



LEGACY INSTITUTE

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Greetings from Bangkok, Thailand.

REPORT FROM BURMA

I am back in Bangkok after 5 days in Yangon, capital of Myanmar (Burma). I went to Myanmar to accomplish two main goals:

1. Take more funds to help victims of Typhoon Nargis, and,
2. Acquire visas for four Legacy Institute graduates returning to Chiang Mai for more education.

First, let me report about the situation in the Delta region that was hit by Nargis. Things have returned to “normal”. This means that most of the utilities have been restored and most survivors have returned to what is left of their homes. Other than a few repairs to houses, no Church of God members (*as far*



LtoR: Legacy graduates, Seng Aung and Seng Hpa have just returned with their children (Surachai and Seng Moon Aung) to Legacy.

as we can know since communications are patchy) have had any lasting damage from the Typhoon. None of our church members have died or lost their homes. I instructed Deacon Myo Zaw in Yangon to distribute the funds to the needy, regardless of religious affiliation. Jesus gave bread and fishes to the masses knowing full well that only a handful understood His teaching. Why? Because they were hungry! U Myo Zaw is in full agreement with this policy since he feels compassion for all who suffer.

How the people have suffered! I was told by an Anglican Christian lady that most of the Buddhists could not cremate their dead because of some government rule about needing a death certificate, which they could not obtain. Christian pastors and priests sent teams out and buried their Christian dead. Buddhist corpses were left to rot where they lay.

Reports I received include stories that the government provided materials to repair houses but sold these materials to the needy. It will never be known how much of the millions and millions of aid dollars ended up in the pockets of the unscrupulous or how much of the donated food aid and materials ended up on the black market. There is no possible way that aid agencies could monitor distribution by the military dictatorship.

We pray that the funds fellow-laborers have donated will be used in the best possible way. I trust Deacon Myo Zaw as he has always shown himself to be conscientious and a shrewd steward of God’s funds. He and his wife Tu Mar set a wonderful example of Christianity for the young people

who are part of the Yangon congregation. All are welcome to stay with him at his house. At any one time, you can find anywhere from 3-10 persons staying with U Myo Zaw and Tu Mar. All can eat and sleep there. None are turned away. U Myo Zaw also helps take care of several Chin COG families who live in Yangon but don't earn enough to feed their families.

As well, I left donated funds with Deacon Myo Zaw to purchase land to build a new church building for the growing Kyawk Taing Church of God congregation near Taungoo in central Myanmar. They are growing and need more room to meet on the Sabbath. This new building will also double as a place for brethren to stay while visiting Kyawk Taing.

The Church of God is growing in Myanmar. It is growing so fast and I am deeply concerned that wolves will come into these congregations and devour the new sheep since they have no *pastors* to feed and watch over them! It is already happening! While visiting the Taungoo congregation last Passover, Gloria and I discovered that a "wolf in sheep's clothing" had visited their congregation spreading confusion about the annual holy days and eating unclean foods. Again, these new babes in Christ are easy prey for predators because they are not well-grounded in the truth of the Bible and have no pastor.



At Passover I gave sermons concerning the Holy Days and unclean foods and gave them the Bible scriptures needed to support these doctrines. They seemed satisfied and grounded once again. Now on this trip I found out that since Passover this same "wolf" wanted to visit the flock again and he was asked by the congregation not to come!

The different organizations and fellowships of the Sabbatarian Churches of God basically have the same doctrines. We all keep the Sabbath. We all gather for Passover on 14 Nisan (*there are exceptions in India where some gather on the Jewish Passover on the 15th.*) We all are non-Trinitarian. We generally all observe the clean and unclean food laws. We all do not fight in wars. Some keep Annual Holy Days and some do not (*some choose to observe them on differing days.*) We do not observe Christmas and Easter. So we generally share the same doctrines. Our similarities far outweigh our differences.

The Apostle Paul said that we should not become divided over "doubtful disputations".

Rom 14:1 "*Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.*"¹

We know this passage was talking about disputes in the church over vegetarianism and fast days, etc., **but the principle can be applied overall to those things that divide us.**

Rom 14:17-21

¹ KJV throughout unless otherwise noted.

“For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost(spirit)². For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence. It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.”

Paul clearly instructs us to not try to force a brother to believe something of which he is doubtful or would feel guilty doing. We need to respect our brothers and sisters new in the faith.

