

# News from Kit Ripley

## Faith Kinesiology

Wikipedia states that "Kinesiology is the scientific study of human or non-human body movement. Kinesiology addresses physiological, biomechanical, and psychological dynamic principles and mechanisms of movement." In my particular case, the "movement" being studied was the passage of a specific human body from one continent to another. Experiments included stress testing for physiological and psychological chaos tolerance and quantifying the dynamics of faith required.

Kinesology. (2021, April 5). In *Wikipedia*. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kinesiology>

## The Gratitude

In my last newsletter, I shared the good news that I would be responding to the Lord's invitation to return to ministry in Thailand. I spent a total of eleven months in the U.S., relying on the kindness of friends who were willing to take in a homeless missionary. I am deeply grateful to them for their hospitality in the middle of a pandemic. I am also thankful for my team of supporters who have continued to uplift me with prayer, friendship and financial support, despite the unique challenges of the last year. If not for your partnership, I would not be able to continue serving in ministry.

## The Journey

In the weeks before my departure, I watched the Lord assemble dozens of details that would enable me to return to Thailand. I secured a flight reservation, a Certificate of Entry, a negative COVID test, a Fit to Fly certificate, a place to store my vehicle, etc. Then on February 16, I began my journey of four consecutive flights in this stylish getup.

## The Arrival

Upon arrival in Bangkok, our flight was met by at least a hundred airport staff in HazMat suits that personally escorted us through the airport, lest one of us should go astray. We passed through four checkpoints where they collected various pieces of paperwork, then we moved on through Immigration. After that, I picked up my luggage and rolled up to customs. I was concerned about how this would go because I was bringing 18-months'-worth of medication for my allergy issues (which is not illegal but had the potential to create drama). To my relief, the customs agent waved me on through and flagged the woman behind me instead. I felt like old Ben Kenobi was next to me waving his fingers and saying, "You don't need to see her identification. These aren't the droids you're looking for." Outside baggage claim, the hotel cabby was waiting for me (also dressed in a HazMat suit). He doused my luggage with straight Lysol, locked me into a plexiglass cabin in the back seat, and delivered me to my hotel.

## The Hotel

At the hotel, I was greeted by another HazMat-clad team. They checked me in at a desk in the rear-entry parking garage (lest I contaminate the lobby). I was immediately provided with disposable booties and a thermometer and instructed to text a photo of my temperature to the nurse twice per day at designated times. Next, they set me up with a phone app to order my meals. After that, my assigned nurse conducted a psych eval screening. Remarkably, I passed, which I thought was a rather impressive accomplishment because I was delirious after having traveled for the last 50 hours without sleep. I curiously inquired as to what he had intended to do if I had not been deemed mentally stable. He replied that he was prepared to prescribe anti-depressants on the spot for those who needed them. I was then granted entry to my guest room, but was

deliberately not given a key card. (As the door clicked shut, the lyrics of "Hotel California" did come to mind.)

I spent the next two weeks working on my computer, studying my textbooks, doing yoga, and enjoying the spectacular cityscape of Bangkok pictured above. On day 15, I breathed a sigh of relief after receiving two negative COVID tests and a certificate of successful quarantine completion. Whew!

Photo credit: <https://mikethemeanderthal.com/easy-chiang-mai-visa-extension-guide/>

## The Bureaucracy

But the saga was still not over. When I got to Chiang Mai on Saturday March 6, my landlord was unable to report my arrival because the Immigration Department's computer system was down and their office is closed on weekends. So she sent it via snail mail on Monday. When I went at Immigration in Chiang Mai on Tuesday the 9th, the paperwork had not yet arrived, causing some consternation. The Immigration official then refused to renew my visa, because it had expired while I was in quarantine (even though I proudly presented my quarantine certificate). The Labor Department refused to renew my work permit without a visa and Immigration refused to renew my visa without a work permit. This quandary was met with various versions of *not-my-problem*. My advocate from the Church of Christ in Thailand (the "CCT", my hosting organization) spent hours politely negotiating with the Immigration officer, but he refused to budge. I watched in dismay as my paperwork slid back and forth across the desk at least six times and the Immigration official kept insisting that I would have to leave the country and re-apply for a new visa. But eventually by God's grace, after two weeks, many hours of negotiation, three visits to Immigration, and my CCT advocate making two round-trip

flights between Bangkok and Chiang Mai, my visa and work permit were finally and miraculously approved! Somehow, the Lord had made a way in a seemingly impossible situation.

## The Welcome

I can now exhale and enjoy being back in Thailand. I arrived at the New Life Center to find that the residents had made me a card and a welcome home sign, and presented me with a bunch of roses. (There may have been tears...)

Faith is a skill that is learned through practice. You can't talk yourself into it. You have to actually exercise those muscles to figure out how they move. The goal is to learn to trust that God will accomplish what he has promised at the right time and in the right way. After this remarkable journey, I can say with confidence that it must be God's will that I continue my service in Thailand – because there is absolutely zero chance that I could have gotten back here by the sheer strength of my own will. It took a global church community and a divine kinesiologist to pull this off!