



LEGACY INSTITUTE

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***“Yet I have reserved seven thousand, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal,
And whose lips have not kissed him.” I Kings 19:18***

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Dear Fellow-workers in the Fields of God,

I returned to Thailand a few days ago from a very successful Pentecost and 2nd annual meeting of the *General Conference of the Church of God in Myanmar*, only to land in the hospital with an acute case of cellulitis in my leg. This is the third time and for the third year that I have returned from Myanmar (Burma) to come down with this infection. The doctor informs me that I have a susceptibility to cellulitis and I must be extra careful with sanitation while traveling.

They discharged me from the hospital yesterday and I am now recuperating at home in Chiang Mai. I thank every one of you from the bottom of my heart for your prayers. Immediately it really made a difference and I could tell the turn around and accelerated healing that took place soon after my sister Anita sent out the email asking for prayers. We have a difficult job over here, and we really couldn't do it without the fervent prayers of all you saints at home!! Now back to my report of the trip to Burma on Pentecost.

Pentecost and the *General Conference* were held in a city called Kalaymyo, at the base of the Chin Hills of western Burma (Burma and Myanmar are two names for the same country. The military government changed the name of the country because they believe that the name “Burma” reflected the negative image of their colonial past). While in Myanmar for Unleavened Bread, I expected them to hold the conference at that time. But most of the elders couldn't make it because of Passover responsibilities in their own congregations. They decided to hold the conference at Pentecost and I was asked to return and chair the annual meeting of this new Church of God organization. The purpose of creating this annual *General Conference* is primarily two-fold:

1. Bring elders and leaders of the various Church of God fellowships in Myanmar together to find common ground for unity and,
2. Find ways to cooperate in accomplishing Jesus' commission to his church to:
 - a. Preach the Gospel of the Kingdom,
 - b. Baptize and,
 - c. Teach all He commanded. (Matt. 28:18-20)

Western Myanmar and northeastern India have a long history of Church of God evangelistic efforts and there are many COG fellowships, scattered like grains of salt throughout this mountainous part of the world. It is believed that there are over 15,000 Church of God members living in this region. But, since few keep records and no one has ever conducted a regional COG “census”, no one really knows exactly how many there are.

Attending the meeting were 9 pastors (including me) and 10 deacons representing various individual fellowships. By and far the largest group represented by Evangelist Lazum Brang from Kachinland was the 7 small churches and scattered individual members totaling over 350. Pastor Peter Za Hmung represents the second largest group, the Kalaymyo COG congregation of about 150 persons. Others represented congregations of 10-30 persons.

The structure of the General Conference is simple. They all have joined together into one “organization” called simply the *Church of God of Myanmar*. Each pastor maintains his own congregation. Myanmar is divided into 2 ecclesiastical regions: the western region consisting of upper and lower Chin Hills, and the northern-eastern-southern areas of Burma, which makes up the second ecclesiastical region. Chin pastor Peter Za Hmung was chosen as coordinator of the western region and Kachin evangelist Lazum Brang is coordinator of the north-east-south region of Myanmar. There is no President or Pastor-General and there are no ministerial ranks. Each year the conference delegates select a Chairman for the following year. It is the duty of that individual to coordinate activities of the General Conference and lead next year’s meeting. A tithe of each congregation’s income is collected for the evangelistic activities of the General Conference. Every delegate attending can cast a single “vote”. But decisions are usually arrived at by discussion and consensus.

High on the list of this year’s priorities was to decide on a platform of fundamental doctrines that would determine membership in the conference. There are some differences in doctrinal beliefs among the various fellowships in Myanmar. For instance, some keep the annual Holy Days and some do not (although all the men present do observe them). But one of the goals of the conference is to maintain doctrinal integrity according to God’s Holy Word. So, it was necessary to determine fundamental doctrines that would provide a foundation for unity. Here are the fundamental doctrines decided upon:

1. Seventh Day Sabbath
2. 14th Nissan Passover observance
3. Non-Trinitarian
4. No military participation
5. Baptism by immersion

All the men present observe the Annual Sabbaths. But it was decided to leave this doctrine out of the platform for now, as this would preclude membership in the General Conference by other COG groups that keep the weekly Sabbath but not the Holy Days.

