



LEGACY INSTITUTE

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Dear Fellow-servants with Jesus Christ,

I recently had a phone conversation with Lazum Brang, the Kachin Church of God evangelist in Burma (Myanmar). I received a letter from him saying he would be traveling to Rangoon (Yangon). So I took the chance to contact him by phone. Normally Lazum Brang will stay in Rangoon with COG Pastor David Ye Gyan who has a telephone in his house.

I was able to talk to Lazum Brang for about 30 minutes. Lazum Brang just returned from an evangelistic tour to the China border area. What Lazum Brang calls the “China Border” is a stretch of territory that forms the border between Kachinland in the far north of Burma and the southernmost province of China known as Yunnan. This mountainous area is sparsely populated by different ethnic tribal groups; mostly Kachin, Kokang, Wa and others. The border is very “fluid” - meaning that the locals cross freely at will. Two of our first year students at the Legacy Institute Leadership Training Center are from the China border.

The Holy Spirit of the Almighty is now very active in this border region. There are currently 6 COG families living there; observing the commandments of God and staying faithful to Our Lord Jesus Christ. Lazum Brang told me that 4 new families began keeping the Sabbath. After 2 months their local protestant pastor found out about their Sabbath-keeping and disfellowshipped them. So they now want to be a part of God’s Church. Lazum Brang visited them and encouraged them to stay faithful to the Truth they have been given. He wants me to go with him next time and baptize these newly called individuals.

In the Central Shan States near the city of Taungu, a small group of Church of God families gather for the Sabbath under the leadership of Saw Htoo Saw, a Karen elder. He was a long-time “*lay pastor*” in a protestant group until his conversion to God’s Truth. (*note: A “lay pastor” is someone who fulfills the role of a pastor – but is not officially ordained by a church group or organization.*)

I baptized Saw Htoo Saw several years ago in Rangoon. As of my phone conversation with Pastor Brang several days ago, there are now 8 more individuals seeking baptism in Saw Htoo Saw’s area.

Lazum Brang is also getting letters requesting visits in the following areas: Upper Shan States just north of Htoo Saw’s area; Putao, the far north of Kachinland next to Tibet; and other areas, including the far south of Burma in the delta region. As you can see, he stays very, very busy.

We discussed our upcoming visit to Burma for the Spring Holy Days. Pastor Brang wants Gloria and me to accompany him to Taungu in the Central Shan States, where we will counsel, baptize and observe the Passover and first Holy Day of Unleavened Bread. Church of God brethren will be coming from Kachinland, Rangoon and Central and Northern Shan States. Then we plan to travel to Kalaymyo, where we will observe the last Holy Day of Unleavened Bread with the Chin Hills Church of God brethren gathered together from the far West. We are also invited to attend the annual *Church of God Elder's Conference* to be held in Kalyamyo at that time.

Please pray that all plans will work out according to the Will of Almighty God. And, please pray for our health and protection from government interference. This will be a very important trip. While Gloria and I are not actively pasturing in Burma, we ARE actively engaged in what I call "Church Building". I am not talking about a building in which a church congregation meets. I am talking about raising up and nurturing new fledgling Church of God congregations all over Burma, Thailand and other parts of Southeast Asia. And currently, it seems that the Holy Spirit is most active in ***Burma and the China Border areas***.

The job of an *evangelist* is to evangelize. An evangelist is to go forth preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to every place where the Holy Spirit leads him. The fruits of his preaching will be the called out ones he then baptizes. It is the job of the evangelist to be Jesus' instrument to bring light into a world of darkness. But because he must go forth into additional areas to continue his fundamental calling of preaching the Gospel to other far off places, he can only stay a relatively short time in one location teaching the brethren to "*observe all things whatsoever I have commanded*".

Staying in one place and actively nurturing the sheep God has called is the primary job of a *pastor*. A pastor pastures the sheep! He feeds them the bread from heaven (*the truth of God's Word*) and actively leads them to the waters of life (*spiritual growth*). He protects them from wolves bent on devouring them (*false teachers*) and watches out for evidence of disease in the flock (*spiritual leavening of sin*).

