



LEGACY INSTITUTE

P.O. Box 7, Dundee, Ohio 44624
www.legacyinstitute.org
mshowers@wilkshire.net

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Dear Fellow-laborers,

What is Legacy Institute? Is it a foundation? Is it a church? Is it a church that “fronts” as a foundation? Periodically the nature of Legacy Institute as an institution gets called into question. The questions are understandable because Legacy Institute is a foundation – but it sometimes looks and does things like a church! Why? Maybe I can shed some light on the issues.

Sometimes I hear this said: *“If it looks like a duck, walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, then it’s a duck!”* This is used by some who want to put Legacy Institute into a neat little box as a church organization. But, while this is a clever saying, it is not applicable to Legacy Institute. It is said: *“Well, you preach; you baptize; you raise up church congregations; you even ordain ministers! How can you not be a church?”*

There is a very simple answer to that question! But how many are able to understand it when I say, “Legacy Institute is NOT a church - but we are PART of *THE* Church!”? Is this difficult to understand? Please let me explain.

Legacy Institute is a physical, corporate entity called a charitable foundation created by humans according to the laws of the State of Texas. The Church of God is a SPIRITUAL entity founded by Jesus Christ, **empowered by the Holy Spirit** on the first Pentecost after the ascension of Jesus, and legitimized by the Laws of the God of heaven and earth.

Legacy Institute was created as a TOOL to accomplish the stated goals of serving our Creator God according to His Will and serving our fellow man as God gives us direction and resources. Legacy has no “membership”. It is made up of a Board of Directors who are human beings and a staff of volunteers and supporters who give their time, prayers and financial support to accomplish the foundation’s stated goals. The CHURCH, on the other hand, is a SPIRITUAL ENTITY created by ALMIGHTY GOD, led by JESUS the KING and the members are made up of human beings in which the HOLY SPIRIT of God dwells.

I am the president or “head” of the humanly created entity called “Legacy Institute”. Our Lord Jesus is the *Head of the True Church of God*. While Legacy is a service ministry of that Church, we are NOT **THE Church** – nor are we formed as a human “church” entity. If that is hard for people to understand, then these same people should re-evaluate their understanding of what the “Church” really is!

I think we are all somewhat encumbered by what I call the “True Church Syndrome”. The basic premise of this syndrome is that, “*only WE are the TRUE CHURCH and everyone else is NOT!*” Taken to the extreme, those who adhere to this premise believe that only THEY will receive salvation and everyone else will either suffer the Tribulation or even lose out on salvation all together. Only THEY are the chosen ones. A milder form of this idea is that, while maybe the “others” will not lose out on salvation, at the very best, they will only achieve the status of “second class citizens” in the Kingdom of God!

Frankly, this kind of thinking is dangerous. It is dangerous because it blinds those who think this way to the obvious and apparent fruits of the Holy Spirit actively at work in others who are not members of the same human “church organization”.

Let me give you an example. I was called by God through the ministry of Herbert W. Armstrong and the Worldwide Church of God. I am grateful and eternally thankful that God chose to call me out of this world of corruption and sin, wash me clean and teach me His Truth. He used the humanly created, physical corporate entity of the WCG to do this. Could he have done it another way? Of course! He is God, after all! He could have talked to me from a bush like He did to Moses, or He could have used a talking donkey like He did with Balaam! He could have struck me down with blindness like Paul or He could have called me in my mother’s womb like he did with Jeremiah! But He didn’t do it that way. He chose instead to call me through published literature and a voice on the radio.

After being called into the SPIRITUAL Church, I was *also* enrolled on the membership list of the corporate entity known as the Worldwide Church of God. A baptism card was filled out on me and placed in the appropriate file. I was taught that the WCG is the ONLY TRUE Church and everyone else was either a FALSE church or a DEAD church. At that time I didn’t stop to think seriously about the ramifications of this concept. What about the “other” Churches of God? Were there people among them in whom the Holy Spirit was dwelling? Were they faithful in keeping the commandments of God as God gave them understanding? Did they demonstrate the active fruits of the Holy Spirit in their personal lives and the “Work” they were given to do?

