

Baptist
Mission
Australia



Buddhist Lent Prayer Guide 2024

Thailand, Cambodia
and Vietnam



Welcome

Welcome to the new and updated 2024 edition of the Buddhist Lent Prayer Guide. This year we are extending our borders to pray over three different regions including Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam.

The Buddhist Lent period extends from mid-July through to mid-October, the rainy season. Buddhists use this time to cleanse themselves of the 'bad' in their life and often make pledges to abstain from certain practices such as drinking alcohol.

Buddhist monks spend this time at the temple studying Buddha's scriptures, meditating, and chanting. It is common practice for a Thai monk to wake well before the sun has risen to chant, meditate and pray.

We know there is one true God who hears our prayers. We want to invite you to pray with us during this Lent period for the Ethnic people of Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam. This guide will help you to follow the needs and prayer points of the Ethnic people and the Intercultural Team Members who work with them.



Week 1

Buddhist Lent Opening Day: *What does that look like in our countries?*

In Thailand, Buddhist Lent is the celebration of “entering the rainy season”. Traditionally this was the first day in which Buddhist Monks remained in one place during the rainy season to avoid killing insects or trampling on growing crops.

Offerings of candles and garments were made to the temple to provide necessities, such as lighting in the days of no electricity. It is believed that the candle represents brightness.

At most temples on this day Monks chant from the Buddhist scripture and share teachings on abstaining from; killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and intoxication.

In Cambodia, the season of Buddhist Lent is known as the Festival of Vassa. The Festival is traditionally welcomed with a service of thanksgiving and offering held during the afternoon on the day of the full moon in the eighth lunar month, this year, Saturday 20 July.

During this service, Khmer people gather at their local temple, taking gifts of large candles, inner dressing robes, and other gifts to be offered to the Monks. After walking around the outside of the temple three times, the people enter inside, joining with the Monks in worship together, and in remembering and giving thanks to Buddha, the Dharma, and Sangha (Monks).

Blessing chants and lessons from Buddhist Scripture are given by the Monks to those gathered, and the gifts brought are offered and shared to the Monks. On the following morning, the first day of the waning of the full moon, the season of Buddhist Lent begins, as Monk’s light the candles and enter a three-month period of retreat.

Vietnamese largely are not officially affiliated to any religion. However, Buddhism is more prominent in the South.



Prayer Points

- » Please pray that, at this time of renewed spiritual activity, doors of dialogue between followers of Jesus and our Buddhist friends may be opened. That the truth of Jesus will be shared.
- » Please pray that Jesus may reveal Himself to people through dreams and other encounters. That He would be revealed as the true Light of the World.
- » Please pray for opportunities for the believers in each Community of Faith, that they would be bold during this Lent period to share with others their faith in Jesus.



Week 2

Ethnic Thailand Team

The Ethnic Thai team is spread out over two locations in Northern Thailand - Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai. Muana (team leader) and Villy (and their daughter Libi) serve in Chiang Mai. Dema and Carolyn (and their son Daniel), Glenn and Liz (and their boys Seb, Levi and Oliver) and Margaret serve in Chiang Rai.

The team meets together quarterly for team meetings and while they all have their

own individual ministries, they all work together to support the Communities of Faith in the rural locations. **The meetings are a great time of fellowship, encouragement, strategic planning, learning and prayer.**

The Ethnic Thai team values unity and encourages individuals within the team to use their own gifts, to build each other up and to support each other in ministry.

Prayer Points

Currently the Ethnic Thailand team is quite small and there's always lots of work to be done.

- » Please up-lift the team as they work together within their locations and with the Communities of Faith. We pray for good communication and a strong commitment to one another.
- » Please pray for the children within the team, (including Yindii, Zoe and Grace attending university in Melbourne). There is great privilege but also great trials in being a Third Culture Kid (TCK). We pray that God will draw close to them and be their constant shield and strength.
- » Please pray that the team will continue to gain deeper cultural understanding and learn the language and worldview of the people they share with.
- » Please pray that the team will be able to find genuine ways to share the truth of Jesus with people in their community and that they will be open to that truth.
- » Please pray for the team's own spiritual walk with Jesus to deepen as they follow Him and minister in humility to those who have yet to hear about Him.