All of us in the Body of Christ need to GROW in grace and knowledge. And we all need to learn to have patience. We should maintain an open mind. None of us have ALL the Truth! There are some things our Asian brethren understand BETTER than we do! We can learn from them and

they can learn from us. If the Holy Spirit is active with us AND with them – we BOTH will grow together into the fullness of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

The next topic on the agenda was the discussion of evangelistic activities. Communications and travel are very difficult in Myanmar. Only the COG members in Rangoon have a telephone. Few have electricity. There are no fax machines or email facilities near where most members live. In the Chin Hills, there are few roads and NO public transportation. Only one member (living in Rangoon) has a car. A different level of technology is needed to carry out the Work of preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom. So what do these men REALLY need?

After lengthy discussion, it was decided that translations of Church of God material into their tribal languages was very important. The Chin, speak 52 different dialects. Only a minority, speak Burmese. Very, very few speak English. It is a blessing that they use the Roman script for their written languages. Written pamphlets and short booklets teaching the Truth of God's Word in the major Chin languages and in the Burmese and Karen languages are very important. I recommended against acquiring an expensive computer. A computer takes electricity and there are virtually NO Church of God members trained in set up and maintenance of computers and printers.

Since we have computers at Legacy Institute and are training young Chin, Kachin, and Karen how to use them, I offered for Legacy to do their computer typesetting. They send us a hand-written text and we send them back "master" copies that can be duplicated in Rangoon, Mandalay or Myitkyina. In this way they can acquire the needed written material without the necessity of technology beyond their means. Also, it was suggested by several delegates that, if they had manual English language typewriters, they could even "typeset" their own material.

Then travel problems were discussed. Since roads are few and public transportation very limited, they asked me if I could help them get a small motorcycle strong enough to take two persons on evangelistic tours in the Chin Hills. They could cover more territory in shorter periods of time.

One of the problems they are facing has to do with the difficulties of the mountainous terrain and the fact that there is no public transportation in the mountains. What I will relate to you now is a true example of the difficulties they face in spreading the Gospel in this part of the world:

Pastor Peter Za Hmung and another young evangelist named Kwallian Thang traveled for 6 months in the high mountains of the Chin Hills, mostly along dirt foot tracks. They preached God's Word about the Sabbath. Some accepted this Bible Truth and the seeds of several small congregations were planted. Then they had to return to Kalaymyo. That was several years ago. Neither of them has since had a chance to get back and see the people they evangelized. They tried to stay in contact by mail. But this proved sketchy at best. They are not sure what happened to the people. They can only pray that God takes care of them until they can get back to visit one day.

Did Satan come in and snatch away the seeds that were planted? Did wolves come in and scatter the flock? Did the people spiritually die on the vine for lack of spiritual nourishment? This is a serious problem. When God's Truth goes out, it never returns empty. People are called and some

accept that calling. But evangelizing is not enough. It must be followed by pastoral care. Someone needs to feed and nurture the sheep on a consistent basis.

I liken it to planting a beautiful sapling tree and then going away. Unless one returns to water and care for the tree, it will eventually wither and die.

That is the fundamental reason we founded the *Legacy Institute Leadership Training Center* in Chiang Mai - to train young workers from among their own peoples who could follow up these evangelistic efforts by going in and watering and caring for the new, fledgling congregations that are raised up. We now have 4 young Chin people from the Chin Hills being trained at Legacy School. We also have one young Burmese man from Rangoon. All come from Church of God families and ALL are there to be trained to become church workers. There is a drastic need and we are filling that need at Legacy School! I am completely awed and humbled to be a part of this wonderful Work God has called us to!!