The focus of the evangelist is the spreading of the Gospel and raising up new churches. The focus of the pastor is to lead and nurture one or more local congregations. It is very difficult (if not impossible) to be BOTH a pastor and an evangelist! Church building means we have to concentrate on the job God has chosen us to do. Not every evangelist is also a pastor. And not every pastor can or should evangelize. Admittedly, there is room for cross-over in some cases. But ideally, each should be totally devoted to his primary calling. If a pastor is also trying to travel and evangelize, his local congregation will suffer and be vulnerable to attack. If the evangelist is busy pasturing local congregations, how can he travel for weeks, and sometimes even months at a time preaching the Good News of the Kingdom?

The answer is, for effective church building, we need both the pastor and the evangelist actively engaged and concentrated in their respective callings.

In Burma, Lazum Brang is a very active evangelist. He travels, sometimes even with his wife and 4 daughters, throughout the length and breadth of Burma, Kachinland and the China Border

region. Small fellowships of the Church of God are being raised up. Who will act as pastors to these new, fledgling churches?

Evangelist Brang is blessed with several unordained elders who help him in pasturing those God is calling. One elder is Lashi Naw in Na Mawn, Kachinland -- Brang's home church. Another is Saw Htoo Saw, who pastors the Church of God in Central Shan States. In Rangoon, Pastor David Ye Gyan oversees the Church of God congregation in the capital city. In the Chin Hills area and Kalyamyo, Pastor Peter Za Mung and other ordained pastors are already leading their flocks. But as new, small congregations are raised up, the need for more church pastors who can remain in one place and nurture the flocks is paramount. We must all pray for this.

For those of us who experienced the history of the RCG/WCG (Radio Church of God/Worldwide Church of God), we had the benefit of Ambassador College, a 4-year liberal arts college which turned out Bible-trained young men and women who could step into the roles of local pastors with their wives, or into other leadership roles in local church congregations. The phenomenal growth of that ministry could not have taken place without the well-spring of an educational institution that turned out trained people to assist in "church building". Small, new congregations grew into bigger and bigger congregations because there was someone there to organize, feed, nurture and protect the flock on a consistent basis.

Providing a "well-spring" in Asia for just such young "church-builders" is the fundamental purpose why we started the Legacy Institute Leadership Training Center in Chiang Mai, Thailand. While we are not naive enough to believe that God will call *every* one of our students to His Church or His ministry; we *DO* hope and pray that He *will* choose *SOME* to help serve in evangelizing and pasturing local congregations. God's will be done! As for the others, maybe they can be a part of Church of God congregations in their own countries, and make a positive contribution to their own people and communities, even if they are not called to God's evangelistic or pastoral service.

Besides the development of "church workers" through the Legacy Institute Leadership Training Center, Gloria and I recognize that God has – as part of HIS job description for us here in Asia – given us the important role of teaching TRUE DOCTRINE to the various Church of God ministries and congregations that already exist. We are already doing this in Burma. We have been invited by several existing COG congregations, and other newly converted groups, to come and teach them the Truth of God's Holy Word. Hundreds are now keeping the Annual Holy Days, observing tithing and other true doctrines as a result. This is an important part of "church building" because the various Churches of God from different traditions are now coming into contact with one another. As we do, we compare similarities as well as differences in doctrine, learn from one another, and eventually – TOGETHER – come to the fullness of the knowledge of Christ through mutual respect and the unifying power of the Holy Spirit! It is truly wonderful to see this all happen.

Brethren, do we really UNDERSTAND the awesome value of the Truth we have been given? Do we stand speechless at what God is doing around the world in far-flung places such as India, Asia, South America and Africa? It is mind-boggling what God, in His Wisdom and Grace, is accomplishing in the hearts and minds of those who live in places *we find difficult to even*

pronounce! I am humbled by the magnitude of God's Power! I am made humble because it is happening before my very eyes! What a wonderful God and Lord we serve!

The harvest is vast, but the laborers are few. Please pray that God sends more workers into His harvest!

