



## LEGACY INSTITUTE

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

April 23, 2006

Chiang Mai

Dear Fellow-laborers in the Fields of the Lord,

Gloria and I just returned from India where we spent Passover and the first part of Days of Unleavened Bread. Our goal was to travel around visiting brethren in Tamil Nadu state and also visit a group of Sabbath keepers in Andhra Pradesh state to the North. We had heard about these Sabbath keepers in Andhra Pradesh through a Church of God congregation meeting in Cincinnati, Ohio.

It is always exciting to hear about “new” groups of Sabbath keeping Churches of God. Actually, they are not “new”. We just didn’t hear about them or have had contact with them before. But because we (*by “we” I mean those of us with a former Worldwide Church of God history*) haven’t heard of them before doesn’t mean they are illegitimate or not *really* a part of the True Church of God! Thinking this way is NOT seeing the big picture. God has been working with many who are not now nor ever were connected or in contact with the WCG fellowship. Also our brethren in the various COG *Seventh Day* groups have been evangelizing and working in India for many, many years.



LEON SEXTON BAPTIZING ZIPPORAH WITH CHITTI BABU

God is not an exclusivist. He has been working steadily with others all along. He just didn't list them all for us. Or perhaps WE have been the ones who were the exclusivists! Maybe WE have not been aware of these others because they didn't fit into our particular definition of a "legitimate" or "orthodox" Church of God! God is truly much bigger than one particular human, corporate church organization. That is the way it was in the 1<sup>st</sup> century – that is the way it is now. If only we could all humble ourselves and acknowledge the Greatness of Our Most High God!

Before going to India, I visited Burma (Myanmar) and met with Evangelist Lazum Brang, Pastor David Yegyan and Deacon U Myu Zaw. I also had a chance to meet with Seng Htun, a Legacy Institute graduate who helps Pastor David in Yangon. They are all doing well and the Church in Burma is growing in grace and knowledge.

I took along some Passover wine which is a bit expensive for them and also some funds that were specifically donated to Legacy Institute so that the brethren in Asia would be able to have an abundant and festive *Days of Unleavened Bread*. I was also able to forward donations for the Work in Burma made by brethren in Australia.

Most of the brethren in Burma are poor. One girl from the Delta region of Burma came to visit me while I was there. Her step-grandmother is the widow of long-time COG pastor Saw Lay Beh (1924-2000). She explained to me that she stays with and helps her elderly step-grandmother. Her name is Mwey Wah Paw. She had promised her grandfather (Saw Lay Beh) that she would always take care of his wife after he died. Her grandmother has no money. They have sold the few goats they had, etc., to buy food. They are alone and have no livelihood. Their old house has holes in the roof and the rainy season is already here.

I conferred with Evangelist Lazum Brang. He agreed with me that the responsibility of taking care of the widows rests with the Church if they have no other source of care such as family members. Mwey Wah Paw's grandmother was the wife of a long-time, faithful pastor. Saw Lay Beh dedicated his life full time to God's Work in Burma. To my knowledge he received NO salary from the Church and had NO retirement to take care of his widow after he died. So we gave Mwey Wah Paw money to repair the roof and extra to provide food and clothing for herself and her grandmother. Legacy Institute will continue to provide for this elderly widow as needed in the future. Lazum Brang agreed to keep an eye on needs of the Church in the Delta area. We also gave Mwey Wah Paw additional copies of the new songbook in the Karen language we recently published. All the Karen brethren in Burma are extremely grateful to receive these songbooks. They are a wonderful tool of unity. Karen brethren on both sides of the border can sing hymns in their own language.

Legacy Graduates Seng Aung, his wife Seng Hpa and their little son Surachai will soon be returning to Burma. Our plan is for them to help Lazum Brang at his home village, Na Mawn, near Lake Indawgyi in Kachinland. Seng Aung will teach English and help with construction of a school building where Church of God youth can come and study English and Bible. It is very satisfying to see graduates being sent out to help serve the Work of God in Asia. The main purpose of Legacy Institute Leadership Training Center is to produce workers for the harvest fields of the Lord.

