



LEGACY INSTITUTE

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Chiang Mai, Thailand

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Dear Fellow-laborers,

The Feast of Tabernacles came and went so quickly! God gave us the Annual Festival Days to teach us His plan of salvation for all mankind. I have discovered that the Church of God congregations that do observe the Annual Holy Days grow in understanding of the step-by-step plan God has in place to save all mankind. Those who do not keep these Annual Holy Days do not have the same level of understanding.



Photo courtesy Ann Vierra

**Leon Sexton and Herb Vierra baptizing
Tze-chee in creek at Ban Mai**

meetings at this hotel. Many different groups from all over the world come and host their conventions at the Empress. Earlier this year, the Empress was the venue for the Seventh Day Adventist regional conference.

The General Manager of the Empress, Mr. Kanog, is a good friend we have known for over 25 years and he takes very good care of our group. Western Feast-goers from the US, Canada and England joined our Legacy Institute students and faculty to keep the Feast at the Empress Hotel.

Legacy fully sponsors 2 Feast sites in Thailand, and helps sponsor 3 sites in Burma and 2 in India. We have not yet received reports from Burma or India, but here is our report on the Thailand Festival Sites.

In Thailand, we had two separate festival sites. The first was in Chiang Mai at the Empress Hotel. We have been meeting at this hotel since 1999. It has all the modern guestroom and banquet facilities one would expect at any 4-star hotel in the world. We are not the only people who hold religious



Photo courtesy Ann Vierra

**Some of the Karen children
attending the Ban Mai Festival site**

The second site was on the border of Thailand and Myanmar (Burma). Most of the Karen tribal members of the Church of God in Thailand are refugees living in border camps. They are not permitted to travel to Chiang Mai. So we needed a second site located near the camps so they could attend the Feast. This year we held the Feast at a new border site, the Wasan Guest House, a group of rustic bungalows situated very near the Moei River that separates Thailand from Burma. COG members and their families from Mae La and Mae Ramoh Luang Refugee Camps joined together at Wasan Guest House to worship God and keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

During the middle of the Feast, western Feast-goers traveled from Chiang Mai to the border to join the Karen members for a few days of combined worship and fellowship.

While at the border, we had the honor of baptizing a Karen refugee man, Saw Po Htoo, and his wife, Naw Tze Chee. The Wasan Guest House has several ponds on their property we thought we could use for the baptism ceremony. But after one of our members, Hser Nay, checked them out, he recommended we find another place to perform the baptism because the ponds were full of leaches! We searched around and found an irrigation canal nearby. It had rushing water, so we didn't have to worry about the leaches. The water was cold – but no leaches!

Most of our Karen members have difficulty traveling to the Feast. They must pass many different military checkpoints as they travel south on the river that forms the border between Myanmar and Thailand. Some checkpoints are manned by the *Karen National Liberation Army*; some are manned by the *Democratic Karen Buddhist Army*; some by Burmese soldiers and some by the Thai Border Patrol or Thai Army. Each collects a “travel tax”. At any time they could be turned back at the discretion of whichever armed group they encounter. It is by the grace of Almighty God that they even make it to the Feast. But every year they put it into God's hands. And every year they arrive safe and sound.

Herbert Vierra, Secretary of Legacy Institute, and his wife Ann joined us for their 7th Feast in Thailand. Herb is an elder in the United Church of God congregation in Los Angeles. Legacy Institute is not a part of the UCG organization, nor ever has been. But the UCG Council of Elders approved Herb Vierra's coming to Thailand over the past 7 years to help at the Feast. This is an example of the kind of cooperation various COG organizations can and should have with one another.

Here are some excerpts from a Festival Report Herb sent to me after he returned to the USA:

“This year marked my 7th Feast in Thailand. As has been my custom since my first Feast in 2000 I'm writing a report on what took place.