I didn’t stop to think much about these things. I was too busy being self-righteous! Later as an ordained minister in the WCG, I had occasion to meet other ministers from Sabbatarian groups whose faithfulness and dedication to God’s Word caused me to start asking the question: “Could there be converted people – led by God’s Spirit – and NOT be part of the WCG?”

Then Mr. Herbert Armstrong died – and what I assumed was the only “True Church” – fell apart.

For various reasons, I decided not to “join” one or another of the corporate Church of God entities that sprung up after the breakup of the WCG. Instead I embarked on what I call my “Jonah years” where I was on the run from the calling God had given me. I tried to be a businessman with little (*very little!*) success. But God used business failures and a “singular event” to bring me back to the job He had given me in the first place.

It was rapidly becoming apparent that I was a prodigal son that needed to come home. Then an opportunity came up to visit evangelist Lazum Brang in the wilds of Kachinland north of Burma.

This is the “singular event” I am referring to. This invitation from Lazum Brang and my consequent visit to Kachinland became a WAKE-UP CALL to the reality of the way the Almighty God works. It set me back on course. It gave me a new lease on life. It restored my faith and my dedication to the calling God had given me. I saw the POWER of the Holy Spirit at work in ways I never expected! I was humbled and empowered at the same time. This experience made me remember what the minister said as he baptized me:

“...I baptize you, NOT into any SECT or DENOMINATION, but into the name of the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit, by the AUTHORITY of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...”

I recently wrote a letter to an elder in a fellow COG organization that was interested in finding out more about Legacy Institute and the connection we have with Kachin evangelist Lazum Brang. Below are some excerpts from that letter:

“Legacy Institute does not operate as a church organization. Legacy Institute is a non-profit, charitable foundation formed under the laws of the State of Texas, U.S.A. However, we are a ministry that seeks to further and support the Work of God in preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom to all the world and helping to build the Church that Jesus founded nearly 2000 years ago, and for which He is now the living, active Head. Legacy Institute is not affiliated with nor receives financial support from any individual large COG organization. We do receive donations from individuals, who come from many different COG affiliations and backgrounds, as well as, several small independent COG congregations. One of our board members, Herbert Vierra is an Elder in the UCG, but his affiliation to that COG organization is incidental to the work of Legacy Institute.

“We believe the Church of God is a spiritual organism and not limited to one or more of our human church organizations. As a spiritual organism, the Holy Spirit is active in many Church of God groups called by different names and organized in different ways. The common denominator of us all is the Holy Spirit, our faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to the Laws of God as outlined in His Holy Word. As a result, Legacy Institute recognizes that it is God who chooses His servants and directs and guides them through the power of His Holy Spirit according to His express Will. God raises up people at various times and in various places, and empowers them to do His Will. Such servants are placed in the Body of Christ as He sees fit.

“As a fundamental maxim, Legacy Institute recognizes the God-ordained, Spirit-led fruits of other ministries and seeks to support and help – where possible – those ministries, in a Spirit of brotherhood and mutual respect. In other words, Legacy Institute seeks to recognize and support what GOD IS ALREADY DOING in Asia, Africa and other areas.”