### **New-Found Friends in Andhra Pradesh**

Our trip to India did not turn out as we expected. Our original plan was to spend the first part of Unleavened Bread in Tamil Nadu and the last part in Andhra Pradesh, but you know what they say about mice and men!

Our program of visiting the various small groups of Indian brethren in Tamil Nadu had to be cancelled because Michael Hubert, our guide and translator, suddenly received a call that his father had suffered a heart attack. Michael left at 4 AM to travel 14 hours by bus to be at his father's side. Since we had no information about how long Michael's absence would be, we decided to change plans and visit Pastor Chitti Babu and his Church of God congregation in Rajapalum, Andhra Pradesh. Gloria and I were able to acquire overnight train tickets from Chennai (Madras) strait to Kakinada, a city near Rajapalum. Then I contacted Pastor Chitti Babu about our change in plans.

When we arrived about 7 AM, Chitti Babu and his 2 nephews met us at the train station. We rode in an old Indian-made Ambassador car to the hotel. I really admire the Indians for building the Ambassador, which was built on the same concept as the Volkswagen. They all look the same, no matter what year they were built! The engines are the same, the body is the same and repairs are simple and parts easy to find. Of course there are now many other, more modern makes of cars on the road, but one can still see many of these Ambassadors chugging along.

I asked them how many were in their congregation and how they came to learn of the various doctrines of the Church of God. Chitti Babu was very forthcoming with answers to my questions. The feeling I got was that he wanted to reach out to others who are also of the Church of God.

The Church of God in this region consists of 3 congregations numbering about 70 persons. There are 3 pastors: Chitti Babu, his brother Gampala John, and John's son, Ananda Babu. Chitti Babu and John's father, Gampala Andrew, was the first one to start observing the Seventh Day Sabbath. Andrew discovered that the Sabbath was really on the Seventh Day (the day we call Saturday) through careful Bible study. He brought his new discovery to the attention of the Pastor of his then church fellowship. He was excommunicated.

Andrew began keeping the Sabbath at home and soon a small group of family members joined him, including his sons John and Chitti Babu. Andrew died when Chitti was 6 years old and he grew up in his older brother John's household.

Contact with other COGs came later, and more doctrinal truths began to be observed (*contact with the western Churches of God has become much, much easier with the advent of the internet!*) Presently, this group keeps the Sabbath and 14 Nissan Passover (but without the footwashing.) They are non-Trinitarian and baptize by immersion. They have started observing the other annual Holy Days including Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles. Their leadership has so far shown themselves to be sincere and open-minded. They want to have a closer relationship with other Church of God fellowships and are very much like the Bereans; "*if it's in the Bible and we see it – we will do it.*"

They DO have customs and practices that might seem strange to our western minds. For instance, they all wear white clothing to church services. But, then again, I am sure we do things that would seem quite strange to them!

Every evening we were there, we held services on the roof of Pastor John's house. It is very hot now in India so it was best to hold services in the cool of the evening. Sometimes services did not begin

until 8 PM. Pastor Chitti Babu's house had been destroyed by a powerful cyclone that hit India last November. His house is currently being rebuilt with the help of the Indian government. Chitti Babu is planning to add an "upper room" to this new house where services can be held.

Each evening I covered the meaning of the Passover and the other annual Holy Days. After worship services I conducted the ceremony of the "Blessing of the Little Children" and anointed and prayed for the sick and crippled. Each night more and more showed up to ask me to pray for their diseases, aches and pains. I lost count of how many children I asked God to bless!

These people live in a rural area and face many hardships. One of the biggest responsibilities of these 3 pastors are the widows. They have 27 widows on the *widows list*. That is well over a third of their church congregations! These elderly women have no income and, if no children are able to help them, must live on the charity of others. So many widows are common place in a country with so much poverty, disease and substandard medical treatment. Their husbands die of fevers, chronic diseases and accidents. It is a great tragedy.

During our visit I had a very interesting experience performing a baptism. The Indian woman seeking baptism was a former Hindu widow 60 year's old. We walked with members of the congregations to the bank of a nearby river. A public reservoir has been created by damming up one end. There people were washing clothes, bathing or watering their cattle and water buffalo. Pastor Chitti Babu and I waded into the water with Mrs. Mangamma and proceeded to perform her baptism with water buffalo swimming nearby and fish biting at our toes!