Week 3

Cambodia Team

Much like the seasonal changes ushering in the entering of the rainy season, our Cambodian team is experiencing significant change this year.

In May, we farewelled Tristan, Megan, Zechariah, Samuel, and Hannah, and in July, we will farewell Luke, Rachel, Isaac, Tahlia, and Michaela. Excitingly, in July, we will also welcome Rours and Reaksmei,

becoming a team of three couples. Three Khmer and three Australians: Rours and Reaksmei, Rob and Deb, and KimLean and Catherine.

As the rains fall, preparing the land and bringing forth new growth, this is a time of new learning and growing for our team, as we continue to plant into relationships and communities here.



Prayer Points

- » Please pray for our team as we enter this season of change, that we would have unity, and that our relationships together would grow and deepen.
- » Please pray for Tristan, Megan, Zechariah, Samuel, and Hannah as they continue to step into relationships and rhythms in Australia.
- » Please pray for Luke, Rachel, Isaac, Tahlia, and Michaela as they farewell Khmer friends and relationships, and continue to prepare to return to Australia.
- » Please pray for Rours and Reaksmei as they journey to Cambodia and begin replanting into the soil of their birth country.
- » Please pray we would walk and live here humbly, yet boldly, growing, and deepening relationships that are fragrantly scented for Him.



Week 4

Vietnam

The Vietnam team is made up of a family of three and two national workers devoting their times and effort working at with a local partner of Baptist Mission Australia.

The team mainly focuses on education and humanitarian work in this region. Through the local partner, the team provides vocational training for young people with physical disabilities, who run an English teaching school for

children in the community. Soon, we will be providing affordable daycare services for low socio-economic families in the surrounding communities.

Twice a month, there is a KidzClub and a mums supporting group that the team runs to share love of Christ to those connected with our local partner organisation who do not yet know Him.



Prayer Points

- » Please pray for our two national workers as they navigate working in ministry and living a Christian life while largely outnumbered by secular and traditional practices; for boldness and strength to show love and honour to their families while still honouring our God and His commandments.
- » Please pray for spiritual growth and transformation for the leaders and the team so that it rejuvenates them and that they are continuously growing closer to God.
- » Please pray that God equips and empowers our team so that we serve and utilise our spiritual gifts in a life giving and effective way.



Week 5

An insight into Thailand's Folk Buddhism

Thai people generally practice a folk form of Buddhism, which is heavily influenced by animistic beliefs.

The life of a Thai person is affected by the spirit world daily. Most Thai people make offerings to spirit houses, a small temple like structure usually located in the front yard of their home or business, to appease spirits and bring them good luck.

The process of making merit is one that is often hard for a westerner to understand. It's based on the Law of Karma.

They believe the good and bad affect every part of their present and future lives. Thai people measure a person's merit based on their material possessions and health.

The amount of merit making and appeasing of spirits needed to have a "good life" is impossible to know. As such, many Thai people are uncertain about their future. Continuing in an often disappointing and defeating routine leaves many still searching for the peace they are longing for.



Prayer Points

- » Please pray that the Thai people will come to understand that Jesus' sacrifice is all they need to receive freedom from their bad deeds and escape the cycle that holds them captive.
- » Pray that Thai people will find freedom in Jesus and be released from the fear of spirits, as it is written "perfect love drives out fear".
- » Pray that the power of the Holy Spirit will move over the nation of Thailand bringing many into the knowledge of a Saviour who died for them.



Week 6

Buddhist Lent in Cambodia

Similar to Thailand, in Cambodia, the three-month Festival of Vassa, or Buddhist Lent, began as an instruction from the Buddha given to Monks.

While the purpose of the instruction was to have Monks remain in one place during the rainy season, and thus protect growing crops, insects, and small animals from being trampled on, the instruction gave birth to the practice of spiritual retreat for Monks.