“Even though we were away for three whole weeks it hardly seems possible the Feast of Tabernacles has gone by so quickly. Because of the limited flight schedules of Thai Airways, and with the two Holy Days falling on the Sabbath this year, we decided to leave on September 25th. Taking a direct evening flight to Bangkok allowed us to sleep on the plane. We landed on Wednesday, September 27th at 6:00 am in the morning.

“A few of those who knew we were headed to Thailand expressed concerns due to reports of a military coup just days before we left the United States. Yet there was never really a threat or problems for Western visitors, and not even

the Thai people for that matter. Crowds praised troops and handed out flowers in celebration. We even saw photos in the English version of the Bangkok Post of families having their pictures taken with soldiers and tanks stationed in the streets. Clearly, all democracies are not equal. It was intriguing to see photos of generals in the newspaper asking the king to approve an interim Prime Minister. By the time we got there, Bangkok was its normal bustling self without a hint of trouble.

“Ann and I had planned to spend two days in Bangkok and were surprised to meet up with Leon Sexton shortly after checking into our hotel. Leon was returning from a brief trip to Burma and was on his way back to Chiang Mai in the north. So, we hung out together and then flew out of Bangkok’s new Suvarnabhumi Airport on Friday. (We landed in Bangkok on the last day the old airport was open. The new facility is spectacular, but makes one feel like you are walking through a huge shopping mall.)

“I was put to work right away and spoke on the Sabbath, and then prepared an unscheduled offering message on Atonement. Leon gave the Atonement sermon. Leon and Gloria Sexton left for the Feast site near the refugee camps along the border early the following Friday morning. They and another Western couple spent the first few days of the Feast in Ban Mai with our Karen brethren, while Ann and I stayed in Chiang Mai with other Western guests and students from Legacy School.

“On Tuesday we and six Western guests took the long journey to the Ban Mai festival site to meet up with everyone there. We finally arrived at about five o’clock in the evening. Our intentions were to get there a bit earlier, but the main highway had far more pot holes than I remember, and we decided to stop at the Mae Sot Hills Hotel (on the border) for a late lunch. Soon after our arrival in Ban Mai we all walked or drove to a nearby stream where Leon and I baptized a married couple just before sunset. The water was about four feet deep and moving at a moderate clip. Fortunately, the roughly twelve foot wide creek had a sandy bottom. The entire setting was quite pastoral, with a colorful sunset, trees and a slight breeze, and brethren rejoicing and singing hymns. It was a very moving experience. Afterwards we all had dinner together.

“Brian and Stephanie Smith (volunteer teachers at Legacy School this year) and their children got to Ban Mai late in the evening. (They stayed back for services in Chiang Mai and then drove up after lunch.) Early the next morning Leon and Gloria returned to Chiang Mai and had late afternoon services with Legacy Students. The shuffle of who was going to be where was a bit of a grind, but necessary.

“There were a little over thirty adults and children in Ban Mai. The guest house where we stayed was very picturesque and comfortable. It was a little sparse by Western standards, but unusually clean and new for such a remote part of Thailand. A few of us even had air conditioning!!!

“Every Feast has its own set of problems and this year’s was no exception. Upon my arrival I learned that Anita (a Karen refugee) who was to be our translator had to return to the refugee camp the next morning. A number of families were required to “register” and she needed to be there because she

wants to immigrate to another country. In desperation we drafted a freshman Legacy student, to help us out. Jay is a Thai citizen and was able to make the trip to Ban Mai with the Smith's. Everyone was shocked by how well he did. Just moments before services I gave him a copy of my notes... and thought... "There is no way he is going to be able to do this." Then, somehow, when I began to speak he jumped right in and spoke clearly and loudly. I was amazed; as were Leon and the other teachers when they found out what happened. The entire crop of freshman students seem brighter and more outgoing than any I've seen at Legacy School to date. The older students are having a major impact on the younger ones. On the opening night of the Feast we had a get acquainted dinner. Freshman students who couldn't even speak English four months ago sat and conversed with us freely. It was wonderful. Of course, we've already seen a tangible pay off on all the training Legacy provides with two graduates starting a new branch of Legacy School in northern Burma.

