



LEGACY INSTITUTE

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Greetings fellow-laborers,

I just returned to Bangkok from a speaking tour in America. Many new and exciting things are happening at Legacy Institute and I want to write to you about them. I will start with my trip to the USA.

It is always encouraging to get back home, see friends and family and be able to accept invitations to speak at various Sabbath services and COG functions. This trip I had the chance to make many new friends and visit some old friends I haven't seen in years.

My trip started out in Lexington, Kentucky where I attended the *Lexington Winter Weekend* organized by Jim O'Brien and sponsored by the Cincinnati, Ohio Church of God. This kind of event is very important and encouraging for COG families and small congregations because it gives them the chance to fellowship together and hear interesting and informative lectures and presentations by leading Sabbatarian scholars and ministers. Ron Dart was there as usual and he always presents thought provoking and scripturally grounded subjects. Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi added to the caliber of presentations with his highly animated seminars about the Sabbath and his experiences as a non-Catholic scholar at the Vatican.

I was invited to give a presentation Sabbath morning about "New Wine Skins" (*see the December 2007 Legacy Letter*). Also two of our Legacy Institute volunteers made presentations Saturday evening. The first presentation was given by Dr. Dusti Howell, Professor of Structured Design and Technology at *Emporia State University* in Emporia, Kansas. He presented information about a new joint project sponsored by ESU and Legacy Institute. This summer we plan to provide an opportunity for college level students to teach English and computer technology to hill tribes at one of Queen Sirikit's projects in the mountains near Chiang Mai. Students can opt for either two or four weeks living and teaching among the hill tribes and touring northern Thailand, Laos and Cambodia.

Dr. Howell is on the Educational Board of Advisors to Legacy Institute and will spend a Sabbatical with us in Chiang Mai this year along with his wife, Deanne and three children. We are very excited to have them with us. Dr. Howell brings with him his knowledge and expertise in using technology for education. Mrs. Howell has a Master's degree in Education and Curriculum Development and will be helping us with designing our curriculum for Legacy school. What a blessing to have them come and help us!

Dr. Howell spent a year teaching in Thailand and Sri Lanka while a student at Ambassador College and went on to complete a double doctorate at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. He has arranged for volunteer teachers at both the summer hill tribe program and at Legacy Institute to now earn

university credits for their humanitarian service. All this is going to take Legacy to an entirely new plateau by providing additional educational benefits to our students and those who volunteer to come to Thailand to teach.

We are grateful to Almighty God for the assistance of the Howells. With their help, *Legacy Institute Leadership Training Center* (LILTC) will become a more professional institution.

Anyone interested in teaching in Thailand and earning university credit for their service should contact us at anita_showers@legacyinstitute.org

The next presentation that evening was given by Achaan (*Thai for teacher*) Stacey Seelig. Stacey is a volunteer teacher at LILTC in Chiang Mai. She taught here last year and loved Thailand and its people so much; she opted to teach for a second year. She will be returning to the USA this spring. She spoke about her Legacy teaching experience and presented a PowerPoint slide show. Both Dr. Howell and Achaan Stacey then answered questions in a frank and sometimes humorous Q & A session.

I wish that all of you could have been there at Lexington. It is sometimes difficult to relate to you the experiences my family and our volunteer teachers have here in Thailand. It is such a foreign and exotic part of the world that I fear my own telling in the Legacy Letter is inadequate. It is helpful to hear stories about experiences from the perspective of others who have been there.

We look forward to the coming year we will share with the Howells. We will miss Stacey, but we know that she will be telling many of you all about her adventures in Thailand and surrounding countries once she gets back home.

VISIT WITH KAREN REFUGEE FAMILIES IN NORTH CAROLINA



Karen COG families

LI Photo

One of the highlights of my recent trip was a chance to visit old friends from the Karen tribe who now live in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. There are six Karen families numbering 25 people who are living, studying and working in this area. They make up approximately 30% of the local COG congregation! All of them at one time were refugees from Burma living in refugee camps in Thailand. Our history together spans several decades. I had the privilege of pasturing and teaching all of them while they were in Thailand before they immigrated to America.

They come from very difficult and dangerous backgrounds. Some were former members of the *Karen National*

Liberation Army which is at war with the Burmese military government. One man was a Karen army officer who spent over six years on the front lines! All of the adults have seen death and experienced deprivation. I believe all the children were born on the Thai side of the border and so were spared the horrors taking place on the other side. Nevertheless, living in a refugee camp has its own sorrows and troubles. All of these families experienced living without nationality at the mercy of political uncertainty. All shared the experience of always looking over their shoulders and never knowing what might come next. A refugee has no power over his or her life. At any time they might be sent back across the border to face prison or execution.



Michelle (L) and Melissa Ko LI Photo

But God is Great! All were given His divine protection and now enjoy the freedoms and myriad opportunities that the US has to offer. In Thailand the children spoke Karen or Thai. Now all the children speak perfect English with American accents. It is amazing!

