. The kids are already drawing pictures of Christmas trees and asking about whether we'll be here and what we'll be doing! Continue to pray that these relationships—built over games, holidays, small businesses, injuries, and all the aspects of life-- show them the love Christ has for them. Pray that we'll have the words we need for conversations and questions, as well as the capacity for the needs around us.

Thank you for praying with us and partnering with us, in a little town so far from where you are. We are beyond grateful! We are so thankful to see Him at work here, and know we are praying for you, too—your families, your churches, your communities.

With love,  
Stephen & Kelli Spurlock



## DO WE HAVE YOUR CURRENT ADDRESS?

Our Christmas cards are going out in the coming week, and we'd love to make sure you get one! Please send us an updated address if you've moved or haven't received a Christmas card from us in the past.



We finished our sewing training this month, and we are so excited that both women from our community have found jobs with these developing skills! Both women are working for non-profit organizations in town—one is working five days a week just a mile from our neighborhood, where she can get to by bicycle; the other will be sewing in our home, where she can work a few days a week with her new baby girl beside her & while her son is at school. We are so thankful for the job opportunities that this training provided, as well as the time Kelli has had to build relationships with them during the classes.

One of the ladies in the sewing class was also the victim of a recent domestic situation, and we've been doing what we can to help her recover. One of her fears was working, as she is illiterate and now lacked a front tooth.

With the help of a local Burmese dentist, we were able to get a great price on replacing her tooth. It is so encouraging to see her confidence returned! You can **read more of this story** on the blog.

This month we were able to **visit Hpa-an**, a town in Burma in region where most of our neighbors are from. We really enjoyed the chance to be in Burma and among more Burmese, where our hearts are. We continue to pray for what God has for us—here in Mae Sot and throughout regions of Burma.



## WOULD YOU CONSIDER GIVING TO OUR COMMUNITY FUND?

Honestly, our personal support is steady and consistent, which we are so thankful for! The House Fund, though—the money that goes directly into the community—has been low recently, while many projects continue to grow, often requiring more funds!

We would love to have more partners making it possible to continue providing food each week for Aung Moe, our blind neighbor; to provide fuel to take our neighbors to church, make Flour & Flower deliveries, and make trips to the clinic; to meet needs in emergency situations, like above, where we've been helping with food and medical; and to provide games and toys for the kids. We also are hoping to expand our space in the coming year to accommodate for the growth of Flour & Flowers, a new sewing project in our home, and the growing popularity of Open House!

We know that God will continue to provide for whatever he places in front of us, and we also want to welcome you join with us. If

you'd like to donate to our ministry fund online, visit **beautifulfeet.us** and click Donate. Under Special Funds & Projects, we are 0340 - The House Collective. Checks can also be made out to Beautiful Feet, with *0340 - The House Collective* in the memo line; then mailed to 3720 S. Hiwassee Road, Choctaw, Oklahoma, 73020.

Every little bit goes directly to our friends and neighbors!