



# Elise and Jon Fletcher

Update from the Edges 4 | April 2026



**Location:** Thailand



**What we do:** Immersing ourselves in the life of a vibrant slum community, sharing Jesus' love with people around us



**Empowering** people pushed to the edges of life to release their God-given potential

Dear friends,

We're thrilled to write to you from Bangkok, and to share stories of other CMS work too. It strengthens our faith and encourages us in our work when we read stories from other CMS mission partners working with people pushed to the edges of life. Use the link at the bottom of our update to read about Josephat who traded a life of being hidden away for a future of dignity and leadership. And see how mission partner Ann-Marie has spent two decades answering God's call. We hope that you are encouraged as you read our update and others' stories too!



*Home visiting, using our new coaching resource to set goals*

Here in Bangkok it's been a smoggy start to 2026 with dangerous levels of air pollution keeping people indoors. We've noticed a lot more respiratory illness in our neighbourhood; in slum housing the dust comes right in through the cracks. Despite this, it has been a very positive start to our new cohort of the Keeping Families Together (KFT) Programme – 12 families from different Khlong Toey slum communities uniting around the goal of family strengthening.

Praew, 48, (not her real name) moved to the slum community one year ago when her husband died of a stroke and she was unable to pay rent and provide for her 12-year-old daughter. The only option was to move in with her adult daughter and family who rent a single room. Praew quickly found herself caring for three grandchildren whilst suffering from chronic ill health. The only income in the home was from selling drugs and life was highly chaotic.

When our KFT caseworker first visited, Praew was feeling overwhelmed. None of the grandchildren were attending school and the bureaucracy involved in arranging a school transfer for her daughter was too much. We were able to negotiate with the local Catholic school to waive fees and accept all four children immediately. With weekly home visiting, we've slowly seen Praew come out of her shell. She's been able to articulate some dreams and commit to working towards small goals.

Families join the KFT programme for a period of 18 months. Every situation is different but the families are supported to do their own work to improve long term outcomes for their children. Progress is often slow but support from caseworkers and peers can make all the difference. We cover nine modules, the first focuses on the importance of attachment and belonging. Soon we will move to a module on child protection; knowing the

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**With Jesus  
With each other  
To the edges**



risks and how to guard against abuse is crucial. Most adult participants carry their own trauma related to abuse, so breaking the cycle is key.

We alternate between monthly training days and family fun days – we recently went to the beach! For many of the kids, it was their first experience of the sea. It was a privilege to see families enjoying time together in nature, away from daily concerns. Playing, eating yummy food and swimming in crystal clear water

Change doesn't happen overnight. The children in Praew's care are now attending school irregularly and their KFT caseworker is working closely with them to incentivise attendance and change habits. There

are many pressures working against the very poorest families. Even in slum communities, hierarchy pushes people to the edges.

In a few months, the KFT families will learn to track income and outgoings. They will work on business and debt repayment plans, and will receive income generation grants to begin working towards financial stability. Praew is a good cook and she hopes to set up a food stall outside her house. It is easy to recognise the image of God in Praew as she comforts a child or sweeps the small home. Our prayer is that she comes to recognise this innate worth in herself and impart that to her family and wider community.

Our God consistently upholds the cause of the marginalised, even entering into the physical life of the poor through the person of Jesus Christ. Those seemingly pushed to the edges are actually at the centre of God's story. As Gustavo Gutiérrez writes, "the preferential option for the poor is not optional; it is rooted in God's gratuitous love." That Praew is blessed and bears God's favour, is a truth that stands regardless of her own profession of faith. We hope that one day she will know Jesus as friend and liberator but for now, God is here in the joys and the sorrows, the crowding and the daily injustices of slum life. God does not turn his face from human sin and suffering waiting for us to change, but dwells in our midst – Emmanuel, God with us.

**For prayer:**

- ▶ Please pray for the four children in Praew's household. Pray for barriers to school attendance to go, and that life will become more predictable. Pray for their safety in a setting that makes them very vulnerable to abuse. Pray that the KFT programme will have a lasting impact for them and for all 48 course participants.
- ▶ Pray for our caseworkers, Nui and Pui who carry heavy situations daily. Pray that their faith in God will be strengthened and they will witness the restoring work of the Spirit in their lives and the families they work with.
- ▶ Pray for Elise reviewing and developing the teaching materials for the KFT programme and for Jon using the grassroots experiences of living in the slum community to advocate for policy change in Thailand. He is attending the regional conference for the 'Global network of Religions for Children' in March. May it be a great opportunity for dialogue and increased partnership in the work of protecting the rights of children in Thailand.

Much love, Jon and Elise



*Photos from top to bottom: Home visit – working on an 'Ecomap' to identify existing support networks; Safeguarding training with church volunteers keen to serve the community. We focus on recognising power dynamics; Fun at the beach!; KFT families at a training day*



**Empowering people pushed to the edges of life**

We hope that you're inspired as you read about Josephat in Tanzania who has changed his future. And, when you see how mission partner Ann-Marie has changed global policy impacting women at risk of female genital mutilation. Read their stories and others, at [churchmissionsociety.org/empower](http://churchmissionsociety.org/empower)

Please note that opinions expressed in updates are those of mission partners, not necessarily of Church Mission Society.

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