The time I spent with our Karen brethren was precious but all too short. It was difficult to leave. I am glad that I made the time to travel to North Carolina to visit them. I look forward to another visit with our Karen Church of God families sometime in the near future.

KING OF THAILAND TURNS 80

Last month Gloria and I had the incredible opportunity of attending King Bhumibol's 80th anniversary celebration on December 5.



Fish-eye view of royal audience at Chakri Throne Hall Thailand P.R. Dept.

King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand is the longest reigning monarch in the world. He has been on the throne of the Thai kingdom for over 60 years! All last year special celebrations were held all over the country because the king turned 80. But by far the greatest was the Royal Grand Audience held at the Chakri Throne Hall of the Grand Palace in Bangkok. Gloria and I were sent an invitation from the king to attend. Attending the Grand Audience is a particular honor because only the highest ranking government officials, army and police officers, and ambassadors of foreign countries are invited.

People traveled from distant parts of the country to line the streets in yellow shirts (the king's color) to wait for the king's royal cavalcade. King Bhumibol is highly revered in Thailand and for an ordinary Thai person to even catch a glimpse of the king is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Even with the special car pass we had been given by the king's secretariat, we were still delayed as traffic started jamming up because buses were parking on the streets around the palace to disgorge the thousands upon thousands of faithful subjects.



Leon and Gloria attend royal audience
LI Photo

I was required to dress in formal white tie and tails for this occasion. Gloria calls it my "Penguin Suit". She was dressed in a yellow Thai silk traditional dress. We were ushered into the formal garden area in front of the Chakri Throne Hall by palace servants and then led by the Chief of Protocol to sign the official guest book. We were the first to sign!

Later we went out to the formal gardens to look around and take pictures. Government officials, military and police officers dressed in full-dress uniforms with medals and decorations began arriving. The ladies all wore either uniforms or yellow full length traditional Thai dresses.

The ladies also wore all their medals and ribbons. In Thailand, different regiments of the army wear different color uniforms. As more and more arrived, the gardens in front of the Chakri Throne Hall, where the royal audience would take place, became a sea of bright red, yellow, purple, green, blue and even pink! The Prime Minister and other government officials wore white, again with all their medals and royal decorations. What a colorful event. Gloria and I met royal Ladies in Waiting, the former President of the Thai Senate, the Queen's doctor, General Prem Tinsulanonda, a former Prime Minister and now President of the Privy Council (king's advisory council), and many other dignitaries and officials as they took their assigned places before the king and queen arrived.

Around 10:30 AM the royal anthem was played and the king, queen and all the members of the royal family arrived by motorcade. The king, queen and crown prince came outside onto the balcony overlooking the garden area. A special throne had been set up on the balcony with the royal garuda¹ insignia on a flag draped over the banister in front of him. Cannons fired a 21 gun salute and officials gave their congratulatory speeches. The king gave his formal speech of gratitude to the entire assembly. Then all of us shouted: "Long live the king!" several times.

This all took only about an hour but it was accompanied by much pageantry and royal ceremony. It was all an incredible opportunity to honor the king who has done so much for so many years for his people. Dr. Herbert W. Armstrong was a good friend of King Bhumibol and Queen Sirikit and the royal couple has never forgotten that relationship. Legacy Institute is blessed to have the favor of the king and queen and they look out for us as their guests in the Kingdom of Thailand. It was a great honor to join the many hundreds of thousands who joined as one voice in shouting, "Long Live the King!"

¹ A garuda is a mythical being with a human torso with an eagle's head and wings. It is the symbol of Thai royalty.

LEGACY INSTITUTE'S FOCUS



Legacy board members and friends meet for dinner in Lexington, Kentucky.

From L to R: Dr. Dusti Howell, Shelby Drawbaugh, Herbert Vierra, Glenetta Murray, Anita Showers, Leon Sexton, Brian Drawbaugh LI Photo

Every year at this time, we re-evaluate the focus of Legacy Institute. Eight years ago in 1999, we founded Legacy Institute with the purpose of serving the Work of God in Asia. We formed Legacy as a foundation registered in Texas. We decided not to form an American church organization for several reasons. The first and most important reason was that we wanted to focus on a NEW frontier of God's Work in Asia.

The second reason we formed as a foundation was that we wanted to do "good works" activities in Asia as well as carry out COG-related programs. As a foundation we could initiate and support secular projects

that would help the poor and unfortunate in Asia. I have often likened it to taking the Gospel to the world with the Bible in one hand and a loaf of bread in the other. The world is starving spiritually, but many are also starving physically. It is difficult to help people understand their spiritual needs when they are worried about how to clothe and feed their families. As a foundation, we are able to do a limited number of good works activities that help the poor.

Another important aspect is that a foundation is more readily accepted than a "church" in the non-Christian world. In order to operate in Thailand, we had to form a foundation registered with the Thai government. We are known as *Legacy Foundation* in Thailand and chartered by the Ministry of Culture.

