



LEGACY INSTITUTE

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Dear Fellow-workers in God's Harvest,

This year Gloria and I attended 3 of the 5 Legacy Institute sponsored Feast of Tabernacle sites; 2 in India and 1 in Thailand. The Churches of God in Asia are growing in numbers; and, more importantly, they are growing spiritually as well.

The Feast of Tabernacles plays an important role in the worship of God and is crucial to spiritual development. At Legacy we follow a simple formula. If the brethren can't come to the Feast because of transportation problems; family issues; or just plain too poor to buy a bus ticket; when possible, *we take the Feast of Tabernacles to them!* This means more work for us, but the payoff is in the spiritual growth and development of the brethren. Let me explain.

In Thailand most of our local brethren live in refugee camps along the Thai/Burma border (Burma is sometimes called "Myanmar.") Ideally, it would be much easier to have a single Feast site in Chiang Mai and ask the brethren to travel there to keep the Feast. But the Thai government officials will not give our members who are refugees permission to travel to Chiang Mai.

Now we could leave everything up to them and justify our decision by saying that it "*just wasn't God's will*" they attend since they couldn't obtain travel permission by themselves. But attending the Feast of Tabernacles is crucial to the spiritual development of members and their families. So, if they cannot come to the Feast, then we must take the Feast to the border where they CAN (*howbeit difficult*) get permission to go.

I have discovered something very important about God's Feast Days. Some of the Churches of God in Asia have been keeping the Annual Festivals and other COG congregations are just learning about them for the first time. Those Churches of God who observe the annual Feast Days have a much better understanding of the Plan of God than those COG fellowships who have not been keeping the Feasts.

It is simple arithmetic. Those who learn about God's plan as outlined by the annual Holy Days – *three times (seasons) every year; year after year* – have a better understanding about *who* we are, *who* God is, and *where* we are headed, and *how* we are going to get there, than those who keep the Feasts *zero* times each year!

For God's people in Asia, it is an important part of church building (*building the Body of Christ*) to provide a place where brethren can gather to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

India Feasts

In India, the Legacy sponsored Feast was split up and held at 3 sites. Gloria and I were able to visit 2 of these sites. Many of those interested in the Truth of God's Word are young women. They must take care of small children and husbands who are Hindus and not interested in the Church. They cannot just pack up and go all the way to the big city for 8 days and leave their familial responsibilities. Others are poor and cannot afford the bus fare or are inflicted with HIV and too weak to travel to Madras. So, it was decided that Festival services would be split up into 3 parts at 3 separate sites.

The first 3 days of the Feast we observed in a city called *Vellore*, located about 3 hours by train from Madras (Chennai). We then observed the Sabbath and one more day in *Madras*, after which Gloria and I returned to Thailand to continue the Feast observances there. Back in India, the Feast continued at a third location called *Tiruvannamalai*, 6 hours by car from Madras.

Attendance at Vellore was over 50 at services on the first High Day; then trailed off to about 35 each of the other 2 days. Many of those who attended on the first day were non-member family members and friends curious about what this "feast" was all about. On the High Day, we had a meal together, so I suspect some were there only for the "bread and fishes". But, we must always keep in mind that Jesus knew most that came to listen to him were interested in only the physical bread (JOHN 6). *But, he fed them all anyway!*

We never really know; and we *cannot really know who* among those who attend the Feast of Tabernacles for the first time, will be called of God. Some may come for the physical bread and leave with a spark of understanding placed there by Almighty God through the power of His Holy Spirit that leads them to repentance. It is NOT our business anyway. It is GOD'S BUSINESS! Our job is to preach the Gospel and spread the seeds of TRUTH. It is then up to God. The fruits of *unconditional giving* sometimes appear in ways we never expected! Most of the Church of God brethren in Tamil Nadu, South India are former Hindus. They came to the Truth through the efforts of Michael Hubert who first came in contact with them through the "good works" projects of his Shabnam Foundation. He began by giving them bread and fishes. One thing led to another and soon he was teaching them from the Bible!

I have always said that God does what He wants - when He wants. HOW He chooses to do it all is His prerogative. I have never gotten a phone call from God asking my advice about HOW He should accomplish His Divine Will! And I doubt any of you have either!