“When I met Lazum Brang in 1999 in Kachinland, I knew of no direct affiliation with any of the COG7 organizations or any other COG group. He showed me literature from several COG groups including old WCG, UCG, GCG, LCG, COG7, etc.; including SDA literature (Lazum Brang attended an SDA seminary in Burma as a young man). I found an unordained evangelist; printing simple Sabbath tracts and sending them out as he could afford the envelopes and stamps. I found a faithful servant of God, full of the Spirit, absolutely dedicated to carrying out His Father’s Will. He had been doing this faithfully – and alone – for over 7 years and, as far as

I am aware – with little support from any of our COG groups. Legacy Institute began to support him in the Work God has given him to do and I ordained him as an elder in the Church of God. He received his ordination certificate from the Independent Church of God in Australia. We did not ask him to join the “Legacy Church”. We did not ask him to come under our “umbrella” or anybody else’s. We simply recognized the Power of God ACTIVELY working in him and decided to provide resources, as possible, for him to continue and expand the ministry God already had given him. Since that time, numerous Church of God congregations have been raised up through his evangelistic efforts with little assistance – other than financial, from Legacy Institute. We do not “claim” Lazum Brang. He belongs to God.”

Meeting Lazum Brang was an eye-opener. It revealed to me the vast power of the Holy Spirit in a way I never expected. Lazum Brang studied at an SDA seminary as a young man. He became one of the first Sabbath-keepers among his people. Later he learned more of the Truth of God’s Word from meeting a Church of God 7th Day minister in India and through subsequent study of COG literature. But the fledgling Church of God congregation I found in the Lake Indawgyi region of Kachinland was raised up SEPARATE from any western organization. God did it through the power of the Holy Spirit actively at work in His chosen vessel – Lazum Brang. God didn’t need me to do this. And He didn’t need WCG, UCG, GCG, LCG, PCG, COG7 or any other COG to do this. God obviously USED literature from various of these organizations to bring understanding to the heart and mind of Lazum Brang. But it was the power of God’s Holy Spirit that brought about the conversion of his mind to the Truth.

Do any of us REALLY believe that God works only through one man or only through one organization? Is this Biblical or just the selfish imagination of the human heart? Show me in YOUR BIBLE where God has limited Himself to only work through one man or one organization! My Bible shows something very different.

During the period of the 1st Century Church, Paul and his team came across someone preaching Jesus Christ who was NOT a part of their “group”. What did they do? Let’s look at the Biblical record.

In Acts 18, Paul was traveling in Greece with Aquila and Priscilla. Silas and Timothy, other members of his evangelistic team met up with him there. Paul preached in Corinth and many were converted, both Jews and Greeks. God told him to be bold because He had many people in the city to be called. He then sailed with Aquila and Priscilla to Ephesus. Paul then left both of them in Ephesus and traveled to Caesarea.

Meanwhile something happened in Ephesus that should grab our attention. Let’s read verses 24 through 26: *“Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born in Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John.”*

Wait a minute! Paul was the Apostle to the Gentiles. Ephesus was his territory. He leaves, and suddenly this guy shows up out of nowhere preaching Christ? And, not only is he NOT part of Paul’s group, but he is *not even baptized* with the baptism of Jesus!

What did Aquila and Priscilla do? Did they dismiss Apollos as a “false teacher?” Did they tell the brethren to stay away from him because he was not a part of the “True Church” and wasn’t even baptized? Or did they see something at work here that they recognized as coming from God Himself!

Well, the answer is in verse 26, “*When Aquila and Priscilla heard him preaching boldly, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.*”

Let’s notice several things that are very important:

1. Even though Apollos had only been baptized by John, he was **powerful in the Scriptures** and was **preaching Christ BOLDLY**.
2. He was **fervent in the Spirit!**
3. He **taught the things of the Lord accurately!** And lastly,
4. He was **willing to listen with an open heart** to all the things that Aquila and Priscilla taught him.

