

Generation Peace Academy in Thailand: One Family Under God

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Finally, the day had come. Our overseas country was announced at the workshop before winter break, and at the time, overseas felt like a far off thing. Time passed in the blink of an eye, and we were already two months into the second half of the GPA year. Two nations, Zambia Nation and Thailand Nation, gathered at Morgan's ranch for a two day workshop in order to prepare for overseas. Even this workshop passed by in a blink of an eye, and quickly came the day we had to depart for Thailand. We, as Thailand Nation, were to leave at 10:00 pm on February 7th. As Thailand Nation left a day before Zambia Nation, we had to say our farewells to our beloved friends we won't see for the next 21 days. Armed with the encouraging words of our friends; we set off on a mission unlike anything we've ever experienced.



On our way to the airport, the excitement was palpable. Everyone was cheerfully chatting and playing games together. Mancala, Reversi, chess. Many of us had never gone to a place such as Thailand, and some had never even gone overseas before. Excited to see what the future had to hold, we started our journey to Thailand. Two days of mostly flying in planes, two layovers, and one cool airport in Taiwan later, we arrived in Bangkok, Thailand. The moment we stepped off the airplane, a gust of humidity hit us, the fact that we're in another country finally settling in. Despite it being 1 am, members of the Family Federation welcomed us warmly, even going so far as to prepare a banner for us. Being in their warm embrace, I truly felt as though we were one family under God. Despite not sharing a language, we are still able to connect and have give and take simply because of the common base formed by True Parents. True Parents' vision of uniting around God, though seemingly lofty at times, is actually being realized.

After being picked up at the airport, we got whisked to the church center. Despite it being a relatively long ride, and it being a very late time, everybody was bustling with energy. Filled with excitement at finally being overseas, we all stated our belated studies of the Thai language. Cries of "Sawadika" (Hello in Thai), "Khob Khun Ka" (Thank you in Thai) could be heard all around the 15 seater van the Thai members prepared for us. Laughing loudly and repeating Thai phrases in a way most likely befuddling to

the Thai members, we made our way to the church center, where we finally got our well-deserved break.



After resting from our long trip, we woke up ready to receive orientation. We had a guidance about the history of the Thailand providence. It was honestly very deeply moving to hear what they had to go through. The incredible faith of the members were apparent. They built up something so strong and amazing from nothing, and endured many difficulties to get to where they are today. Hearing how the top leaders of Thailand were incarcerated not even 60 years ago was especially painful, despite hearing about it during the Chosen series. Hearing it from a person whose country was directly involved in this incident was very different from it being briefly mentioned in an episode of Chosen. There is something to be learned from the perseverance and level of faith that the Thai members had, and continue to have to this day. Their faith in God and True Parents are so incredibly strong, and as a person coming from the elder son nation, I sincerely believe it is time to step up and fulfill our responsibilities. This orientation lecture told me that the rest of the world is looking towards the United States to step up, to help, to be the one that helps everybody. And seeing the faith of the members almost put me at shame.



After orientation, we were given the opportunity to have an outing to experience the Thai culture.

The members first took us to a traditional Thai clothing (chut Thai) rental shop. Entering into the shop, it almost felt like we had been transported into another world. A very clean and modern store, with ornate fabrics full of beautiful designs were hanging neatly on racks. Mannequins dressed in fashionably sparkly

tops and distinguished skirts, finished off by intricate jewelry all about could be seen all throughout the store. Stepping in, it was a wondrous atmosphere, seeing clothes never seen before and seeing so many people excited at their transformations. It was so nice to experience a culture so uniquely different from my own, and was a great way to thoroughly enjoy the Thai experience.



With our outfits donned, we had the great honor to visit the Wat Arun, or Temple of Dawn. A main temple area towered in the middle, surrounded by smaller pavilions and gates leading to the temple. From a distance, the temple inspires awe by its sheer size and height, yet as one approaches they are amazed by the intricate design and meticulousness of the temple. Each level of the temple had small statues, each painted with immense detail and expressions. With a rich history in its background, the temple was yet another wonderful way to experience Thai culture.