In Cambodia, this practice of spiritual retreat during the rainy season continues for Monks today. During the three-month retreat, Monks take intentional and extended time, both communally and individually, to pray, to meditate, and to reflect on Buddhist Scripture. It is a significant time for Monks of deepening learning and understanding of the tenets of Buddhism, and of more deeply knowing, understanding, and disciplining oneself in light of those tenets.

The three months of Buddhist Lent are also a season of “caring for and continuing the light.”

Traditionally, as the season of Buddhist Lent was commencing, large candles would be placed in Wats to burn for the duration of the Lenton season. The candles would provide light to enable Monks to read, cook, and perform other day to day tasks.

More significantly, however, the candles shone light into darkness, symbolising the light that comes through wisdom and truth.

As it was then, today, candles continue to be lit and maintained by Monks throughout Buddhist Lent, reminding both Monks and the Khmer people to seek and walk in the ways of wisdom and truth.



Prayer Points

- » Please pray for the Khmer people, that as they continue to seek wisdom and light, they will come to know, and walk in, our Father’s transforming wisdom and light.
- » Please pray for us, that as we walk alongside of Khmer friends, we would be people of light and truth.



Week 7

An overview of Vietnam

The Vietnamese largely are not officially affiliated to any religions as the result of the current ideology. However, the people in the North tend to be influenced by Confucianism whereas Buddhism is widely seen in the South. **Most people will visit a temple or a pagoda at least once or twice a year as a way of requesting and receiving blessings from a higher source.**

They will bring a plate of fruit, flowers and incense as an offering. Quite often, they burn fake paper money, paper household items and paper vehicles throughout the year as form of communication/ transaction with the spirit world for blessings, curses, and/or answers to questions.

As the Vietnam region is developing into a more modern society, young families are migrating from rural countryside to the city. Education has not been a priority for many of these families as they have had to focus on meeting basic needs of food, water, and shelter.

In addition, most working adults do not have work skills that are applicable in the city as the vast majority of them come from farming communities. The lack of education and transferable work skills causes a widening disparity between low and average income households.

Transitioning from a closed country to a more open-minded society, these people are hungry, spiritually and physically. This presents a very unique opportunity for seeds to be planted. To be able to come alongside young families during this vulnerable time and provide holistic care, knock down barriers, encourage them along the way can be significant to their future and quality of life.

By planting small seeds of hope and faith, transformation can start with one person, one family at a time. In being able to join in with the developing and modernising movement, the Kingdom has an opportunity to grow and positively impact the country's future leaders.



Prayer Points

- » Please pray for the people of Vietnam to emerge from the confusion of syncretism, combining many religions and belief systems, that there is no other name by which they will be saved except Jesus.
- » Please pray that God would break the spiritual bonds of ancestor and spirit worship that hold the Vietnam people in darkness and reveal His truth to them.
- » Please pray for more Christians to find favour with the government officials and be allowed to minister to Vietnamese people without hinderances or barriers.



Week 8

Thailand Rural Communities of Faith

There are three areas where Communities of Faith have developed in Northern Thailand. Two in Nan (Baan Luang and Baan Faa) one in Phayao (Ban Sra) and one in Chiang Mai (Sanpatong). Each of these groups meet weekly to share in the word of God together.

Most of them have local leadership and faithful members, however the Baptist Mission Australia workers support them in providing leadership trainings, visiting for fellowship and meetings and annual family camps.

Over the years these groups have faced their own challenges, but it has been encouraging to see them

continue to learn what it means to be followers of Jesus and witnesses of the Gospel in their context.

In March 2024 the believers of these faith communities came together to celebrate a weekend of fun, fellowship, and good teaching at their annual family camp.

During the weekend two members, one a young lady named Jen who has been learning the Scriptures for the past couple of years, and an older man named Kasem (in his 60's) who has faithfully followed Jesus for the past 6 years both received baptism. This was a momentous and joyful occasion for the group.



Prayer Points

- » Please pray for all the believers to have courage and a burden to reach out to their wider family members with the Good News of Jesus.
- » We pray for those who need encouragement in their faith and for strong relationships within the groups.
- » We pray that the Holy Spirit will work continue to work in the lives of Thai people and that we will see many more baptisms.