"Early Friday, eight of us returned to Chiang Mai. Leon gave an offering message in the morning on the Last Great Day. I was asked to give the customary thanks and pray for God's blessing on the offering we received. After several special music numbers I gave the sermon. (All toll, I gave seven sermons and one offering.) After lunch at the hotel, Zallian, a Legacy School senior, gave his second sermonette of the Feast. Between messages Leon and I blessed two small children whose parents are freshmen students this year. Leon then gave the closing message of the Feast.

"The last few years we've been able to have a special farewell dinner by the outdoor pool on the third floor of the Empress Hotel. It makes for a very nice close to the Feast and gives everyone time to say their good-bys in a very lovely setting. What a wonderful time it was!

"Ann and I spent the night, had a late morning breakfast with the Sextons, and then flew back to Bangkok Sunday afternoon. After one more night in Bangkok and a few quick shopping stops the next day we finally caught our eight o'clock evening flight back to Los Angeles. The return flight was a bit shorter... only 15 hours! Curiously, we arrived safely at LAX the same time and same day we left Bangkok airport! Two hours to clear US immigration and Customs and then the long drive home got us in at about midnight. Hmm? That's nearly the same time we left the US three weeks earlier.

"It was another wonderful Feast with new and old friends, serving God and his people. What a great privilege to be a part of it all!

"Regards,

"Herb Vierra"

I was surprised to hear that when Anita had to return to the refugee camp, our freshman student Jay stepped in as translator at the border site. Even though his English is limited, he was able to help explain the sermons in the Karen language. This is the kind of "can do" spirit we encourage at Legacy Institute Leadership Training Center.

Most educated Europeans speak at least 2 languages. But in the USA, few Americans take the time to learn a second language. Some Americans have the unrealistic expectation that everybody else in the world should learn to speak English. Some in the church have even gone so far as to say that God would only call English speaking foreigners. This is very short-sighted!

Jesus spoke at least 3 languages that we know of: Aramaic, Greek and Hebrew. His conversation with Pilate could have been in another language – Latin; but it just as easily could have been in the Greek language. We know that the Apostle Paul spoke all four, and possibly more. Jesus and Paul did not expect everybody else to speak Hebrew or Aramaic.

The Apostle Paul said in **1 Corinthians 14:18-19**:

“I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all; yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.” NKJV

In order to spread the Gospel of the Kingdom, we need to do it in whatever way gets the message across. In many cases, this means learning another language so that we can teach *with understanding*, or training interpreters and evangelists to help do it in their own languages.

In **Revelation 7:9-11**, John sees the vision of the saints praising God and Jesus Christ at the Heavenly Throne. How does he describe what he sees?

*“After these things I looked, and behold, **a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands**, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” NKJV (my emphasis)*

John describes an innumerable host of people from ALL nations, tribes and languages standing before the throne. This can hardly be *just* Israel! These people are clothed in white robes which symbolizes saintly status. They are church members! Where do they come from? From **all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues!**

A major part of this end-time work is to preach the Gospel to as many nations and tribes, and in as many languages as necessary to fulfill our commission. God has many tools at His disposal. In the first century, the Gospel was preached to many nations and tribes and in many languages. Sometimes God gave His first-century servants the gift of languages. At other times He performed the miracle of the audience hearing the same message – but in their own languages (as in Acts 2). We must draw on all resources to do God’s End-time Work!

We use English as the medium of instruction at Legacy Institute Leadership Training Center for several reasons. The first and most important reason is that our volunteer teachers from the West are not native Thai, Burmese, Karen, Chin or Lahu speakers. Some have a smattering of Spanish or German, but that’s about it. In order to teach our students vocational skills, leadership principles and the Bible, we need our students to learn relative fluency in English. This we can do with good success over the course of three years.