It was sad to leave Michael Hubert, his wife Terencia, their son Ben Hur; and all the brethren in India to return to Thailand. But this year we were spread very thin and needed to help carry the speaking load back in Thailand during the last part of the Feast. We were consoled by the fact that 3 Church of God members attending from the USA – Glen & Christiane Williams and James Bass, would remain in India and continue teaching the new brethren in *Tiruvannamalai*.

Thailand Feasts

In Thailand, Legacy Institute sponsored two separate Feast sites. The first was our usual site in *Chiang Mai* at the Empress Hotel. Our Legacy Institute students, local brethren and foreign visitors attended there, 37 in all. We also set up a site in *Mae Salit*, a small village along the Burmese border for brethren who could not travel to Chiang Mai. Most of our brethren in this area live in 2 refugee camps situated on the Thailand side of the border. We asked permission for them to travel to Chiang Mai for the Feast, but were turned down by the Thai government authorities. The border area is very sensitive and the Thai government has become very strict about refugees traveling further inside Thailand.

I asked Ryan Foster, Legacy School's Director of Academic Affairs, to set up the Feast site and act as festival director. He was able to arrange a good place to meet and did an outstanding job of making sure the brethren had adequate food, etc. to enjoy the Feast. More importantly, Ryan also spoke almost every day so that they would receive the spiritual food they needed. 35 people attended from Mae Ra Moh refugee camp, Mae La refugee camp and Mae Sot town. Mae Ra Moh camp is located deep in the mountains. Families from that camp had to walk over 40 kilometers out of the jungle to reach the main road.

Following is a report given to me by Mr. Foster after his return to Chiang Mai. I thought you would enjoy reading it:

Report on the Feast of Tabernacles 2004 in Mae Salit, Thailand

This year we had an excellent Feast of Tabernacles and Eighth Day in Mae Salit, Thailand. Mae Salit is a small town in Thailand on the Burmese border, about halfway between the larger border towns of Mae Sot and Mae Sariang. It is also located between the two refugee camps where most of the church members in Thailand live.

Last year a Feast was planned in Mae Sariang, but, in spite of diligent efforts to get permission for the refugees to come out of the camps, the government refused to grant them permission to leave the camps. The Feast was relocated to a member's house in Mae Sot, and the members in the Mae La camp were able to join for the last part of the Feast, risking being thrown in jail if they were caught by the police. The members in the Mae Ra Moh camp were unable to come, and did not learn until later why no one had arrived to take them to the Feast.

This year we hoped the situation would be better and that everyone could come to Chiang Mai. But the government would not allow the refugees to go to Chiang Mai or even to the border area town of Mae Sariang. However, the members in the Mae Ra Moh camp could get permission to take a boat to the village of Baan Tha Song Yang. I looked for a place to hold the Feast in that village, but no facilities exist. However, I found a guesthouse that is suitable and large enough to hold the Feast in the next village down the road. As far as I am aware, Mae Salit is the only town between Mae Sot and Mae Sariang that has a guesthouse. I discussed the situation with some village leaders in Baan Tha Song Yang and they said the refugees could travel from their village to Mae Salit without a problem.

It appeared that everyone could get suitable permission to safely attend the Feast in Mae Salit, so we made arrangements there. However, as much as we tried, we still experienced difficulties. The members from Mae Sot and the Mae La camp arrived at Mae Salit by car in the afternoon of September 29th. Meanwhile I waited at Baan Tha Song Yang all day, but no boat came from the Mae Ra Moh camp. We later heard that they had tried to come, but that their boat was stopped and turned back by the Thai army for security reasons. A few days earlier there had been an explosion further north on the border, and the army was not allowing passenger travel on the river.

We had an opening night service and two services on the first holy day with 14 people in attendance. That evening we began our game night, but the fun was dampened because we were all disappointed that our friends from Mae Ra Moh had not been able to come. Some suggested that the adults who were in good health could walk a long trail out to the nearest road and we could meet them there with a car. I was determined to find a way for the children to come, celebrate, and learn also, and thought that maybe they could come by boat in small groups rather than all in one group (at the time we thought the army might be allowing boats with only a few passengers to pass). Before we had decided on a plan, the members from the camp surprised us by arriving at the guesthouse!

