

Call Waiting

Standing in the middle of a cold stream, I lowered the young man into the water. "I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost," I said. "Welcome to the family."

I thought back to when I was 15 years old and heard a missionary talk. I yearned to preach the gospel overseas.

However, my denomination offered me only two choices: I could remain single and be a nurse or a teacher, or I could marry a missionary and be a wife and mother.

I did want to marry, but I also wanted to preach. I saw no way to fulfill the call.

I married a man whose desire to travel was as great as mine. With our four children, we saw the world as State Department employees. But I had a feeling that I wasn't doing what God had called me to do.

When I was 40 years old, I received the baptism in the Holy Spirit and with it a renewed zeal to read the Bible and evangelize the lost. Shortly after that, we were sent to serve in the embassy in Thailand.

In Bangkok, I met a woman from the Karen tribe. At her urging, I traveled with her to some bamboo villages high in the hills in the opium-growing Golden Triangle where Myanmar, Laos and Thailand meet.

I was enchanted and totally at ease with these people. Although they looked so different from me and followed strange customs, I felt I'd finally come home.

We retired after the Bangkok tour, and I traveled back every year or two. My husband had no interest in living there in the hills. But my heart ached to stay and fulfill my calling.

Six years later, when I was visiting friends in Hong Kong and feeling distraught that I couldn't stay with the tribes, my friend said: "You are right where God wants you, doing what He wants you to do. You are a go-between."

Her words were prophetic. Some of those who have accompanied me on my trips have become very involved with the tribes, raising money and workers and generously giving of themselves. By cooperating with the tribal evangelism group in Chiang Mai, I'm able to intercede, support and advise from a distance.

I've watched God (and the Thai government) help the tribes advance from being preliterate to being computer-literate. I've witnessed miracles of healing, deliverance and reconciliation. And I've seen missionaries and tribal pastors bring thousands of people into God's kingdom.

Whenever I go to Thailand, it's still like coming home. That call was worth waiting for.