



LEGACY INSTITUTE

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Dear Friends and Brethren,

I am very relieved to get back to Chiang Mai. Soon after arriving in Thailand from our Passover trip to Burma, I had to be hospitalized in Bangkok with a very high fever caused by a strep infection (**Erysepelas**) that settled in my leg. But, thanks to all your prayers I am on the road to recovery -- still a little weak, but much better now. At the moment we are busy getting ready for the next school year at *Legacy Institute International Leadership Training Center*. There is a lot of work to do to prepare for this next academic year beginning June 9. The work God has given Legacy is expanding and we need trained workers for God's fields. At Passover I baptized Seng Htun, our very first student who learned the Truth of God at our school. He is now in Kachinland receiving further Bible education from Lazum Brang and will return for one more year at Legacy Leadership Center in Chiang Mai.

Before I begin telling you more exciting news about India and Thailand, I want to clear up a misconception. In my March letter this year, I talked about the beginning of my contact with Evangelist Lazum Brang in remote Kachinland. I mentioned that Pastor Brang had never had any "affiliation" with the Worldwide Church of God or any offshoot group and that the Church of God in Kachinland *had been raised up by God separate* from the rest of us. By that, I did not mean that Lazum Brang had no contact with any of our western COG groups; rather that he had *never been a "member"* of WCG or any subsequent COG organizations. In fact, before I met him, Pastor Brang had been in correspondence with WCG, UCG and other COGs. My good friend Alan Kendall, a COG elder in Australia, formerly with the Independent Church of God, has been in correspondence with Pastor Brang for many years. Mr. Kendall has faithfully kept him supplied with COG literature and has provided financial donations. So, I am sorry if I gave the impression that I was the very first western Church of God elder ever in contact with Pastor Brang. I am not. I am honored that God has used me to help the wonderful Work He is doing through Lazum Brang, but I am *not the only one* God has used.

Now, I have more good news about Thailand and India. The Work of God over here is expanding so quickly that it is just plain impossible for us to keep up. Gloria and I were committed to go to western Burma for Passover this year so I asked two Church of God elders, Herbert Vierra and Wade Frannson, both very good friends of mine, to come over to

Thailand and India respectively, to help out with Passover and Unleavened Bread services. They both agreed to help and even volunteered to pay their own way over to Asia. This year we held Passover services in 3 locations in Thailand; Chiang Mai, Mae Sot on the Burma border, and Mae Sariang in the mountains near the Karen refugee camps. Jack Aungmin was able to arrange Passover at our school in Chiang Mai, and Davidson Lebay, a Church of God deacon, officiated at Passover in Mae Sot. I was concerned about making sure I also arranged Passover for the six newly baptized members living in refugee camps along the Burma border north of Mae Sot. In addition, we had three others from the camps who wrote requesting baptism. So, I asked Herb Vierra, Legacy Institute's Secretary, if he would come over and help out. Church of God Elder Wade Fransson volunteered to go to India to preach for Passover and Unleavened Bread and counsel people in the Madras (Chennai) area seeking baptism.

Our project of translating material into the Karen language is paying off. God is using this tool to introduce the Bible Truth to those He is calling in the border refugee camps. I will let Mr. Vierra tell you in his own words the good news about the first Holy Day service ever held in Mae Sariang and the baptism of one of the Karen refugees in Thailand:

*“Upon arrival in Chiang Mai I had just enough time to check into the hotel, change my clothes and then ride out to the Legacy school for Sabbath services. Everyone was sitting and waiting quietly as we arrived. After the sermon I had dinner with Bonnie Turner and Heidi Hanisko, two volunteer Legacy instructors from the US. What a wonderful example of service and dedication to God they both are! It was awesome to see these two young women living the reality of their faith.*

*The next morning a driver picked me up at the hotel for a four-hour drive through the mountains to the city of Mae Sariang. We stopped once at a State Park high in the mountains and finally got to our destination about 2:00 in the afternoon.*

