



LEGACY INSTITUTE

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Bangkok

Dear Fellow-laborers,

Church of God brethren are facing hardships all over the world. I just returned to Bangkok from Myanmar (Burma). I flew to Yangon (Rangoon) to meet with Evangelist Lazum Brang, Pastor David Ye Gyan and Kawllian Thang from the Chin Hills. During our time together each discussed the progress in their various areas. Lazum Brang evangelizes in the Central Myanmar area, Shan States, Kachinland and the China Border region; David Ye Gyan pastors the Church of God 7th Day in Yangon and holds in-home Bible studies in the surrounding area; and Kawllian Thang preaches the Gospel among the Haka Chin tribal peoples of the Chin Mountains bordering India.

Myanmar is ruled by a repressive military government that is basically running the country into the ground. Under the British, Myanmar (called Burma until 1989) was the largest exporter of rice in the world. Today, one can ride the train through the central plains from Yangon to Mandalay and see paddy field after paddy field lying fallow and untended.

Other countries are in Myanmar exploiting the natural resources as fast and furious as they can. Myanmar is very rich in natural resources. The mountains are full of jade, gems, teak, gold, platinum and other metals. Myanmar also has oil and natural gas. Chinese merchants are everywhere! Japan has a big investment in Myanmar. India does. And so do the Americans! In 2003, California-based Unocal became the first corporation in history to stand trial in the United States over human rights violations abroad because of its connection with Myanmar's military regime in using alleged slave labor in laying a gas pipeline to the Thai border.

So while the fat cat businessmen of the world's leading countries are getting fatter as they plunder Myanmar, it is the ordinary people – particularly the minority hill tribes – who increasingly suffer. People go hungry, get sick and are unable to afford medical attention! Lazum Brang told me that he visited a Church of God family in the Delta region that ate only one meal a day. The husband would work all day and make only enough money to buy food for the meal that night! And life is getting tougher. Costs are rising. Finding a job – any job - is nearly impossible. Things we take for granted: food, shelter, clothing and transportation are increasingly becoming serious concerns.

But, it is under this repressive cloud of greed and exploitation that God is doing a growing and fruitful Work! The Gospel of the Kingdom of God is being preached and the poor and downtrodden are responding to the call. Please pray fervently for our new Church brethren in Myanmar. King David said that he never saw any of God's people begging for bread:

*"I have been young, and now am old; Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken,
Nor his descendants begging bread." Ps 37:25 NKJV*

Let me give you one detailed example of the kinds of struggles our brethren in Myanmar face. Lal Lian is one of our second-year students from the Chin Mountains. His father is an elder in the Church of God and his grandfather was a COG (*Seventh Day Meridian*) evangelist who spread the Gospel throughout the mountains of Eastern India and Western Myanmar until his death at the age of 94. Lal Lian is a positive, hard working student, but recently I found out he was very concerned about problems on the home front.

Lal Lian comes from a poor family. His father and brothers earned a living by plowing fields with a yoke of oxen. Lal Lian explained to me that his father had sold one of the oxen to provide travel money for Lal Lian to come to Legacy Institute in Chiang Mai. That left one ox. Normally, one plows with a “yoke” of oxen (2). They had wanted to buy another ox sometime in the future. But, then someone stole their remaining ox! After that the family suffered because their means of earning a living was gone.

Then both parents fell ill (probably due to stress or even malnourishment). Lal Lian’s mother almost died because she had no money to go to the clinic. Kawllian Thang gathered offerings from among other COG members and made sure she received medical attention.

Lal Lian wanted to leave school – go home – and try to find a job to help his family. Lal Lian is a very promising student. I did not want him to leave Legacy. So I made a deal with him. I told him that Legacy would buy his family another yoke of oxen if he would stay in school and work hard. He was very surprised at my offer and gratefully agreed. So, while I was in Yangon, I asked Kawllian Thang to take back \$460 to Kalaymyo to buy the new oxen. He lives near Lal Lian’s family.

This is only one story among many examples of the hardships our brethren face day by day in Myanmar. There are many more stories like these in other parts of the world.

I recently received a letter from a Church of God leader among the Massai people in Kenya. He wrote to me about their difficulties and the terrible drought that is ravaging the horn of Africa for the second straight year. Here is a bit of his letter:

“... during our outreach to Narok on 29/1/06 with pastor Moses to visit evangelist Simon Obiki. We found them safe by God grace full of hope for future in this life and eternity. The trip made me to remember HABAKKUK 3:17, ALTHOUGH THE FIG TREE SHALL NOT BLOSSOM, NEITHER SHALL FRUIT BE IN THE VINES, THE LABOUR OF OLIVE SHALL FAIL, AND FLOCK SHALL BE CUT OFF FROM THE FOLD, AND THERE SHALL BE NO HERD IN THE STALL – VERSE 18, YET I WILL REJOICE IN LORD, I WILL JOY IN GOD OF MY SALVATION. KJV

“This is indeed I saw people living with no water, food and seeing their animals dieing with lack of pasture and water. ...we spent the night, pray and study the word together. We visited the only place in area where very little water is found, we walk for 3 good hours with women riding donkey for water, we meet both men and women waiting on line to get water for human use and animals. ... the situation particularly in that side is unexplainable, we need God intervention only. Still no rain except two days early this month, then stop.