Week 9

Building Connections in Thailand

The Thailand team are using different platforms to seek ways to connect into their local communities with the vision to build deep relationships.

For many years this has involved innovative ideas such as Villy's beauty salon which has recently gone mobile, allowing Villy to take her tools so that while she's visiting people, she can offer her hairdressing services.

English teaching has always been a wonderful platform for the team in Thailand to engage with locals within their communities. The team do this in a variety of ways including meetings in the local town halls, within Government schools, tutoring in their homes and through the House of Light (English Language Centre) in Chiang Rai.

Empowering locals through income generation projects is something the Thailand team has recently begun with the launch of a new project through Baptist Mission Australia. This pilot project will allow locals to apply for a grant to start their own chicken farms. The aim is to allow them to generate some supplementary income to help support their families who are often living day to day to meet their needs.

As the Thailand team go about life meeting people where they are at, they seek to be the hands and feet of Jesus, supporting their local friends in both word and deed.



Prayer Points

- »» For the workers in Thailand to have great wisdom to speak truth as they come alongside the Thai people and meet them in their needs.
- »» For the provision of funds needed to support the new income generation project in Thailand.
- »» That this project will empower local people to be able to support their own families, providing them with greater dignity and honour.
- »» That as the team seek to serve the Thai people in all of these initiatives that the Holy Spirit will open the eyes of many to hear the Gospel in ways that they understand and are compelled to respond to.



Week 10

Cambodia: A glimpse into the work

Based in a rural village outside of Siem Reap, Rob and Deb engage with the community through being present in a full range of life issues, prayer with visitation, volunteering at the village school and a hospitality project partnership. Deb supports good health outcomes using her background as a nurse and midwife, while Rob uses his agricultural skills working with the school community through a community fruit and vegetable garden and does conversational English teaching.

During their time in Cambodia, Luke has used English teaching to engage with young people and their families, to walk alongside his Cultural and Language Nurturer in a developing house church, and to strengthen life opportunities of staff at a hospitality project.

Rachel has developed the project, Language of the Heart, working with and supporting children with disability and-or communication impairment, and their families.

KimLean and Catherine continue to walk alongside Khmer men and women, sharing their lives and home with five Khmer men, and meeting together weekly with small groups using meditation to explore faith and spirituality.

Together they are also developing life lessons exploring what brokenness, woundedness, healing, and reconciliation look like within Khmer culture and worldview.

As they prepare to return to Cambodia, Rours and Reaksmey hope to learn shadow puppetry and Khmer traditional music to engage with children and families. Reaksmey hopes to use these skills alongside of her background in health. Rours hopes to use these skills in connecting with and walking alongside local faith community leaders in serving and discipleship.



Prayer Points

- » Please pray with Rob and Deb for fruitfulness in the growing mentoring and discipling opportunities in their village and through the hospitality project partnership.
- » Please pray for Luke as he finishes and hands over ministry involvement. Please pray for Rachel as she continues to be involved in Language of the Heart from Australia.
- » Please pray for KimLean and Catherine, that they would have wisdom, humility, and sensitivity as they walk alongside Khmer men and women.
- » Please pray for Rours and Reaksmey as they journey this time of transition, farewelling family, friends, and colleagues.



Week 11

Vietnam work

A community playground and café are currently being built so that students from the local partner's English school and neighbourhood children have access to a safe playground and a mini-football field. At the same time, parents will have a café where they can sit and chat, eat and drink as they wait for their children.

In addition, we are in the process of setting up a daycare centre; providing discounted rates to low-income and single families so they may be able to work and financially provide for themselves.

Designed with biblical values and principles, we are creating a Christian environment and biblical culture to surround these young children, with the hopes of introducing and pointing them to Christ early on.

We utilise these opportunities to deepen our relationships with the families and connect them with our KidzClub and Mums group ministries where we are able share the Gospel in a smaller setting since openly sharing of the Gospel is still unlawful.



Prayer Points

- » Please pray for God's hands in the paperwork and compliances that are required to legally provide our ministry services. The approval and annual requirements are in the hands of the government workers in charge, pray for softened hearts and that God nourishes this relationship.
- » Please pray for the Holy Spirit's intervention in the daily challenges that this work brings every day.
- » Please pray for spiritual protection over the entire facility, and for health and safety over the disabled staff and children who are most vulnerable.
- » Please pray that God will bring more Christian workers and volunteers to join us in serving our ministries.