*Our troubles began almost immediately. David Mya Maung (a COG member) informed me that the hotel where the Karen were supposed to stay had backed out due to some fear regarding housing refugees from Burma. So, he had to find another place. He also told me that two of the three who requested baptism did not come along. They were afraid of being stopped at one of several police or military check points and perhaps being sent back to Burma. Heightened tensions because of the Iraq war and other issues made it extra risky to travel outside the camps. Life is difficult for the Karen, imprisoned between two nations... ironically living in the free land (Thai means free) but having no freedom. In fact, they are extorted by “legal bribery,” being charged 100 Baht per day for paperwork that allows them to be away from the refugee camps. (100 Baht is only about \$2.50. But to put it into perspective, one can buy a decent meal with a drink for about 40 Baht!)*

*The next day I arranged with David to bring the person who requested baptism to my hotel... a woman named Mondy. (Mondy is a very nice mature lady whose husband is a Baptist.) I found out she had written requesting baptism three years ago. Then, after getting no response she wrote another letter. This time Leon got it and asked David Mya Maung and Davidson Lebay (two Karen members) to meet with her. I asked her why she wanted to be baptized and was deeply moved when she told me she had been bitter and angry before coming across the Holy Days booklet... the very first booklet translated into the Karen*

language. She said when she read it she knew it was the truth and her whole attitude changed. I baptized her the next day before Passover with several Karen brethren present.

There was some mix up in understanding regarding our intended meeting and dining facilities. So David arranged for us to take the Passover service in a modified "concrete bunker" just outside town. He said it "wasn't good," but the only other option was to have it in my hotel room. That didn't seem like a good idea. Seven people in such a small room just wouldn't work well. David told me a few hours before services there was only one woman, Mondy. I didn't want any of the men to wash her feet so I asked Ampon (David's 2<sup>nd</sup> oldest daughter, an unbaptized Legacy student) if she would come to the service and wash feet with Mondy. But I made it clear that she could not take part in the wine and bread service. She graciously agreed... and was eager to participate. However, as it turned out there was another woman there who was only baptized within the last few months. I can't remember her name, but was very impressed by her, and the caliber of many of the women God is calling in this part of the world. Ampon came to the service, but sat in the back and just watched. After the foot washing she sat outside... I guess because I told her she couldn't participate in the rest of the service. These people are wonderfully childlike in their faith. Overall, the Passover service seemed to go fine. But it made me chuckle a little that the foot washing service went so easy because no one wore shoes!

The song service at the end of Passover was a bit unusual too. None of the Karen except David knew any hymns in English, and couldn't read English either. So, the songbooks I brought were no help. David and I ended up finishing the evening service singing a duet for those present! (The Karen did ask to borrow the songbooks so they could practice three songs for the Holy Day service.)

Services on the first holy day were in an upstairs room of a local restaurant and went well overall. I spent a good deal of time before the service attempting to explain just what unleavened bread was. Because the Karen don't eat bread, many analogies of why we need to be unleavened don't compute for them. After services we all went downstairs in the restaurant and had lunch together.

Reflecting on the trouble we had with music I began to wonder about translating some of the hymns into Karen, or Thai. It makes sense that we use English songbooks at the school, but this whole experience has made me think those outside the school should have the chance to sing hymns in their own language. Perhaps we should consider this.

The Sabbath between the holy days I once again spoke to those still at Legacy school. The group was pretty thin with school out, illness and injury. (Eh Moo... David's wife... was not feeling well and stayed home. Saw Ser was in a motorcycle accident just before Passover and was still in the hospital. He apparently needs an operation to repair damage to his jaw. Moo Kapaw was scraped up a little, but she was OK.) I really enjoy some of the Karen tradition in their approach to services. They don't have a song leader... they have an emcee! And it's always delightful to see the children participate in the Sabbath service by standing before the congregation and reciting scriptures they memorize in Thai. After services I had dinner once again with Bonnie and Heidi, and asked local Karen members Jack Angmin, his wife Elizabeth and David to join us as well. Sadly, I had to cut our fellowship short so my driver could get me to the airport in time for a 7:00 flight back to Bangkok.