One custom they have is that they do not perform the *Laying on of Hands* until later. In fact, we did not do this part of the ceremony until the next day at regular Sabbath services. We also gave her a new name. Mangamma is the name of a pagan goddess. Once she became baptized and had hands laid on her, she became a new person. And she needed a new name. So we decided to give her the name *Zipporah*, the name of the Midianite wife of Moses. I also changed the names of two little girls. One little girl I asked God to bless; another older girl I anointed. Both had the name *Durga*. *Durga* is the name of the Hindu goddess of death and destruction! I thought this name was so very inappropriate for such beautiful and innocent little girls, so I gave one the name *Susanna*, and the other, the name *Dinah*.

After Sabbath services we participated in distributing bags of foodstuffs to the church widows. They all got rice, lentils, oil and salt (Gloria added some small candies she had brought along.) This food was provided by donations made by Church members in America. The Rajapalum Church of God takes maintenance of the widows very seriously. For the widows it can be life or death! They don't have SSI and Medicare or socialized medicine like we do in the West. This attitude of solemn responsibility toward the needs of Church widows should be an example to all of us!

One elderly lady has been crippled since birth. She cannot walk but crawls and scoots around on all fours. She lives about a half kilometer from where they gather for church services. Sometimes she crawls there by herself! We had excess Festival Tithe along that had been donated, so we decided to give it to Chitti Babu so they could buy her a hand-pedaled tricycle "rickshaw" to get around in. It will certainly help her *and* give her a little dignity as well.

After Sabbath services we had a communal meal of rice and curry, using banana leaves as plates. The members here eat very little meat because it is expensive. Again, because of the kindness of

brethren in the West who had donated funds to make the Feast a more enjoyable time for our Asian brethren, they were able to purchase chicken for the curry. There were also funds left over to be used for a festive meal on the last Holy Day of UB.

After the Sabbath meal, it was time to catch the overnight train back to Chennai. As always it is hard to leave new friends, especially when they are Church of God brethren. We plan to go back and visit them again sometime in the future. We are blessed to have Brian and Stephanie Smith coming over to help us at Legacy School. We are already planning a couple of trips for them to visit the Rajapalum congregations sometime over the next year. We are looking forward to a deepening spiritual relationship with our brethren at Rajapalum as we grow together in the grace and knowledge of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Please pray for the Rajapalum congregations so that the Holy Spirit of The Almighty will open more and more hearts to the Truth of His Holy Word.

### **Thailand Feast of Tabernacles Sites**

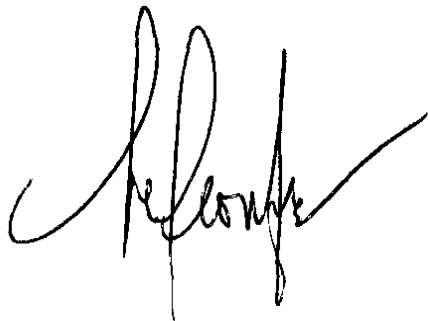
Preparations for the Feast of Tabernacles are in full swing. This year Legacy Institute will help sponsor 4 Feast sites in Asia. We will have 2 Festival sites in Thailand; 1 in Burma and 1 in India. As yet, we have no information about preparations for India and joining our brethren in Burma is very difficult because of heavy monsoon rains during that season. Details of the Thailand Feast sites will be included in the Feast Information supplement accompanying this letter.

In the meantime, God be with you all.

Please keep the king and queen of Thailand in your prayers. Thailand is in a very serious political crisis at the moment and, frankly, a moral crossroads. This is also the year that King Bhumibol Adulyadej celebrates his 60<sup>th</sup> year on the throne. He is the longest reigning monarch in the world. The king and queen are always very kind and gracious to us. It is because of them that we enjoy the freedom to do God's Work in peace and safety in Thailand.

Until next time,  
As always,

A Fellow-laborer in God's Harvest Fields,



Leon Sexton

#### **WHAT IS LEGACY INSTITUTE?**

LEGACY INSTITUTE is a private, non-profit, charitable foundation. 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.