“Yesterday we heard through News a school boy at Kajuado district few kilometres from Nairobi city who come in school to see his parents and found all of 200 herd of cattle die of drought, the boy lost hope and went to shop and buy poisonous chemical and drunk and admitted to hospital in coma, we not sure if still alive or die, this make me feel deeply touch about this pastoralist [Maasai cattleherder (Editor’s Note)]...

I recently watched a report on CNN about the worsening drought in Kenya and Somalia. If they do not get water in April this year, famine and hundreds of thousands of deaths are sure to come. Please join us in prayers to Our Almighty God that the drought will be broken by an outpouring from the windows of Heaven and that the Kenyan brethren will be provided for and protected.

If God wills, I hope some day to visit Kenya and learn more about Church of God ministries there. In the meantime, let us to join our brethren there in fervent prayers to God!

Now back to Myanmar. While in Yangon, our discussions included how Legacy Institute could *better* assist in their preaching the Gospel in Myanmar. They need original written material in pamphlet form in the Burmese, Karen and Chin languages. This is where we make a very positive contribution to their efforts.

I gave them a booklet I developed based on a sermon I had given titled: “*Why a New Covenant Christian Should Observe the Day of Atonement*”. This was then translated into Burmese by Seng Aung, one of our Kachin graduating students. Both David Ye Gyan and Lazum Brang reviewed the translation and, except for a few misspellings, they agreed that it was a very accurate translation written in very proper Burmese language. They recommended we use Seng Aung to translate more material into Burmese which can then be distributed throughout the region since Burmese is the common language.

They also asked us to typeset material written by Kawllian Thang in the Haka Chin language. Kawllian has written booklets such as, “*The Law of God Before Moses*” and “*Pagan Holidays of Christianity*”. Kawllian Thang has no computer, printer and no electricity. He lives in a small, remote village in the Chin Mountains. Lazum Brang has a laptop computer donated to him several years ago. But he doesn’t know how to use it and has no electricity in his home in Kachinland. So, God’s evangelists in Myanmar must rely on taking their handwritten material to a computer shop in a large city (either Mandalay or Yangon) and have the material computer typeset and copies made. This can be costly by their standards.

This is how we can help. Our Legacy students can take the handwritten material; computer typeset it at the Legacy School in Chiang Mai and prepare a “master copy” from a laser printer. This can then be duplicated in Myanmar. All this saves money and time, and our students can use the training they have received to directly serve the Work of God!

We have always understood that Legacy was created to help those God is *already* using to do His Work in Asia. This is one way we can accomplish this mission.

In Myanmar there are many evangelists and pastors. The custom is to give the title “Evangelist” to someone who evangelizes; and “Pastor” to someone who pastors a church congregation. This is the custom whether they are ordained or not. Typically, this is not our western practice. Granted, many of these evangelists and pastors in Myanmar are self-appointed or perhaps even charlatans. But, here and there, scattered like salt, we can find the genuine article. False ministers are nothing new in this evil world. Our own church experience shows us that there are wolves in sheep’s clothing *even in our own Western fellowships!*

In the case of both Lazum Brang and David Ye Gyan, they are ordained, but Kawllian Thang is not. However, Kawllian Thang is actually doing the work of an evangelist. And Legacy Institute is helping him by publishing small pamphlets in the Haka Chin language.

Now I know that when I use the word “evangelize” or “evangelist” I will make some people nervous. For one reason or another, some are afraid of these words. But “evangelist” is an important word which we find in the New Testament. There should be no controversy over the use or meaning of this word. It is a Biblical word with important meaning for every Christian today.

In the Greek language it is “*euangelistes*”. According to Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, euangelistes” means “*a messenger of good*” (*eu, "well," angelos, "a messenger"*).

In Acts 21:8, Paul and his team visit Caesarea and stay with “Phillip the evangelist”. Philip was one of the seven deacons ordained to take care of the needs of Church’s widows (Acts 6). By Luke saying that Philip was an evangelist we can understand that helping the widows was not the only thing he was doing! Obviously, Philip was busy taking the Gospel to others – he was EVANGELISING!

In Acts 8, an angel instructed Philip to go down to the road between Jerusalem and Gaza. Here he met a eunuch, a servant of the Queen of Ethiopia. He preached the Gospel to the eunuch and baptized him.

“Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus. And passing through, he preached in all the cities till he came to Caesarea.” Acts 8:39-40 NKJV

Philip didn’t stop in Azotus and wait for more angelic instructions! He traveled about and evangelized in ALL THE CITIES between Azotus and Caesarea!

Paul instructs Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:5 to “*do the work of an evangelist.*” Timothy was, not only to be ever ready to instruct the church brethren in the way of righteousness; but he was also to carry the good news of the Kingdom to others who were NOT church members!