*Up at 5:00 am to get to the Bangkok airport and checked in to make a 7:30 flight to Tokyo... a 5 ½ hour flight with a 40 minute layover before reboarding the plane for the 11 hour flight home. What a grueling flight. The Passover came and went so quickly. I eagerly look forward to keeping the feast of Tabernacles with our Karen brothers and sisters in the fall.”*

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There is also a lot of activity taking place in southern India, mostly in the area of Madras (Chennai) where the Apostle Thomas evangelized and was eventually martyred over 1900 years ago.

Michael Hubert, a deacon in God’s Church has been very active evangelizing in Madras and outlying areas of Tamil Nadu State, and now 2 groups of Hindus have become quite interested in the Gospel Message brought to this earth by The Messenger Jesus Christ. The first group consists of approximately 10 men and their families living near a village called Tirivannamalai, a drive of over 5 hours from Madras. The second group consists of AIDS patients and caregivers centered at a clinic in Gudiyatham – 5 hours in a different direction. Gloria and I have visited both these groups several times and believe that the Holy Spirit is actively working with some among them that God has chosen to enter the Kingdom.

Here is Wade Fransson’s inspiring report:

*“About a year ago, Michael met two ladies, Jayanthi, and Shibra, at the home of a local student volunteer tutor working in his Street Children program. Jayanthi, and Shibra became interested in discussing the Bible and spiritual matters, and attended most services at the Feast last year.*

*Since then Michael has continued to conduct local Sabbath lessons and discussions 2-3 weeks each month. I met with them and Jayanthi’s adult daughter, Lavanya. They had all been seeking baptism for some time, and Michael encouraged them to study, ask questions and wait. I took the opportunity to visit with them and counsel them for baptism for an hour and a half. Later, we also counseled with another lady, Mrs. Kumari, who has been attending for some time.*

*I am pleased to report that **Jayanthi, Shibra, Lavanya and Kumari** were all baptized. It was the most unusual baptisms I ever participated in up until that point, being conducted in the water cistern for Michael’s house. They all attended Passover. There were 7 of us, and I’m sure this was not a coincidence.*

*We then traveled to Tirivannamalai (five hours) and counseled and baptized **Selvam and Annamalai** - two former Hindu men who had kept the Feast of Tabernacles with us last year. This was another unusual baptism, being done in a public swimming pool during open hours. The three of us had to pretend to be there to swim to avoid suspicions, especially with the current law in Tamil Nadu against evangelism.*

*We celebrated night to be much observed with these two men, their wives and children. These men and their families are wonderful people, and I'm convinced they will all be at this year's Feast of Tabernacles, God willing. We had planned to take the men back with us to Madras after the Night to be Much Observed meal, but God had other plans.*

*We developed car trouble and while repairs were made, we spent over two hours with the family on the streets of the village. We got to know them closer as we sat together on a big pile of sand at an intersection, fighting off mosquitoes. As a result, there was a bond formed. Then we told the men that they should accompany their families back to their home village by bus since it was already dark and not good for the women to travel home alone. While this meant that the men could not accompany us to Madras for UB services, I believe that their wives perceived that Love was our first law. I'm convinced that there will be two strong Church Families in Tirivannamalai as an augmentation to the growing group in Madras.*

*We spent two more hours at a mechanic's shop in Tirivannamalai and somehow made it back to Madras on a sputtering engine after a grueling 7-hour trip. I managed 90 minutes sleep before services on the 1<sup>st</sup> Day of Unleavened Bread, attended by 10 people.*

*Friday we were supposed to travel to visit the AIDS village and counsel people interested in baptism. But I began to have stomach problems Thursday evening and this turned into a strong fever which kept me up all night. I was drenched in sweat, cramping stomach and miserable. I suspect the green slimy water of the public swimming pool was the culprit. So instead of traveling to the AIDS village I rested and read the Bible.*

