



THE PHOENIX ALLIANCE
RISE FROM ASHES

News from the Nest

Fall 2022

October * November * December

Juvenile Detention

Things changed a bit over our last year at the detention center. In addition to ongoing group activities, we were asked to spend more one-on-one time with the girls, often several hours at a time. It was a fantastic opportunity, as the girls opened up much more in those sessions. We were able to share the Gospel more effectively and answer more questions. We're so thankful that God has given us favor in this facility! In total, we worked with 46 young ladies in 2022.

One insight we've come to understand this year is that the majority of the girls we work with are involved in gangs. The gang dynamic is as foreign to us as it is frustrating, but we're learning how powerful and controlling this influence can be in these young lives.

Lastly, although we've spent years in Thailand working with girls who don't speak English, we've now had our first non-English-speaking girl in the USA. We've decided that in addition to continuing to work on speaking Thai, it's time to brush up on our Spanish!



The 2022

Storybook Gala

Thank you to all who helped make our first Storybook Gala in Eden a success! We used the classic book *The Christmas Carol* as inspiration, focusing on the past, present and future of trafficking survivors we have helped.

For our "past" segment, Teresa Cuthbertson and Genesta Perry from the Guilford County Detention Center shared from their experience in law enforcement. They shared the types of situations many of the pre-teen and teen girls find themselves in, their family backgrounds, and common challenges.

For our "present" segment, Shaana Robrock shared about the work she is doing for TPA in Northern Indiana. Shaana has worked extensively to educate teens in her area about the dangers and reality of sex trafficking. She has also trained multiple local law enforcement agencies on how to best serve victims. She shared about her work with one survivor who is walking through a recovery that includes testifying against her trafficker.

Ethan and Kanya led our "future" segment, where Kanya shared her testimony of God's great love and how it has changed her future forever. She talked about her story of being trafficked in Bangkok as a young teen, and how her life is dedicated to serving the Lord.

Overall, we were able to raise \$9,553.60! These funds are so critical for the continuation of our ministry.

We can't say "thank you" enough to all our wonderful volunteers, ministry partners, and silent auction donors. We are so thankful for God's provision and the many hands that were involved.

Is He Still Worth It?

by Kimberly Wheeler

The last year has been, without a doubt, our most difficult season as a family in ministry. After carving time from our packed schedule to help not one, but *both* sets of 70-something parents move cross-country to join us in NC, Ethan's father passed away in February. He was one of our biggest financial and spiritual supporters, and he had hoped to spend his retirement working with us in the ministry. In the midst of that, we navigated a perfect storm of reduced family support, unexpected major expenses, and the addition of multiple side jobs to keep our heads above water. We continued working with many young girls with deeply distressing stories. We had to close the door for now on being foster parents because...of all things...our bedroom windows would not pass fire inspection, and we can't afford to replace them. I could see God opening doors, but struggled to communicate these opportunities in a way that connected with our supporters. It seemed that in the blink of an eye, we went from sufficient provision to destitution, while everything in our home seemed to break at once.

Meanwhile, the *ministry* was doing great, both financially and in our operations. Go figure.

It may or may not be connected, but we also crossed the seven-year mark in 2022. We've all heard of the seven-year-itch in marriage, but apparently that timeline is also linked to burnout in ministry workers. As the year dragged on and the hole sank deeper, we began to feel thoroughly burnt out.

One day, while trying to do some reading to encourage myself, I came across the following words: Is Jesus Still Worth It? Those words shocked me but stuck in my mind. On the surface, I think all Christians would answer that easily. But when I felt like I couldn't handle any more stress over finances, and the plumbing is broken again, and we're down to one car, and we're grieving over loss in the family, and we're trying to help sort out estate issues, and we're exhausted from lack of sleep, and I'm hearing another heartbreaking story from a survivor, I thought, IS He still worth it? It was so tempting, and would be so easy, to go back to the lives we had before. A job with a regular paycheck. Ministry we could dabble in, that wasn't quite so heavy. The comfort we left, and could have again if we'd only give up.

As Elisabeth Elliot said, "discipleship always involves things which are not necessarily to our taste." Isn't that the truth? It felt like we had a whole year of things not necessarily being "to our taste". It hasn't been easy. It hasn't been comfortable. But these momentary troubles are just that; momentary.

So how do I answer that question? He is always worth it. He is worthy of all glory and honor and praise. He is worthy of any sacrifice, even our very lives. Our God has not changed. The God who directed us to sell it all and move to Southeast Asia in 2015 is the same God who is walking with us today. He never failed us through that leap of faith, and He never failed us through the trials of this past year.

We were given a great example in Job, who suffered more loss and tragedy than any other human can claim, and yet refused to turn from God. Why? Because he understood who God is, and nothing that happens in this life, no matter how it makes us feel, can change the truth of who God is. When we remember who God is, his infinite glory, power, righteousness, and His inexplicable desire to be intimately connected to us on a personal level, it truly is a foreign concept to question whether or not He is still "worth it". So while our circumstances can cloud our judgment at times, He always brings clarity when we seek Him.