It is not *just* the job of the ordained ministry to teach others about the Truth! How were you called? What instrument did God choose to use? I’ll bet it wasn’t an ordained minister! Many times, it is a family member or co-worker in the place where you were employed that introduced you to the Truth and started you on the path to salvation.

In my own family, I was the first one baptized into God’s Church. Then it was my brother; then my mother; then my one sister; then her husband; then my other sister; then her husband; then my mother’s elder sister; then my cousin; then another aunt; then another cousin, then an uncle! Each of these saw and personally experienced the *changes* made in close family members because of the Holy Spirit of God effectually working in them. Each one saw the EXAMPLES of truly converted mates or family members which led them to God! God can use you too, if you let Him and surrender yourself to His Will. This means we are to be ever faithful to God and

educated in His truths found in the Holy Bible. This means we must be prepared and always ready to share our faith with others. This is the way we “evangelize”.

“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; . . . “
1 Peter 3:15-16 NKJV

Now in NO WAY does personal evangelism diminish the responsibility and calling of the ordained ministry. The minister is set apart by ordination to be a special vessel of service to God. But, that doesn’t mean that lay members have nothing to do! It does not mean that lay members are divorced from any responsibility of preaching the Gospel! It doesn’t mean that all you need to do is “pray and pay”.

Jesus said that we are not to hide our light under a basket – but use that light to shine a path in this world of darkness for others to see and follow:

“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” Matt 5:14-16 NKJV

We have all heard the stories or even experienced the effects of these words of Jesus about a friend or acquaintance in the workplace that was a Church of God member giving someone the first exposure to the Truth. It is always interesting to hear how some first learned about Bible doctrines such as clean and unclean meats or the Sabbath because someone they knew was obeying these laws.

God can and does use ordinary Church members as instruments to TAKE the Gospel to someone else. It does not have to be an ordained minister, a voice on the radio or a booklet. God can and *does* use the personal example of a faithful disciple of Christ! Every one of us has a responsibility to be good “evangelists” in the service of God by being lights. People will see our examples of character and faith at work and our God will be glorified in us. We need to ask daily the question: “What kind of light am I?”.

NEW KAREN HYMNAL

The new Karen language hymnal is now fresh off the presses. The songs contained in this hymnal were first translated by Pastor Saw Lay Beh, a faithful and diligent servant of God in Myanmar right up until his death in 2000. These songs were then computer typeset in the Karen script by his son Davidson Lay Beh, a deacon in God’s Church, who lives in a refugee camp on the Thailand side of the border. We then took the computer disks to the printer and ordered 500 copies.

I was able to take 40 copies with me to Yangon. These will go to the Karen COG brethren in the delta region and the Karen COG members in the Taungoo area. The day before I left Yangon, Saw Lay Beh’s granddaughter arrived. You should have seen the look on her face when she held the finished hymnal in her hands for the first time! Lazum Brang asked her to stay with the new brethren in Taungoo so she could teach them the hymns since they cannot read music.

The new hymnal will be a unifying force among the Karen COG members on both sides of the border. All will now be singing the same hymns in their own language. Legacy Institute is honored to play a small part in helping bring to fruition a wonderful labor of love begun by Saw Lay Beh many years ago and carried on by his son, Davidson Lay Beh.

2006 LEGACY GRADUATION COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES

On February 26, we will hold our second graduation exercise. We have 4 students receiving diplomas this year. The entire student body is excited and looking forward to the graduation ceremony. It is the highlight of each year when the fruits of – now 3 years of education and training – are demonstrated in speeches (in English) and a musical program performed by our students. Graduation is also an opportunity to honor the volunteer teachers who have sacrificed to help give our young Legacy students the opportunity of a lifetime.

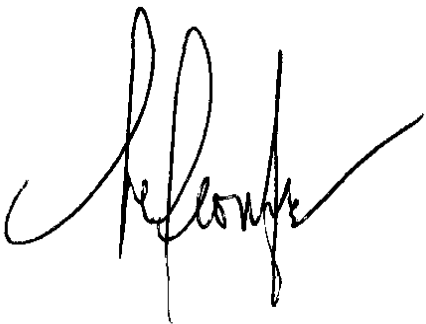
This year Ryan Foster will be returning home after 3 years of volunteer service. Jason Boise and Kevin Troyer will also be returning to the U.S. after serving one year each. James Hostetter will be staying on for a third year. Words cannot express the appreciation we have for each and every volunteer who helps us here in Thailand. May God grant them all blessings and guidance as they pursue their future lives!

UPDATE ON GENERAL ANU SUMITRA

General Anu is still in the hospital, but much improved. He is eating but still very thin. He is not able to walk, but can sit up for 5-10 minutes at a time. He is suffering from abdominal pain. We hope he can begin a physical therapy program. Please continue to pray for him. He is an important friend of Legacy who deserves our prayers and concern.

That is all for this letter. I will write again soon and tell you about the graduation and update you more on the activities of Legacy Institute. May God bless all of you.

A servant of Our Lord Jesus the Christ,



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.