*I had earlier had trouble with my flight back to the US - due to a reservation I let lapse, so I had to extend my stay an extra day (against my will) by booking a return flight early Monday morning instead of Sunday morning. I did NOT want to do this because I couldn't afford to miss that Monday at work. But God's will is done. Because of the delay of my departure, the next day I was able to visit the AIDS village, where there were people who wanted to discuss baptism.*

*Sunday the 20<sup>th</sup> was the day I "wasn't supposed to be here", but for having a problem with my reservation and flights cancelled because of the SARS crisis. But now, here I was, about to travel to the "Aids Village". We rose at about 4:30 to leave at 5:30 to make the 5-hour trip. Again, the winding roads and sights, sounds and smells of third world existence were almost overwhelming. Riding in the comfort of an air conditioned chauffeured vehicle is a virtual necessity for a westerner like myself, but God saw fit to make sure I was humbled by going on 70 hours of fruit and juice fasting for my stomach. This was the only way for me to keep my bout of "Vishnu's Revenge" under control. In this weakened state I was very aware of being outside my "comfort zone" in terms of being in control of my circumstances and future, but also very much at peace in being where God wanted me to be, traveling through India towards Gudiyatham, the "Aids Village".*

*Michael and Leon had previously made several visits to these groups of AIDS-infected outcasts. These groups are connected through Rajendran s/o Selvam (the "s/o" is a Tamil naming convention that means "son of"). When Rajendran, a former engineer, became infected with the AIDS virus he lost not only his job but was shunned by his family.*

*Rajendran has worked with government agencies to fund hospices with beds and medical supplies. The resulting program now assists about 300 people who form five groups, whose primary purpose is moral support to help combat the high suicide rate among the HIV positive in India.*

*Rajendran had assembled 12 people who had been studying the Bible truth as outlined by Michael and Leon on their various visits. After introductions, Rajendran, who's English is fairly good, explained that they wanted to be baptized to become members of God's family. He also explained that they wanted to have God as their healer.*

*In spite of not being prepared for what amounted to an impromptu Bible Study, having expected to meet with perhaps two or three people for baptismal counseling, these words provided an introduction, and I felt God inspire me as I proceeded.*

*I started by explaining that during a serious health crisis I had a number of years ago, God revealed to me that the most important healing is of the heart and mind. I explained that disease and suffering on this planet is a result of sickness of heart and mind of all people, and that God was in the process of providing this healing. I gave a number of examples and covered some related concepts before turning to Isaiah 66.*

*We looked at Isaiah 66:1-2 that shows that the powerful creator of the universe will look to the man that is humble and contrite, and trembles at His word. I explained that the good news about their unfortunate circumstances is that it had brought them to this humble and contrite attitude, where they were beginning to learn what His word is, and were showing an appropriate response. I encouraged them to continue to learn what His word says, and to continue to "tremble" in that they should continue to put it into practice. I concluded by saying that Michael and Leon would return to continue to teach, and that God and His Spirit would continue to guide and open their minds.*

*Rajendran was visibly disappointed in this outcome. It was clear that He wanted to be baptized, and explained that he did not think it was good to wait another several months, as he and the others had already been waiting several months for my visit. The truth is, I did not want to go ahead with these baptisms, and it just seemed like "too much - too fast" to me. Michael and I conferred briefly about what they did and did not know.*

*Michael explained that they had been keeping the Sabbath and had been learning about the Holy Days and many other matters. I began to question Rajendran about these points, and he confirmed what Michael had told me by explaining clearly what the Ten Commandments were and other biblical truths. This led to a lively exchange about obedience and submission to God.*

*The more I tried to find a way to "get out of" baptizing these people, the more it became clear to me that God had prepared them to baptism. After another 20 minutes or so of discussion we agreed to hold a private audience with each of them to make sure that each individual understood what was involved and wanted to proceed.*

*By the time these discussions were over there were still 13 people who wanted to be baptized. I was in for one more big surprise. It turned out that Rajendran had commissioned a baptismal pool to be built on the grounds of the hospice. This was a 5-by-five foot, four feet*

