



JAN AND JIT

Serving Karen people in Thailand

The Karen people are an ethnic minority (despite numbering up to 8 million) in both Thailand and Burma. Many of the Sgaw Karen are Christians. The Pwo Karen, with a quite different dialect, have mostly adopted Buddhism, fusing it with their animistic spirit beliefs. They have been resistant to the gospel. Yet ancient traditional stories can form bridges to the gospel, for God has already put “Eternity in their hearts” (title of a book by Don Richardson)

- Jit has raised awareness of Pwo Karen traditions, stirring interest in culture and language and demonstrating that Christ seeks to work through culture, not destroy it.
- 30 congregations, mostly Sgaw Karen, scattered along the border between Thailand and Burma, have also valued Jit’s assistance.
- Refugees from Burma and the little publicised conflict in that country are on the Yawans’ doorstep. Jit and Jan help where possible.

Jan went to Thailand with Global Interaction in 1977 to nurse at the Kwai River Christian Hospital. Jit, locally born, was teaching at the Christian school. He later completed a law degree. In the early 1980s, Jit helped to relocate the community and hospital to make way for a dam. The work drew Jit and Jan together in more ways than one. They married in 1985, and celebrated Anna’s birth a couple of years later. Jan continued nursing and Jit became the hospital’s business manager.

In the 1990s, Jit and Jan completed four years of study in New South Wales, where Jit was ordained. On their return to Thailand in 1998, their focus shifted to evangelism amongst the Pwo Karen people group, and church development work with other Karen groups. They give some assistance to various wholistic ministries that seek to care for the sick, disabled and marginalised, and provide education and self-help for the local people.

While in Thailand, initially Anna pursued local schooling and schooling by distance education with Jan as supervisor. Time in Australia gave her opportunity to enjoy the classroom and the company of fellow students. In recent years, Anna’s schooling has continued at Hebron School in India. From 2007, Anna is at university in Wollongong, NSW.

