



23rd June 2009

G'day friends,

A few years ago I was directed to drive down a dead end track. The ute rolled into the shadows between a concrete road bridge and a steel railway bridge. The strange man sitting next to me assured me we were at the right spot. I was performing the traditional UNOH worker vocation of helping move house. However as the track petered out and the mud became impassable I saw a structure the size of 4 shipping pallets. There can't be too much to move then. The shack was only accessible from one side as the river was lapping at the other. As we entered I realised 3 pallets was more accurate as part of the floor had collapsed.

This was Jack's place which he stayed in most nights with his kids who I taught at our community centre. Some nights the tide was too high and flooded the place. So we were moving his stuff to my first place in the slum which had been renovated. A roof had replaced the Pepsi banner and access to the communal bathroom made by neighbours knocking down a wall.

Since that day, Jack and I have come to know each other better as he started work at the community centre. The great thing about community is people get to know you and the worst thing is ... people get to know you. As the general handyman at the centre Jack could testify to my impatience and frustration at "borrowed" or broken tools.

Last weekend I was once again in a ute with Jack. This time the conversation filled most of the 4 hours driving, chatting, joking and reminiscing about our lives. It struck me how this guy was an example of hope. From his life living in the slaughterhouse slum and involvement in bike racing and gangs to tramping around the country and now raising two kids with mum in prison, this year he says has been the best ever. One of his highlights is the trips



Jack, his son and friend trying to sail a traditional Thai fishing boat.

Your words of encouragement

will be greatly appreciated. Use this space to write a brief message to your UNOH partner. We will forward your note as quickly as possible.

we've done together around the country: meetings on the tallest Thai mountain with centre staff; our house church camp at a fishing village; and kayaking to then sleeping on a deserted island with my local teenagers. Another highlight of his has been the help and support in looking after his kids through the community of our house church. Previously coping with life had been by unhelpful means that often made things worse. But the last couple of months Jack's gifts of serving and getting alongside others have really stood out.

Last Friday at home church he heard about the weekly "Tough Journey" bible study I have with a couple of guys and wants to come tonight. He attributes his transformation so far to God acting through neighbours so wants to know more. I thank God for the privilege to journey with Jack and be a neighbour that makes a difference. But the gift from God through Jack for me has been hope and faith that God transforms people.



Jack returning the favour by helping me move house with all my things in this ute last October.

Since I moved into my neighbourhood of Lok 4, I've seen the raw reality of lives living without hope. It can be contagious, the despair that leads to the guy breathing through glue fumes outside my door as I write or the drunk ranting I can hear of a single mum down the alley who can't take it anymore. However through examples like Jack, I know there is hope for transformation of this neighbourhood. Just because I can't see it happening all the time doesn't mean it won't. Since "faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" I seek your prayers for faith in God's kingdom coming here in the Lok 4 slum. Our team's also seeking new workers to join us in sharing this joy.

As I'll be back in Aus next month for the last couple of weeks, I'm hoping to catch up with as many of you as possible. My mobile will be 0422 358 081. I'll be at Christ Church Dingley at 8:30am and 10:30am on July 12th. Then St Aidan's Noble Park at 8:00am and 9:30am on July 19th. I always look forward to this annual fortnight of reunion. Be seeing you soon.

Love,
Rod Sheard

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