*deep pool, clean and filled with clean water. He had also commissioned a photographer to be present to record this event.*

*What a joyous experience it was to participate in the baptism of these 13 people, picturing the cleansing of their sins. My arms grew heavy and tired as I laid hands on them, asking God to send His spirit to guide, teach, protect and nurture them, but I was ecstatic.*

*On my first visit to India six months earlier for the Feast of Tabernacles, Michael shared his hope that God would once again grant him a church family so he, Terrencia and their son Ben could enjoy the wonderful times they had experienced in the Chennai congregation. It was heartrending to know that he and his family were all alone spiritually, even as he was giving so much to serve his brothers and sisters amongst the poor and lonely of Chennai.*

*On this trip it became very clear that God is at Work in India. God has granted Michael favor, and has blessed his efforts. Now I was elated to have been able to play a small part in all of this. On the trip back to Chennai we talked about what Michael would need to do to be an older brother to all of these new brothers and sisters. I'd like to ask all of you to please keep **Rajendran** and the others in Gudiyatham, as well as Michael, in your prayers."*

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So why is God calling poor Hindu farmers and AIDS patients in India? Why not educated Christian Indians who speak English? (*In the 1980's, a Church of God minister visited India and actually preached that God would only call English speaking Indians! What a lack of vision!*)

And in Thailand, why has God so far called only Karen tribal people from the refugee camps along the Thai-Burma border? There are about 500,000 Karen living in Thailand who are not refugees. But God is not calling them.

**In 1 Corinthians 1:19-21** we find:

*"For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."*

Paul continues in verses 25-29:

*"Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: **But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yes, and things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are: That no flesh should glory in His presence.**"*

God is truly calling the weak (as we also are!!!) of the world to confound the mighty. Can we TRULY accept them as our brothers and sisters? Will we warmly welcome them into the

fellowship of the greater Church of God, even though they come from pagan Hindu, Buddhist or traditional Christian backgrounds? Does it matter to us if they are refugees or AIDS patients?

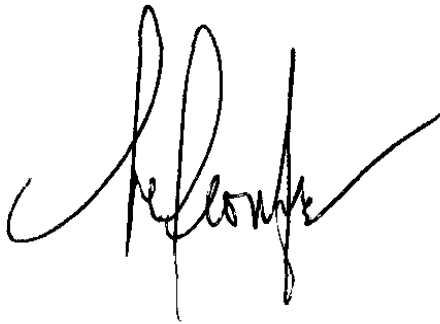
God is doing His Work. He will do it WITH or WITHOUT our help. The Holy Spirit is very active in Asia. It is getting more and more active with each passing day. God said that we are to go out and take the Gospel message of the Kingdom of God to the ends of the earth.

Some mistakenly believe that the Work is over. They think that all we have to do is “hold fast” until Jesus comes or we are carried off to a place of safety. How wrong they are! Let them come see what is taking place in far off places like Kachinland or Tamil Nadu. They will either have their eyes opened wide, or they will have to deny the very obvious fruits of the Holy Spirit!

We at Legacy Institute are honored to be a part of the Great Work of the Almighty God as He adds more and more new children into His Royal Family before our Savior and King returns to this earth. Please pray for all these newly converted children of God. Pray that they will grow in grace and knowledge and remain steadfast in the faith. And, please pray that God gives Gloria and me the protection, health and *SPIRITUAL* strength to accomplish all His Holy Will wherever He sends us.

I stand in awe of the Great Power of God!

In service to Our Lord Jesus,



Leon Sexton

**WHAT IS LEGACY INSTITUTE?**

LEGACY INSTITUTE is a private, non-profit, charitable foundation and is not affiliated with any human church organization. Legacy Institute seeks to serve and help mankind in the spirit and example of our Lord Jesus Christ. His instructions were to freely give. This means without discrimination and without prejudice. Your donations to Legacy Institute are tax deductible in the USA.