

Eric Johansen Letter from Thailand Concerning Earthquake/Tidal Waves of Dec. 25

Dear Pastor Kevin,

Updated on Jan 4, 2005 – see end of this handout for the update from Eric

Arun suwat! As far as the whole story, I will write that today and attach it to an email for you, and that way I can also send it to the folks in Vegas and the Philippines that we know. I will try and do that today, I guess that means you will get it tomorrow.

We have been serving in the hospital for the last three days. As of last night, many people have begun to move out to Phuket and Bangkok so they can get a flight home. The Scandinavians in particular seem to be mostly gone except for those with really severe injuries. We don't even feel like we will spend as much time there today. There are no longer people overflowing into the hallways and extra rooms here in the Phang Nga hospital. We hope to go to Kaw Lak (one of the most badly hit places) today to see what the needs are there.

So far we have been able to share the Lord some, we really didn't begin until yesterday, when the immediate physical needs stabilized a bit. In doing so we also met one precious Dutch saint and were able to encourage her. What a difference, my wife and I were both suspicious that she was a believer even before we shared; right now so many people are angry and complaining and the like, while she was nothing but sweet and grateful for everything, despite losing her mother and having a broken pelvis. We saw her go home last night.

Our biggest need is in this area, we would request prayer from the body there in taking Jesus to these people. Bro, I can't believe the response - I had half expected people to be angry or whatever at this time, but I think that is what Satan would have [us] think, not the reality - every single person we shared with was so grateful to hear of anything spiritual. That in mind, please also pray for the people, because the JW's [Jehovah's Witnesses] are already here, sharing their poison. I overheard one, and was comforted that at least what they share really has no value in a time like this, but on the other hand people are so open...

As far as monetary needs, we have incurred some extra expenses at this time, but we are lacking nothing. Yes, we fell short of the goal for support raising, but the school in the Philippines offered some help in that area as well, 3 hundred dollars a month at present. As support from the U.S. grows, we hope to relieve them of that. God is really good bro. Got to run, I just got news about a possible ride to Kaw Lak in about 30 minutes. Will give you the full report next time I can sit down at a computer. It is about 20 to 8 this morning, I will write again when we get back.

In His service,
Eric and MJ

December 29 update:

Our apologies for not sending this out a few days ago, but there were simply too many things to do.

We have been studying Thai in a city called Hat Yai, about 40 minutes north of the Malaysian border. We finished our first module of Thai language materials on Dec. 23, and arrived here in Phang Nga on the afternoon of the 24th, with the expectation of spending our first Christmas as an old married couple with our friend Mira, and the rest of the body here at Calvary Chapel Phang Nga. Christmas was nice, we celebrated it the Filipino style of staying up until midnight on Christmas eve, and then celebrated by calling our families back in the Philippines or America.

Around eight a.m. on Sunday, we all felt a long but not too terribly strong earthquake. We switched on the radio hoping to hear how strong it had been, but there was nothing, so we went on with our day and went to church that morning.

At about 8 p.m. Mira got a call that people were pouring into the local hospital in relation to a tidal wave caused by what we had thought was a small earthquake. We are about a two hour drive from a place called Kao Lak, an exclusive resort town where Europeans like to come spend the cold season, and one of the worst hit areas. We hurried to the hospital that first night to help with the flood of people who were just then able to pass through the roads on the coast and get medical attention. Phang Nga is the provincial capital, so, having one of the biggest nearby hospitals, they began bringing many battered Europeans here. Most were only wearing sand filled swim suits, and some even less, as many had been on the beach when it happened.

They said they saw the water go out very far at first, and thought it was really interesting, so they went out to look at the trapped fish or crabs, etc. Then they saw the ocean coming back, sort of boiling in the distance. One guy I met survived by wrapping around a palm tree, until the force of the wave was too much. So that first night we worked late washing wounds, helping translate for doctors and nurses, helping people go to the bathroom, drink some water, call home on the cell phone, etc. We went back the next day for more of the same. On the third day it began to not seem so desperate. We only had one English tract, so we went and had duplicates made and took those in to the hospital. Though for some reason I had thought people would be "mad at God" or something like that after something like this, especially since so many people were angry at Thailand and their countries for not having any kind of warning system in place, every single person we gave tracts to was truly grateful.

Most of the Europeans have either gone home now, or are in Phuket or Bangkok waiting to go home, so we have adopted the strategy of helping just one person at a time as much as we can. Yesterday we spent all day with an Italian guy trying to locate his missing family. We went to every hospital in the area, and many temples (all dead bodies go to the temples) trying to identify them if possible. We were able to see the areas hit the worst here in Thailand. Many areas that were once popular hotels and resorts are now just foundations outlining where they stood.

At this writing it is Thursday morning. Last night at about 11, last count was about 60 foreigners left in Phang Nga hospital, and zero left in the outlying hospitals. We are not sure, but are praying about and considering just going back to Hat Yai next week to resume language study, as the worst is over, and I at present have only a minimal ability to communicate with Thai people who have been affected by this.

In His Service,
Eric and MJ Johansen

Note: Eric was being disciplined at our fellowship (Calvary Church of Port Orchard Washington) when he felt a calling to the ministry. He then went to the Calvary Chapel Bible school in California, and continued his training at the Calvary School in the Philippines. At the school, he met his wife, MJ who had spent some time ministering the gospel to the people of Thailand before going to the Calvary School.

Eric came back to our fellowship this fall (2004) for a short furlough to raise funds to go full time in Thailand for the gospel. Our church and a Calvary Chapel in Las Vegas are helping with his support. Eric is still short of the needed support. If you would like to contribute to Eric and MJ, who will be ministering to the people of Thailand with the gospel of Jesus Christ, then you can send your donation to our fellowship with the check or money order made out to Eric Johansen and we will get it deposited into his account.

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January 4, 2005 update

Hey bro,
Have you been following the news of the tsumani lately? It looks really bad. On the news. I have been to the absolute worst, and seen it with

my own two eyes, and I can say that the aid and resources are coming in like a flood. Piling up, with nobody really doing anything with it. I read in an article on MSNBC, a guy from UNICEF was accusing the US and other big countries of being stingy, but I think the real reason they are hesitant to give is because they know the real situation. A lot of people are going to become very rich through this disaster. Please warn the body there to be careful in their giving. There is plenty of aid here, the question now is "will it actually get to those who really need it?" There is a Calvary in India that I think has a good work going, the church here in Phang Nga does too, but I think the needs for that stuff are being pretty well met. We are actually telling groups NOT to come.

Im sure you already suspected as much, the world just being worldly.

God bless,

Eric