They told us that, after being stopped by the army, they appealed to higher authorities, but were not able to get permission to go on. When they returned to their camp, they decided to get up early the next day and walk out. The next day they left a little after 5am and walked through the jungle with packs of clothes and young children until they finally reached the road at 3pm. Since they were not traveling by boat they had no travel papers. They passed two army checkpoints in the jungle, but fortunately no one was at either checkpoint when they passed. On the road they found a driver who they could hire to take them to Mae Salit. They finally arrived at about 7:30pm, sweaty, tired, and hungry, but happy to be at the Feast.

One woman, being five months pregnant, was unable to make the trip, and stayed back with her children, and one other child was sick and stayed back. The next day, hearing that the army would allow river travel again on Monday, we sent a message to her to come by boat on Monday. The Mae Ra Moh camp is in an isolated location, without any phones, except for a satellite phone reserved for use by the hospital. It can easily take weeks to send messages by mail. However, being on the Burmese border, we were able to send and receive messages via Karen army soldiers who cross over into Thailand. They can take a message back to the Burma side and then send a telegram to other locations in Burma and they also have telegram wires going into the refugee camps in Thailand.

The army finally opened travel on the river on Tuesday, so the last four people finally arrived at noon on Tuesday, bringing the total number of people to 35 people for the last three days, and a high of 39 with our guests on Wednesday.

The people from the Mae La camp had their own difficulty. They requested ten days for the Feast, but the authorities only granted them three days. They planned to stay the full time regardless, but the daughter of one member returned Friday afternoon to request an extension. She had also only been given three days leave from school, but her sister had asked on her behalf and did not give the exact reason for her absence. I encouraged her to personally ask her teacher for permission for the remainder of the Feast, and tell plainly that it was for the purpose of keeping the Feast of Tabernacles, but that regardless of whether she was granted permission or not she should obey and fear God rather than a human teacher.

She returned to extend the permission for everyone to stay and also talked to one of the administrators of the school. She explained that she would return in time for the examination after the Feast, and that she would take her book and study hard during the Feast. The administrator said, "Don't take your book! You must enjoy the Feast of Tabernacles! Don't worry about the test." As it turns out, he grew up attending the Worldwide Church of God and kept the Feast many times. After the changes in Worldwide he became a Seventh Day Adventist, but remembers his experiences keeping the feasts when he was younger.

Every day of the Feast we enjoyed both physical and spiritual food. We sang all of the hymns in English. Special music was performed in English, Karen, and sometimes Thai. In the place of a sermonette we read about four chapters each day from the book of Deuteronomy, which encouraged us to follow God's law of love. I gave a sermon most days, but I got a break two days. The local deacon, Davidson Ley Bey, translated the messages into the Karen language. On Monday he also gave a sermon about the proper attitude of Christians. On Wednesday we were visited by two elders and their wives: Herb and Anne Vierra from California and Jack and Kathy Fike from Florida. Mr. Fike spoke about Christ's death removing our sins which separate us from God and Mr. Vierra showed that God's kingdom will be a literal kingdom, not a "kingdom" in one's heart. The other days we had messages on: Why Are We Here?; Why We Need To Keep the Feasts; Tithes and Rejoicing At the Feast; God's Calling Now and In the Future; True Love: The Solution To Today's Problems; Humans and the Children of God During the Millennium; Why Did God Give Sacrifices?; One Chance For All People; What Will Eternity Be Like? and two offertory messages. It was very encouraging to study and be reminded again of God's AWESOME promises to us and His great plan for all mankind.

We also enjoyed many kinds of physical food. We had both ice cream and popcorn twice. For many it was the first time to try these foods. Another day we had a "fruit festival" and sampled many kinds of delicious fruits that grow here in Thailand. The durian and mangosteen disappeared very rapidly, and the watermelon was the last to be finished. On Wednesday and Thursday we enjoyed a delicious goat.

Other activities we enjoyed which did not center around food included a sports day, hymn singing, a Bible study, talent night, and movie night. We also enjoyed good conversations daily. This was the first opportunity for several people to keep the Feast of Tabernacles and Eighth Day, and for some who missed the first part last year it was the first time to keep the full eight days. We were all happy to stay together and celebrate the wonderful Feasts that God has given us. We look forward to having the freedom again to peacefully keep the Feast next year, and every year until Christ's return.