On Pentecost, I ordained 2 men. First I ordained Peter Za Hmung as a Minister of Jesus Christ. Previously, during Unleavened Bread, I discovered that he had never been formally ordained!! My mouth fell open! Here is a man who has been faithfully pastoring a church congregation of 150 people for over 7 years; who is highly respected by the brethren; whose wife is a Proverbs 31 wife; and whose children are all faithful to the Truth. He was fulfilling all the requirements of Timothy and Titus and had been doing so for years. Yet, he was never ordained. So, after fasting and much prayer, I decided to ordain him on Pentecost.

Now, I have something very encouraging to relate to you. No matter how much I pray for God's Will in a baptism or ordination, I still ask myself, "*Am I really doing the right thing?*" Well, after I ordained Peter Za Hmung, he gave the Pentecost sermon. In that sermon, he told us that it was his birthday *today* - *AND* that he turned 50 years old that same day! Wow, talk about a sign! God can be wonderfully encouraging sometimes!

Then, Peter Za Hmung, Lazum Brang and I ordained U Myu Zaw, from the COG Rangoon congregation as a deacon in God's Church. He is responsible for the finances of the COG Myanmar and has proven over time to be an honest and responsible individual; *AND* a very fine Christian example; (interestingly, he was converted to the Truth from Buddhism!)

These ordinations were very encouraging to the brethren there. The Church of God in Myanmar is becoming more and more active. The Holy Spirit of God is becoming more and more active. The Church is growing dynamically. More and more church workers will be needed. May God Almighty call more to *His Great Harvest* in Myanmar!

Legacy School Opens

Legacy school opened June 14 for orientation week. I missed it all because I was in the hospital. But, we have a great teaching team this year, and they took charge. Ryan Foster is back for another year. Bobbi Bauer is back for the first semester, and we have two new volunteer teachers; Mandi Steele and James Hostetter. Ryan is an experienced "Thailander" and has a Master's degree in Teaching. He will be our academic director this year. Things went very smoothly for

orientation and we are ready to begin classes next week. This year we have 10 Kachin students; 3 Karen; 4 Chin and 1 Burmese. We had accepted 4 Karen from the refugee camps, but the Thai government would not allow us to bring them to Chiang Mai because members of their families had fought as insurgents against the Burmese government. Queen Sirikit is also sending 3 tribal students to Legacy School, but they will not come until next year. So we have ended up with 18 in our student body for this year.

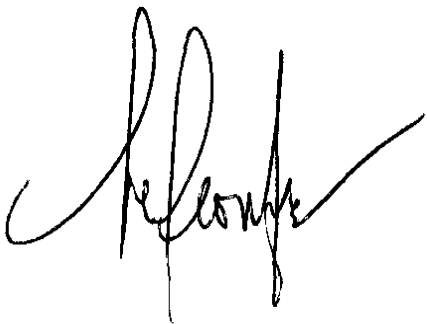
School Land Purchase

Please pray fervently that God intervenes to work out the land purchase for the school. Satan has thrown numerous obstacles in our way. Why would he want a small college teaching God's True Way of Life to be established in Thailand?! Things are NEVER easy here in Thailand, and we have been struggling for at least 4 months to get this deal closed. But we are almost at the end of the race! We thought everything was going to go through with the bank loaning enough to cover 100% of the purchase price. Now the bank will not loan the full amount of \$71,000. They see us as a "foreign" entity and, as such, a "risk". So they will only loan a part of the purchase price of the land, and we have to come up with the rest. So, we must rely on God. This is His project. This is His school. We are His servants doing His Divine Will. If He wants us to have this land for the school, He will have to provide the means to do so! We are helpless to remedy this latest development! We are in His Hands! God's Will Be Done!

Please remember us always in your prayers. We really need the intervention of God to see us through the hard times over here. It is a constant struggle to keep things going forward and upward. There just is no respite. But the many letters and e-notes you all send encourage us. It reminds us that we are not alone. Many hundreds of God's people are praying for us, and you are always there when we need you!

We all at Legacy thank all of you. May God bless you all always. You, our fellow servants, are also always in our prayers!

In service to Our Lord and King, Jesus the Messiah,



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