Now back to my phone conversation with Lazum Brang. He is opening a branch of Legacy Institute in Na Mawn, Lake Indawgyi, Kachinland. The course of instruction will be for 3 months during the beginning of the monsoon season – June through August. Courses will be intensive Bible, English, and some Computer training. This year's Kachin graduates of Legacy Institute will go to serve with Lazum Brang in Kachinland. Lazum Brang has informed me that many young people want to come, but he will accept only 20. He told me that he had to return quickly to Na Mawn to oversee the construction of the school/church building.

In past reports I believe I have mentioned that the construction of a church hall by Lazum Brang was halted due to an injunction by the local government against the building of churches. Now, instead, he will be building a "school building". This building can also serve as a place of gathering for church services. But its primary purpose will be for weekly classes in the Legacy Institute branch school.

Volunteer Teachers Needed

We are now starting recruiting efforts for next year's volunteer teachers for Legacy Institute Leadership Training Center in Chiang Mai, Thailand. The school year will last from mid-June 2004 until the end of February 2005. Volunteers must be at least 20 years of age and have completed at least 2 years college or university. We are looking for those with education and/or experience in English, Computers, Music and Organic Agriculture. We need volunteers able to serve for the whole school year. Those serving in Thailand must have no chronic health problems or serious recent illnesses. While Thailand has modern hospitals and well-trained doctors, it is still a developing country. Volunteers will be challenged both physically and mentally in a way most have not experienced. Each must be in good health, and remain in good health, to sustain a year's service. Thailand requires no vaccinations at this time.

All travel and visa expenses are the responsibility of the volunteer. Adequate housing and food are provided by Legacy Institute. However, we cannot guarantee that volunteers will have soft beds and hot showers. Also, Thai food is provided – *not* western food. If someone has an addiction to McDonald's hamburgers or pizza, they can get these items easily in Chiang Mai (at their own expense).

Volunteers can expect hardships. They can expect frustrations. But more importantly, they can also expect to have a spiritually rewarding experience and the satisfaction of helping to change young lives forever, and in a way that reflects the influence of the Holy Spirit of God.

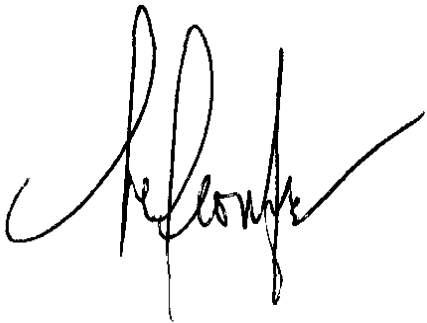
Anyone wanting further information about service in Thailand and to acquire an application form, please contact Anita Showers at mshowers@wilkshire.net, or write Mrs. Showers at the address on top of this letter.

Trip to US

The last time Gloria and I made a trip back to the U.S., we were able to give an informative *power point* presentation on Lazum Brang and the brethren in Myanmar (Burma), Thailand and India, and show examples of what Legacy Institute is accomplishing in Asia. Now we are planning another trip to the states during the month of May and are preparing a new presentation about the *Leadership Training Center* in Thailand. If you are interested in meeting with Gloria and me and finding out more about Legacy Institute; or if you are interested in possibly hosting a presentation to your church congregation or group, please contact *Herb Vierra* in California or *Anita Showers* in Ohio to see if we will be in an area close to you. Please let us know before the end of March so we have time to plan our schedule. In the western United States, please contact Herb Vierra at 626-357-2588. In the east call Anita Showers at 330-852-2709.

Well, that's all for now. We are busy preparing for our very first graduation ceremony at *Legacy Institute Leadership Training Center* which will take place on February 22. Our young graduates will then begin their 10 month work experience service program. Please pray that God uses these young people according to His Will. And please pray that God continues to work with their hearts and minds to bring them to the full knowledge of His Truth.

In Jesus' Service,



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.

Leon Sexton

P.S. The Avian (bird) Flu is epidemic now in Thailand and other countries here in Asia. After an initial 2-month attempt to cover it up – the Thai government is now actually exterminating millions of chickens. As a safety precaution at Legacy school, we have cut out chicken and eggs from our menu. So far, our own chickens and ducks are OK. Please pray that God continues to protect our students, teachers, and all our church brethren throughout Asia (and even our chickens and ducks)! Thank you all.