Aquila and Priscilla recognized the active and powerful fruits of the Holy Spirit working in Apollos, and they welcomed him as a fellow-worker in the fields of God, ***even though he was NOT a part of their group.***

Not only that, but the brethren at Ephesus sent him on his way to Achaia with a **letter of recommendation** to the brethren there! This also bore fruit. The Bible then says Apollos, “...*greatly helped those who had believed through grace; for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ.*” (Verses 27-28)

What did Paul think about all this? Did he see Apollos as a threat? Or did he too embrace him as a fellow-servant of Jesus Christ? We learn Paul’s thoughts in the Book of 1st Corinthians, Chapter 1. Here it has come to his attention that divisions were taking place in the Corinthian Church. Let’s pick it up in verse 12: “...*each of you says, ‘I am of Paul,’ or ‘I am of Apollos,’ or ‘I am of Cephas (Peter),’ or ‘I am of Christ.’*”

Instead of taking the opportunity to “reign in the rebels” and get them “back in line” to his own authority; Paul took the opportunity to teach the Corinthians a very important principle about the government of God. He said, “*Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?*” (Verse 13)

Paul did not point the brethren to himself or any other human being. Instead he pointed them to the Living Head of the Church, Jesus Christ. Jesus did not just start the Church 2000 years ago and then ascend to Heaven and turn everything over to the Apostles. Instead, He is the ACTIVE, VIBRANT, Leader and Head of the Church of God today. Paul knew better than anyone that God chooses *whom He wants, when He wants, where He wants* and gives them a job to do *as it pleases Him!* Remember, Paul was a great enemy of the True Church when Jesus struck him

down and made him His servant – like one “...*born out of due time.*” (ICor. 15:8) It took the brethren a long time to accept Paul, their former persecutor, as one chosen by God.

Paul rebukes the Corinthian members for their divisive spirit: “*For you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? For when one says, ‘I am of Paul,’ and another, ‘I am of Apollos,’ are you not carnal?*” (1 Cor. 3:3-4)

Paul again points them away from the human instruments and directs them to Christ: “*Who then is Paul? And who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God’s fellow-workers; and you are God’s field, you are God’s building.”*

Notice how much Paul emphasizes that Apollos is his fellow-worker. Notice how much he recognized him as an important part of the Work of God! Notice how he preaches UNITY and the OVERLORDSHIP of Jesus! Notice that he said he and Apollos WERE ONE!

Brethren, if only we today could see as Paul saw. If only the scales would fall from our eyes and we could lay aside our selfish, carnal, prideful, exclusivist natures and embrace our various Churches of God as fellow-laborers in God’s fields!

Yes, we have differences. But many of us are too busy saying, “I am of Paul” or “I am of Apollos” to focus on our similarities — and most importantly — the spiritual fruits that each of our various human Church of God organizations are bearing to the Greater Glory of God.

Legacy Institute is not a church for a very important reason. We don’t need to be. We are ALREADY a part of the Spiritual Church of God. We have ALREADY been given a commission by God. We are ALREADY carrying out that commission and bearing the fruits of the Holy Spirit as God leads us. God is ALREADY providing sufficient resources to carry out whatever He wants us to do. We don’t need a stamp of approval from anyone to legitimize us – God has ALREADY taken care of that.

We don’t need to start a human church organization to do God’s Will. We don’t need to “join” anybody. We don’t need anyone’s “umbrella.” As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:7, “*So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.*”

Legacy Institute continues to follow one of the founding principles of our existence. We will follow where God leads us. We will seek out where God is ALREADY opening minds and hearts. We will help support whomever He has ALREADY chosen as His servants in a Spirit of mutual respect and brotherhood as God gives us the resources.

Legacy is not a duck.

Prayer Requests

There are several very important things I need to ask all of you to pray about. Prayer is a very powerful instrument for accomplishing the Work of God. Our prayers together can make all the difference in the world to the Work we have been given to do and cause miracles to happen in the lives of our brethren scattered in remote places of the world.

Pastor Saw Htoo Saw Dies

A great tragedy has struck! Pastor Htoo Saw is dead. I have no details. I only received a recent letter from Lazum Brang informing me of his untimely death on January 2. This is a big blow to the preaching of the Gospel in Burma. Saw Htoo Saw was an unordained pastor in a Protestant group for over 30 years. He was a graduate of a Baptist Seminary and spoke very good English. God called him to the Work of God and I baptized him several years ago.