Ryan Foster

See how this works? If the people cannot come to the Feast because they live in remote areas; cannot afford to travel long distances to attend; or cannot even obtain travel documents; it is **IMPERATIVE** that we take the Feast of Tabernacles to them. In the western churches, there are *literally hundreds* of members well-trained in the Word of God that are in a position to help take the Feast of Tabernacles out to the remote areas of this planet where God is now working!

Believe me. I make use of the instruments God sends me. We have 2 young men now teaching at Legacy school, Mr. Ryan Foster and Mr. James Hostetter. Both grew up in the Church of God; both have University degrees; and both attended the Ambassador Bible Center program sponsored by the United COG organization. Neither had opportunity to teach the Bible back home in the USA. Now Ryan and James are giving sermons, sermonettes and Bible studies almost every week (*and sometimes several times a week*) at the Legacy Institute School or while visiting remote refugee camps. And they are doing a good job. They are doing a very good job! They know their Bibles well and are able to pass the knowledge they have been given on to new brethren and prospective brethren STARVED for the Word of God! They are exactly what Legacy needs. They are exactly what our scattered brethren need. And Legacy (*and Asia*) need more young men like Ryan and James.

The harvest is PLENTEOUS. But the laborers are few! We have prayed that God send young men and women to help in the great end-time harvest. And He is answering our prayers!

Land Purchase

God is fully behind what He wants Legacy Institute to do in Asia. And He obviously wants us to have a permanent campus to build His training college in Thailand. The Almighty God, through the prayers and financial support of His Saints, is providing enough to go ahead with the purchase! As of this writing, we are short of the full purchase amount by only several thousand dollars. And we fully expect, *in faith*, that we will have the rest we need by the end of October!

But, as they say, “it ain’t over till its over!” Please continue to pray that God carry us through without unforeseen problems in the “gun lap” of this purchase.

A permanent location for the Legacy School is very important. We cannot plan long term for any campus development as long as we are subject to the vagaries of fickle landlords. Now that we are an officially registered foundation in Thailand, AND soon will have a permanent campus, we can start planning for the future development of a serious college institution.

Few may realize that Legacy Institute is the *ONLY* Sabbatarian Church of God institution of higher learning in *ALL* of Asia! Once we complete our master plan for curriculum and add a fourth year, we will be (to my knowledge) the *ONLY 4 year Sabbatarian Church of God College in the whole world!*

Just think of the ramifications of what I just said!

And ALL of you are playing an active part in building this Church of God college!

Will I be criticized for being too ambitious or “pie in the sky”? Probably! But I have the assurance and full confidence that God Almighty WANTS this college! We *NEED* just such a college. And our God is VERY, VERY AMBITIOUS!

Legacy Leader Student Newspaper

We have started publishing a Legacy Institute student newspaper which we call the, “*Legacy Leader*.” It is full of information about the day to day happenings at the school and the articles are written by the students and faculty themselves. Our Editor is Miss Mandi Steele. She has a degree in Journalism and uses the newspaper as an English language composition teaching tool.

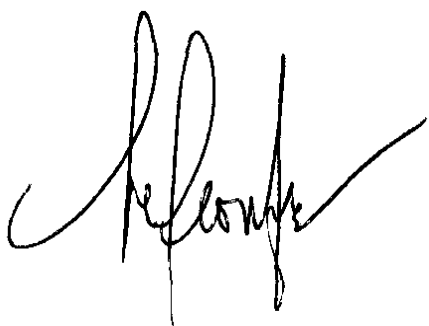
Since the newspaper is part of the learning experience at Legacy, the articles are written by students who are in the process of learning English. Therefore, the articles can sometimes sound “foreign”, and the English will not be what you would expect from a school newspaper in America or other English speaking nations.

You can find and even download the *Legacy Leader* from the internet at www.LegacyLeader.org I know you will be inspired by what you read. For those who cannot get it from the internet, you can request a physical copy by writing the address at the top of this letter.

Well, I will close for now. Please continue to pray that God guides us in every way to further His Great Glory. Please pray for my health as well as I continue fighting strange and nasty viruses during and since the Feast.

May God bless you all for your sacrifice and effectual prayers on behalf of my wife Gloria and me, our Legacy teachers, and all the volunteers who keep Legacy Institute operating.

Until next letter,
In Service to King 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.

Leon Sexton