

Dear friends,

Those of you that I was able to connect with during my recent trip to the UK will already know my news - apologies to those of you who I didn't manage to see in person (including those of you who live elsewhere around the world!)

As you know, since Ark closed down at the end of June 2016, I have been on a journey of exploring what God has next for me. For about a year and a half my main focus has been on ministry to refugees and asylum seekers in Bangkok, mainly education-based but also including visiting detainees regularly. I have really loved this work, and I don't think I would ever have found my way into it without the experiences I had at Ark. I feel that God has placed refugees and asylum seekers on my heart and this is something I will carry with me into the future.

Over the past number of months, it has become clear to me that God is bringing my time in Thailand to an end. This feels both right and hard! I spent considerable time praying and seeking wise counsel on my next steps before deciding that I will move back to Belfast in June this year. God has spoken about 'roots' and re-rooting in my home community, and that's something I'm looking forward to.

I don't have any definite answers yet as to what I will be doing, but I do have some ideas and hopes. I am applying to do a MSc Child and Adolescent Counselling and Psychotherapeutic Skills, which is a course aimed at those with a teaching/social work/youth work (etc) background. I would be studying part-time for two years. I have been interested in training in children's counselling for years, and this seems like the right time to pursue it. I think counselling skills would be valuable in the work I do with children and young people.

As I mentioned above, refugees and asylum seekers are still very much on my heart. I would like to continue working with them in Belfast and have been investigating possibilities in this area. There are clear needs for support within the refugee/asylum seeker community in Northern Ireland, including supporting children and teenagers to integrate into a new culture and education system. I made some good connections when I was in Belfast, both within YWAM and beyond, but it's unlikely that I will be able to define a concrete role or position before I leave Thailand.

Of course, I can also go back to doing some teaching - I think it would be great to 'keep my hand in' and this could also provide some stability and routine as I transition back to life in NI. However, I won't be looking for full-time teaching positions, since it's not realistic for me to teach full-time, study a Masters and get involved with refugee/asylum seeker work!

I would greatly value your prayers as I make plans and preparations for the future, and I welcome any questions or comments you have. I would also appreciate prayers as I finish up in Bangkok over the next couple of months. It's important to me to finish well, hand over work as far as possible and say good goodbyes, and right now it's a bit of a balancing act of continuing normal life and ministry while also starting to make preparations to leave.

I want to say thank you for the many ways you have supported me over the past 5½ years in Thailand - your prayers, giving, encouragement, emails, messages, letters, meeting up in the UK or even in Thailand. I know I've said it before, but I couldn't have done any of this without the incredible support I have received. So thank you!

May the Lord bless each one of you as we remember His death and resurrection this Easter.

Love, Gillian