Saw Htoo Saw was actively engaged in evangelizing among his Karen tribal people in Central Burma through preaching and writing Church of God tracts in the Karen language. The last time I met him, we were observing Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread together in Western Burma. He was highly respected among the Church of God elders and absolutely dedicated to the Truth God revealed to him.

His efforts in God's service were paying off. There are now approximately 8 families in his small congregation recently converted to the Bible Truth. There are also several new persons seeking baptism. Who will now take care of them? Who will now pastor this small but growing flock? We were planning to go to his area for Passover and the 1st Day of Unleavened Bread. We will still go, baptize those who are ready and counsel and comfort this new, fledgling congregation. But we cannot stay. Our Lord Jesus will have to intervene to keep things on track in Central Burma.

The harvest is truly plenteous, *but the laborers are few!*

Please pray that God comforts Saw Htoo Saw's family and the new babes in Christ in Taungu and that God will provide a new worker or workers to pick up where Saw Htoo Saw left off.

Prayers for Kaiser Hla Htoo

Kaiser is the only brother of the 6 Hla Htoo sisters, all of which are either baptized or attend Church of God services. He is the son of General Hla Htoo (now deceased) who was a part of the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) at war with the Burmese Army. Kaiser was a soldier in the KNLA and was captured about 8 months ago. He escaped and made it back to Thailand. He was severely tortured while in captivity. He is presently in the hospital with multiple injuries and is suffering extreme mental trauma from his ordeal. The doctors say that, while he may recover physically, they are concerned the many tortures have permanently scarred him psychologically. He is not able to talk and fearfully huddles in a corner of his hospital room. Though the family is very relieved of his escape, they are extremely concerned about his physical and mental condition. Please pray for Kaiser. He will need God's intervention to recover fully.

Permanent Location for Legacy School and Building Fund

For over 2 years now we have been leasing the land and buildings for the Legacy School in Chiang Mai. Recently, we have been praying to God to show us His Will concerning the location for the school and whether or not we should try to buy the land or prepare to move. Our lease is up next year and the owners could unilaterally decide to raise the rent or even lease the property to someone else. We are now asking God to miraculously intervene in providing enough money to purchase the property and for construction of needed buildings. God has always provided – *if He wants us to do something!*

Now we have a chance to purchase the land on which the farm portion of the school is located. There is enough land to house our campus and even expand. We were recently informed that the owner wants to sell. Since we are now registered as an official Thailand foundation, the bank will lend us the money to purchase the property with a low interest rate. In the long run, we will end up paying less on a monthly basis than we are paying now for facilities. But, we need enough funds for the down-payment and the construction of the men's and women's dormitories.

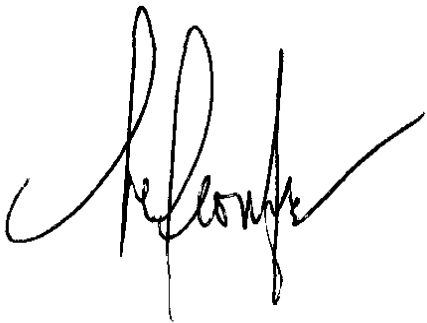
For many reasons we are in Thailand for the long haul. The Work of God is growing in Asia. Trained workers are needed as laborers in God's fields. It is the purpose and goal of Legacy Institute to provide those trained workers as God directs. Thailand provides a haven of religious freedom in which to train such workers in peace and safety. We have established ourselves with the local villagers and they have accepted us as a part of their community. The location is ideal for our purposes.

Please pray that God provides the financial resources to make the down payment and also enough to build the necessary facilities.

We all at Legacy recognize that we cannot do any of this alone. We need the gracious guidance of God Almighty and the prayers and support of all of you.

Thank you for all your prayers. We will keep you posted.

Your fellow-laborer in Jesus,



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.