The following day (February 11) was Sunday, a day where we attended church and interacted with the community. We were invited onto stage to introduce ourselves and also perform a song that we had been preparing for overseas. We listened to a very inspiring sermon from Reverend Kamol about how a life of faith does not end in youth, does not end when you have a family, does not end when you graduate GPA.



He emphasized the fact that a life of faith is eternal and lasting. After the main lecture, we offered our dance to Treasure by Bruno Mars, another performance we had been preparing for overseas. It was amazing to be able to offer something up to the Thailand community, and not just receive one sidedly.



After service we headed off to a soccer field to play games and integrate ourselves into the community. This was personally where I felt a lot of joy and love, as well as a sense of community. Everyone was playing with such a youthful spirit, not mindful of how they were looking or how they acted - we were simply family having fun together. Everyone was able to interact with each other well, despite some language barriers, and it truly felt as if we were family members. It once again made me appreciate all that True Parents have done, managing to create a global family. It's kind of crazy to think that no matter what country you go to, there are people who know who True Parents are, and that you can relate to them so intimately. This was such an amazing time, and I deeply appreciated the Thailand community for organizing this with us.

After that we had a welcoming party, where we got to further hang out with the community and get to know them better. We played a game called Heart to Heart in which there were cards of all different designs scattered on the floor, and everyone picked one out. Then they go and share about why they picked it to another person. It was a great way to start conversations with the Thai Second Gen who attended the party, and was a fun way to connect to them as well. We also randomly picked up cards that have inspirational quotes on them, as a representation of a message that God wants is to receive. It was a

nice and deep internal activity in which we can receive messages that God would like us to have, while interacting with the community.



Monday February 12 was the first day we went out witnessing. It was a little nerve wracking, knowing that our Thai is very limited and we might meet people who can't exactly speak English. In order to prepare our hearts, Reverend Sutin gave a lecture on the Thai way of witnessing. Their meticulous method of witnessing and bringing people into the church impressed me, and I admired the thought that went into it. After being prepared externally, it was time to go witnessing. Breaking up into many different groups of trinities and some quarters, we split off into three different college campuses to witness. As so many other communities, the Thailand community witnessed through surveys. Having a student answer a survey, and then introducing them to a service project we will be conducting was the standard protocol. Even in this short amount of time witnessing, I felt the sincere and warm hearts of the Thai people. Many people stopped and listened to what we had to say, taking time to fill out our surveys. I couldn't help but feel that people in America would be far less willing, or even interested, in listening to what we say. I felt the Thai spirit of wanting to help others out, and it was wonderful to sense this culture of giving and loving.



Tuesday, February 13, was the day that our GPA team split into three. One group remained in Bangkok, one headed off to Surin, and one to Chiang Mai. Bangkok had seven First Years, and Surin and Chiang Mai both had four. Each city had two Captains and two staff. It was saddening to see them off despite knowing that this day would come but I had full faith that my brothers and sisters would do well no matter what mission they had. For those remaining in Bangkok, this day was another witnessing day. Because we had less members, we only went onto two campuses. Observing the different types of college campuses was interesting. The two I went to were both quite different from the ones I've been to in America, especially the one I went to today. I observed many wild animals, such as birds and stray dogs. Getting to experience Thailand even through witnessing was an enjoyable time, and getting to interact with the Thai people was fun despite the language barrier. It was also a great way to experience God's heart, as you desperately hope for a person to come back to God's bosom when you are witnessing to them. That desperation is what had been pushing God to continue the providence of restoration for the path for the past 6,000 years, and is what will continue to propel him forward until every single person on Earth is saved. If you think about it that way, God is so so grateful for us to simply go out and try to bring his children back to him because without us, God wouldn't be able to do anything. So I left the day feeling more of God's heart, but also having this feeling that God truly appreciates what we all do in order to further his providence.

That was honestly probably a lot, but I did have a lot to cover because we've had jam-packed days, but that's all that we've done so far! Come join us in a couple of days to see what the Bangkok center is up to!