Week 12

Workers to the field

The truth is that these fields are vastly outnumbered, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam need more kingdom brothers and sisters to live and work alongside the local people. **Whether short or long term, your presence will make an impact on someone's life.**

The Thailand team are seeking workers to come and help them share the Gospel, especially in the areas close to the established Communities of Faith in Nan and Phayao. There are opportunities to serve in a variety of roles, including English teaching.

Similarly to Thailand, the Cambodia team are seeking workers to come and join together in building deep and authentic relationships with Khmer people, living out and sharing the Gospel in ways that make sense within Khmer culture and worldview.

The specific needs in Vietnam include physiotherapists, doctors, nurses, kindergarten, and English teachers.



Prayer Points

- » Please pray that God expands these teams.
- » Pray for our brothers and sisters who the Holy Spirit is prompting to join us
- » Pray for their heart to desire after God's heart, for their willingness to respond to the calling, and courage to go.



Week 13

A Boy and the Temple

From early April to late May each year the Thai schools take their long holiday break. During this time Saturday classes continue at the House of Light (English Language Centre) providing the students with a fun place to hang out each week.

Glenn and Liz noticed that one of their students, a 10-year-old boy named Pha, hadn't been showing up for a few weeks. After a visit to his grandma, they learnt that Pha had been sent to live at the temple during this time.

Usually, Thai kids get a cooked meal each day at school, so the school holidays meant another mouth to feed which was too much for this family. Pha is a very intelligent boy who studies hard, but he's had a tough life. He was diagnosed with Autism at a young age and his grandma shared that he didn't speak a word until he was 5 years old.

You can only imagine how hard living under the strict new routine at the temple, away from his family and norms

was for Pha. Rules like waking up at 4am to meditate and pray, hours spent cleaning the temple grounds and not being allowed to eat after 12pm each day.

Glenn and Liz prayed for him during this time and started making some arrangement to provide Pha with some new school uniform and school bag for when he returned home and started back at school.

Once Pha was home, Glenn and Liz went to visit one evening, with his new supplies, Pha was very excited to see them. His grandma mentioned that he had been asking all day what time they would come. When they asked him how he was and how the time at the temple went his face sunk a little and he said it was hard and he got teased a lot. Liz shared with him that she had been praying for him and passed on the bag and clothes as well as one for his little sister. To this he was very thankful, smiles all around. A small sense of joy restored.



Prayer Points

This story is an example of some of the brokenness local people face in Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam.

» Please pray that as the workers respond to the needs around them with it, they will bring hope to the hopeless and peace to the hurting.

» Please pray these verses with us:

He heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds. He determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name. Great is our Lord and mighty in power; his understanding has no limit.
Psalm 147:3-5



Week 14

Buddhist Lent comes to an end

In Thailand the final day of the Buddhist Lent is called Ook Pan Sa which translates to “the day of leaving the rains retreat”.

This marks the end of the three-month Buddhist Lent period as the rains begin to clear.

Monks can now leave the temple; restrictions are lifted, and life returns to ‘normal’.

We want to thank you for praying with us over this Lent season. We trust in the power of your intercession prayers to our Father.



Prayer Points

- » Please pray that as this Buddhist Lent period is now over, that God will continue to reveal Himself to individuals and groups in this nation throughout the next year.
- » Please continue to pray for Baptist Mission Australia workers, and all those who are working amongst the Buddhists, that they will be equipped and strengthened for the task.
- » Please pray that people will be fervent in seeking out Jesus and the freedom and life He brings.
- » Please pray these verses with us:

May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine on us so that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations. May the peoples praise you, God; may all the peoples praise you. May the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you rule the peoples with equity and guide the nations of the earth. May the peoples praise you, God; may all the peoples praise you. The land yields its harvest; God, our God, blesses us. May God bless us still, so that all the ends of the earth will fear him. Psalm 67:1 – 7





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