The second reason is that English is a very important skill in this modern world. Students who master spoken and written English have a valuable skill to help them earn a living or pursue further education.

The third reason is that English opens up a whole new world to our students who can use English to unlock the door to information previously unavailable to them. Our hope is that they will study and read English material to further their knowledge and understanding of God's way of life.

The fourth reason is that we are training translators to help translate Gospel booklets into their own local languages and dialects.

Finally, we are turning out English teachers and interpreters who can return to their own homes and help teach others.

If God chooses servants to preach the Gospel from among our graduates, they will use *their own native languages* to spread the Good News among their own peoples. Their English ability is only one of the tools God, through His Holy Spirit, will give them.

On this note, I want to relate an incident at the Feast that I think will help you see how our students can use their various language skills to spread the Gospel message.

On the Last Great Day of the Feast, several of our senior students were helping with leadership responsibilities. Haung Daw (Lachaing Kachin tribe) was the song-leader (*all in English*). Zallian (Falam Chin tribe) gave a sermonette *in English* and Pallian (Haka Chin tribe) translated the sermonette *from English into Burmese!* All did a good job and demonstrated their English language skills to our western feast-goers.

Most of our students speak at least 3 languages. We pray that God use the native language skills of our students – *and English* – to further glorify Him in the spreading of His Gospel Truth in this part of the world.

EXTEND Thailand

I want to announce a new Legacy Institute project for young adults ages 20-30. Here is a write up by Stacey Seelig, **EXTEND Thailand** contact person:

“Real Life Experience!

*“Sometimes you just don't know what you can do until someone gives you the chance to try. Well, here is your chance. Legacy Institute is excited to announce a brand new summer project. June 2007, will be the beginning of **EXTEND Thailand** (an international service project centered in Thailand). Participants will spend 8 weeks in Thailand and surrounding Asian countries. The project will end in August with a cultural tour of northern Thailand, Laos and Cambodia. Ten to Fifteen volunteers around 20-30 years of age will be accepted for this year's pioneer project.*

“This is an excellent training ground for life as a Christian. You will learn how to serve, how to teach, and how to lead by example ... true Christianity in action. You will also experience many cultures and gain an entirely different perspective of the world you live in.

“The plan is to have this project coordinated with Queen Sirikit of Thailand’s service projects for the poor. Selected volunteers will spend 5 weeks teaching basic English language and computer skills to underprivileged villagers in the mountains of Northern Thailand.

“It is a difficult job to do, but the rewards far outweigh the costs. It is an opportunity of a lifetime. If this opportunity is what you are looking for, contact me (Stacey Seelig) at slseelig@yahoo.com for more information.”

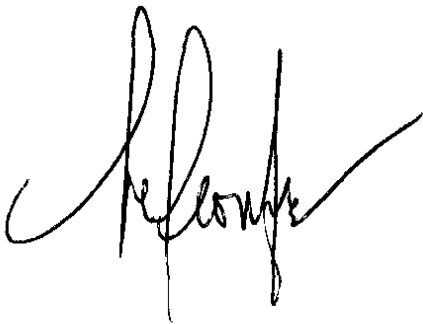
The **EXTEND Thailand** project is a wonderful opportunity to participate in Christianity in action! The cost to participate will be 2,500 – 3,000 U.S. Dollars including roundtrip airfare from Los Angeles or New York.

God’s way of life is GIVE – helping and serving others less fortunate. The way of Satan’s world is GET – to accumulate as much as you can for yourself, even if it is at the expense of others.

EXTEND Thailand is a wonderful chance to participate in a project based on God’s GIVE way of life.

I will close for now. God bless you all for your help in supporting the Legacy Feast sites and helping to make projects like **EXTEND Thailand** possible.

In Jesus’ service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Leon Sexton', with a large, stylized initial 'T' and a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

T. Leon Sexton