Since the Body of Christ is a SPIRITUAL organism, it matters little whether we are organized as a foundation or a church. What we may call ourselves or what kind of human organization we choose is far less important than what we are ACCOMPLISHING. The paramount question is: Are we DOING THE WORK of GOD?

The parable of the talents should put all of us on notice that WHAT we accomplish and HOW much we accomplish are very important to God.

Matt 25:14-19

"For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. And likewise he

who had received two gained two more also. But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them.”²

Jesus Himself is the man traveling to a far country (Heaven) and His own servants are first, the Apostles, and then Church members throughout history, including you and me. He gives His servants resources to work with according to each person’s own ability. Jesus’ servants do the Work He requires. Some accomplish a little while others accomplish a lot! But then there are those servants who do little or nothing. What happens when He returns?

Matt 25:20-30

"So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.' His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' He also who had received two talents came and said, 'Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.' His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'

"Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.'

"But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents.'

“For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

This parable is describing a test. It is a test of all who claim to be the servants of Jesus. It is true that Jesus ascended to Heaven and the Throne of His Father. But He didn’t stop doing the WORK! The Work of God on earth is carried on THROUGH His servants. We are the people to whom He gave His resources. We are the ones who are supposed to take those resources and accomplish the preaching of the Gospel to all nations and peoples.

When Jesus returns there will be a reckoning. Some of us will receive an incredible reward in the Kingdom of God because our hearts were in the WORK! Some of us take what God has given us and increase it – some fivefold and some twofold. But what about those of us who bury the resources Jesus gives us in the ground? Their reward is clearly tragic!

² New King James Version (NKJV) unless otherwise noted.

And so, during our Legacy Institute Board meeting in Lexington, we re-evaluated our focus and what we are accomplishing in His Name. Are we faithful and profitable servants or not? Are we focused on the job He gave us to do? Are we using His resources wisely? What do we need to change to better serve Our Lord?

Legacy's main focus is to support evangelism and local church building in Asia through education. The main purpose of the LILTC is to educate and train young people from local tribes and nationalities to serve the Work in Asia. Some of our students come from COG families in Burma and Thailand. Some are from traditional Christian and Buddhist backgrounds. We cannot know whom God will call to His service. Our job is to teach, His job is to choose.

We are not interested in sending our students to the USA or other countries for training. This is very costly and usually once they have experienced the materialism of the West few, if any, will ever return to their own countries. Instead, Legacy seeks to train them in the context of their own cultures and socio-economic standards. Our goal is for them to RETURN to their own people and to serve the growing needs of local COG congregations.

For example, today in Burma, Legacy supports the evangelistic activities of Lazum Brang, a Kachin tribal evangelist who speaks over 20 languages. Since 1999, he has raised up over five small COG congregations from scratch, as well as serving scattered members. But he is only one man and these growing congregations are very distant from one another and have no local pastors.

Lazum Brang needs help. Our purpose and focus, with the help of God, is to supply young people who can help evangelize among their own peoples and pasture these new congregations that are cropping up.

Thailand and Laos are also countries that are ripe for the harvest. If God wills, we will have three young people from Laos attending Legacy school this next year.

Education in God's Word and training in leadership and vocations with which to earn a living is the main purpose of *Legacy Institute Leadership Training Center*; and the LILTC is the main focus of Legacy Institute.

We know that all who attend Legacy are not going to be called to serve Jesus Christ. But ALL who attend receive instruction in the moral compass of God's Holy Word and the principles of ethical leadership. Some will be sent into God's harvest fields. Others will return to their homes with a skill with which to earn a living and a witness to the Truth that will make them moral examples to their families and tribes.

Only God knows which road they will travel into the future.

All of us in the churches of God should re-evaluate our calling. Most are not in a position to pack up and move to Thailand like Gloria and I did. But the Harvest of God has many fields. God already knows the field in which He wants you to work.

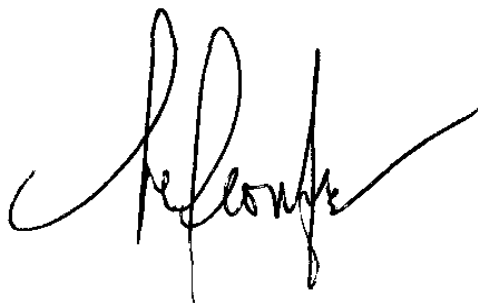
All of us must search our hearts and evaluate whether or not we are actively and appropriately using the resources – both *physical* and *spiritual* (talents) – He has given us so that we can finish His Work! He told us we should be helping Him with His Work while it is day because the night is soon approaching when we will not be able to work (John 9:4).

May God grant us continued blessings so that we can accomplish the Work of God until it is finished.

John 4:34-36

“Jesus said to them, 'My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!”

In Service to Our Lord Jesus,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Leon Sexton', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

T. Leon Sexton

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P.S. As a cost saving measure, we will not be including a return envelope with the Legacy Letter mailing. Instead, these will now be included with monthly receipts.