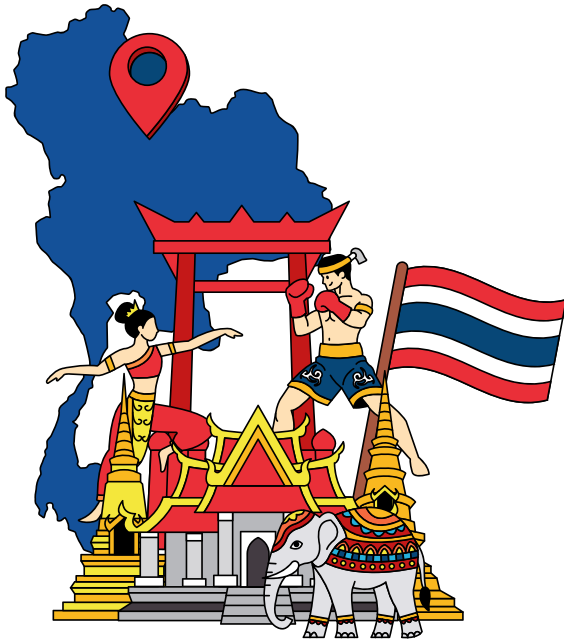


Celebrating 55 Years of AA in Thailand



Regular AA meetings have been taking place in Thailand since 1971 when a meeting started in Soi Thonglor, Bangkok, but the first mention of AA in Thailand is in *AA Comes of Age*. On page 81 the story of a letter being received from Thailand is recounted. Contact had been made by a Presbyterian minister who said, "For a long time I've been trying to get a group started here in Thailand. Recently a highly educated Thai, speaking fluent English, came along. He was a terrible case of alcoholism, and he desperately wanted to get well. Now he has had a promising period of sobriety and is eager to translate the entire A.A. literature into Siamese. He and I are already at work, starting groups. Can you give us a hand?" No dates for this letter are given, and the AA Archive doesn't have the original but it assumed to be from the 1950s (*AA Comes of Age* was written in 1956 and published in 1957).

By 1973 the Bangkok meeting had relocated to the Holy Redeemer Church in Ruamrudee, Bangkok where it remained for many years. The founder Jack B was a Catholic priest with a drink problem (who'd have thought?) and was told to get into treatment by his boss Father Harry T, also an alcoholic and the founder of the AA group in Chiang Mai, Northern Thailand. Over the following years AA Groups were established around Thailand starting with the group founded by the aforementioned Harry T at Chiang Mai in 1979. By the 1990s there were groups in many locations, including Phuket, Hua Hin, Khon Kaen, and Pattaya. These groups have their regular membership but are bolstered by the many tourists who choose Thailand for a holiday destination and are relieved to find the familiar Steps and Traditions wall hangings, preamble, pamphlet holder and AA books present in the rooms. The early groups were established by expats but by the early 80s there was a Thai group in Bangkok, and fellowship among the Thai population has grown steadily over the years particularly in Bangkok and Northern Thailand.



■ The Thai That Binds

“If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again” coupled with the slogan “Do the next right thing” might well characterize the struggles endured by the A.A. Thailand translation committee in their efforts to publish the Big Book in Thai, the second edition of which finally made it into print last year.

The first translation of *Alcoholics Anonymous* into Thai was printed in the 1980s, long before the Thailand service structure was formed. It was an effort that, unfortunately, never fully panned out. According to John M., the first chair of Thailand Area, the original version must have been translated by a political appointee at the U.N. or Thai embassy, as it was written in what is known as “Hi-So” (high-society) Thai, which is



The desire to produce Thai language literature was already established when GSO received the letter referred to in AA Comes of Age. By 1981 a translation of the Big Book had been published. It was never seen as being a perfect translation and there was a strong desire to produce a better book that properly tackled the issue of “God”. Back in that AA Comes of Age extract it was suggested by the Senior Cleric at a Buddhist temple that if “God” was replaced with “Good” in the 12 steps that could work for Thai Buddhists. Over many years a new translation was made which was eventually published in 2017 (The story of how this came about can be found in Box 459 Holiday Edition 2018 under the title “The Thai that Binds”). More recently the Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions and Living Sober have been translated, as well as a number of pamphlets. AA Thailand are grateful for the support of GSO in these endeavours, and great contacts were made with the right people at AOSM meetings.

AA Thailand has had a long association with AOSM, first sending delegates to Auckland, New Zealand in 1997. AA Thailand has a commitment stated in the Charter and Bylaws to send delegates to the AOSM, and has only not sent delegates on a few occasions (during the pandemic for example).

In 2009 the AOSM was hosted in Bangkok. The report for the meeting there, records that there were approximately 500 members in AA at the time, with meetings taking place in Bangkok (central Thailand), Chiang Mai (northern Thailand), Khon Kaen (northeastern Thailand), Pattaya (southeast of Bangkok), Hua Hin (south of Bangkok), and Phuket and Samui islands (southern Thailand). There were also less-regular meetings held in Chiang Rai and Pha Ngan, as well as smaller English-language meetings in the northeastern provinces of Maha Sarakham, Mukdahan, Nong Khai, Sakon Nakhon and Udon Thani. Around the time the AOSM was held Bangkok, AA Thailand completed the transition of the service structure for the country to Area Assembly and Districts (previously Thailand had an Intergroup structure).

8th

ASIA-OCEANIA SERVICE MEETING
of ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS





In 1997 the first Thailand Roundup was held in Pattaya. This has been a successful event attracting attendance from Thailand and across the world. In February 2026 the Roundup celebrated its 29th year. A smaller scale roundup is held in October each year in Chiang Mai, Northern Thailand arranged by local groups many of which have Thai members.

Currently the AA Thailand website (aathailand.org) lists 188 meetings taking place each week and throughout the country. The website was redesigned in 2023 and now uses the WordPress CMS to allow meetings to be listed using the TSML (Twelve Step Meeting List) plugin developed by AA members in the USA. This plugin provides compatibility with the AA meeting guide app for mobiles. This allows anyone to find meetings in Thailand and is really useful for someone planning a trip. The website has content in English and Thai providing access to materials for the professional community, recordings of speakers at the Thailand Roundup that takes place in Pattaya, as well as details of all the in-person and online meetings taking place throughout Thailand.