

Grace in Action

Stories of God at work in and through the GIS community

April 2018



The Blessing of Community

Listening to New Zealanders Greg and Rosie Blok recount their journey in missions, one gets the sense they are not the type of people who back down from a challenge. Their long-term plan was always to work in a rural area for a people without the Bible in their own language. They landed in Chiang Mai in 2008 and enrolled their two kids—Thomas and Xanthe—in GIS, thus freeing the Bloks up to study Thai and commence training in Bible translation. Settling into a neighborhood with other GIS families, the kids made friends quickly.

In 2011, the Bloks were introduced to the Bui*, an animistic people group living in a village south of Chiang Mai. Greg and Rosie believed God was leading them to start a project to translate the Bible into the Bui language. Having heard stories of missionary kids becoming disconnected from their families when sent to boarding schools, Greg and Rosie determined their children would stay with them. Thomas—an introvert—was content in the village, but Xanthe—an extrovert—found it increasingly difficult. She greatly missed her many friends at Grace.

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After her first year in the village, Xanthe was desperate to return to GIS. Greg and Rosie wondered how they could meet Xanthe’s needs while also fulfilling their call to the Bui people. A family in the GIS community—fellow members of Wycliffe—offered for Xanthe to board with them. After settling Thomas into university in New Zealand in 2014, Greg and Rosie returned to their village work, while Xanthe continued her studies at GIS, living with several welcoming families over her years at Grace.

With their kids’ needs taken care of, Greg and Rosie have been able to focus on their work. The Bloks’ team has produced 50 oral Bible stories to be made available on a phone app by June of this year. They have also developed a Bui alphabet, in order start a written translation of the Bible in the coming years. God is slowly building His church among the Bui with a new family becoming Christians in January of this year.

Greg and Rosie are very grateful for the blessing the GIS community has been to them. Parents have filled in some of the gaps—attending Xanthe’s school events in their stead—so they can continue to do their work. In hindsight, they see how the boarding experiences have shaped Xanthe positively, making possible an easier transition to life after GIS.

*a pseudonym

