

THE BALLOU FAMILY

LAMPHUN, THAILAND



Regarding visa requirements and elections in Thailand:

Dear Friends,

I don't believe I have ever written to you about the requirements of holding a visa here in the country of Thailand. I think we accept the fact that the privilege of living here will come with a certain amount of expense and effort on our part. We are truly grateful for the opportunity to live and labor here in Thailand, so we understand and readily comply with local immigration and government offices.

We also seek to keep our updates focused on positive stories and ministry impact. I know you care about every aspect of life and ministry, but we love to communicate the progress we are seeing. The current climate we are experiencing, however, has been increasingly resistant towards Christian organizations working under the broad label of foundations. The provided reasoning from various government offices is that during Covid a high number of visas were issued "under the table" and so they are actively tightening restrictions and inspections on foundation visas. While we try to take that at face value, it does not seem to fully explain the current level of inspection from immigration officials.

As I write this letter, I am preparing for another interview at our local immigration office tomorrow morning (9 pm EST, Thursday, May 18). The particular investigative officer who is looking at our branch office at the moment has shown a hostile attitude in his communication, and frequently goes beyond any normative level of questioning. While I would not want to speculate on his motives, this has been an unusual season of scrutiny, and a rather contemptuous attitude towards our presence here. It seems that this particular officer has even timed his visits to our office in a specific way to try to create discomfort or pressure with his presence. During our interactions, I work to remain extremely calm and peaceful in my answers as he gets quite loud and animated. As I go in tomorrow, we are doing everything we can to be prepared to answer gracefully. I would ask you to pray with me that we can satisfy the questioning of this immigration officer without bending any truths or going outside of Thailand's immigration laws and fees.

This leads me to express so much gratitude for the fact that God has allowed our family to live in Thailand for over 10 years with relative ease of communication and cooperation with local government offices. Seriously, we count ourselves extremely blessed to live in a place and season of calm in this region.

In addition to praying for our specific interview appointment tomorrow, I would ask you to be in prayer for the formation of government taking place following last Sunday's election. This election season in Thailand seems to be especially important. Our hope would be that whatever the outcomes might be in the next months, that freedom of religion will be even further solidified, and that the gospel will go forth throughout Thailand.

Finally, I ask for a third request. As you know, living in a foreign country comes with challenges and frustrations in many forms. Paying a simple bill or getting a small repair might involve many unnecessary steps. Many systems are not built for efficiency, and it might require multiple days of work to complete something as simple as getting a driver's license. Years ago I started to think of all these steps that are essential for living here as "the law of survival." No matter what else is on my plate, I always have to be sure that everything is in order for us to survive. Then, I have to challenge myself to raise my own baseline expectations for doing effective evangelism and discipleship. It can be challenging to step away from a stressful interaction with cultural difficulties, then go right into discipling a new believer or preparing a Bible study. I would ask you to pray regularly that we would have wisdom to manage all of our essential tasks with efficiency, and that we have the power and boldness of the Holy Spirit to do the work of the ministry.

In the midst of this, we are so encouraged with how the Lord is blessing his work. We have seen several adults added to the church, and I am launching our largest new members class ever. People who have completed discipleship are ready to disciple others, and members who had never served have jumped into new ministries. We are so thankful for the blessing of God on His church, and so thankful to represent you as ministers of the Gospel in Lamphun, Thailand!

Sincerely,

Jay and Alisa Ballou Family

MINISTRY MOMENTS

While we love to share the most exciting news of important events that take place, the success of long term ministry is built on the foundation of faithfully tending to the regular moments of each season.



1. SUMMER BREAK

DISCIPLESHIP

Here Toey is leading 3 young men in a Bible study as part of their daily routines in our student center during summer break from school.

2. CREATIVE MISSION WORK

TRENT KELLY

Trent has visited us several times though the years. He and his wife Clara are living here for a season, and serving effectively in many ways!

3. LONG TERM IMPACT

NAT (& A PUPPY)

Nat is a boy who has come to Bible classes for several years now. I have been blessed lately to see him grow in maturity. Pray with us for young leaders to be formed for the future!

4. LADIES MINISTRY

ALISA & FRIENDS

A number of ladies in our church are such a blessing through faithful serving and steadily growing in Christ.