The situation in Burma goes well beyond Paul’s instructions. There are false ministers who go about preaching that it is all right for a Christian to eat pork because the Old Covenant is “done away”. Some are now teaching that the Annual Holy Days are “Jewish” and people who observe such days are “Judaizers”. They propose other such doctrines to divide the Church and gain a following after themselves. Their goal is NOT to preach the TRUTH of the Bible. Their goal is to divide congregations and steal new sheep! Confusion and disillusionment reign!

Now if certain Bible teachers want to eat pork and deny the validity of the annual Holy Days, that is their business. But they should NOT go about disturbing congregations that *someone else* has raised up and that *already* believe in the food laws and holy days!

Paul gives clear instruction about how ministers, evangelists and pastors are to respect someone else’s territory.

Rom 15:20

“Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man’s foundation.”

Paul was careful not to infringe where another servant of the Gospel was already working. He moved on to new territory where Christ had not yet been preached.

I have been invited to preach in Asian COG congregations that think a bit differently than I do. I took the Passover with a group where the elders washed every man’s feet that was in the congregation. They used the example that Jesus personally washed all the disciples’ feet. Now what good would it have done for me to make that particular interpretation of the events of the Passover evening a point of division? What purpose would it serve for me to start a crusade to teach them the “right” way?

In cases such as these, it is best to let it go – or if it is a major doctrinal error, then discuss it privately with the leadership. Respect the people who God is using to raise up and shepherd these new flocks, even if there are small differences. Throughout history, the Churches of God have not always done everything the same way. The Churches of God do not always do things the same way today!

“Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.” (Rom 14:19)

The new congregations of Burma are ripe for wolves to attack since the people are new “babes in Christ” and have only a very basic understanding of scripture. Their FAITH is strong. But their

² GOD’S HOLY SPIRIT IS NOT A “GHOST” OF SOME DEAD PERSON, BUT RATHER THE POWER OF GOD.

knowledge is weak. They have no pastors. Sometimes the local pillars are also new to the faith and not well grounded in doctrine and Bible knowledge.

Deacon Myo Zaw admits that he is not strong in Bible knowledge, so his policy is not to allow someone to preach to the Yangon congregation unless U Myo Zaw is confident that they will preach true doctrine as he has been taught. Most times this means that Sabbath services consist only of singing hymns and readings directly out of the Bible. So be it. At least the predators no longer come to try to preach there!

We must pray for God's new congregations in Burma. The sheep who gather in fellowship belong to Jesus Christ. He is their true and ultimate pastor. Pray that He will protect them and cause them to be well grounded in the TRUTH.

Meanwhile, Gloria and I will try to visit Burma more often to strengthen and teach them. We are initiating more classes in homiletics and pastoral care for the graduates who are returning to Legacy for further training. We are already in the process of translating more doctrinal booklets and are compiling a new Bible Study Course that will be translated into Burmese.

In the meantime, pray for us. Every time I start some new project, Gloria reminds me that our plates are already full and overflowing! But how can we NOT do what is necessary to further the TRUTH in Thailand, Burma and other surrounding areas? The harvest is PLENTEOUS! The laborers are FEW!

One highlight of my visit to Burma is that one baptized Legacy graduate, Seng Htun, now believes he is called to help do God's Work in Burma. He has already been giving sermons and Bible studies and assists me when I visit Burma for Holy Days. As soon as we get his visa sorted out, he will be returning to Legacy for more training. Please pray he gets his visa!

BANGKOK TURMOIL

I arrived back in Bangkok to find the city in turmoil. The tens of thousands of the *People's Alliance for Democracy* (PAD) have been in the streets for several months demanding the resignation of Prime Minister Samak Sundaravej. They say he is the bought puppet of ex-PM and fugitive from justice, Taksin Shinawatra. Taksin and his family have already jumped bail and fled to England to avoid a three-year prison sentence handed down to Taksin's wife Potjamon, for fraud and corruption. The rest of the family is up on tax evasion and fraud charges. There are at least six cases pending against former PM Taksin for abuse of power and corruption. All his billions of baht in assets in Thailand's banks have been frozen and there is a warrant out for his arrest. Thailand is seeking to extradite him from England.

The country is divided. You can even see it in the rallies either pro Taksin or con Taksin. The cons wear yellow and the pros wear red! The PAD has taken over Government House (PM Samak's office) and several airports in the South. Unions have shut down the trains and threaten to shut off electricity and water to government buildings unless PM Samak steps down.

The stand off is escalating. Today the "red shirts" of the pro-Taksin *United Front of Democracy Against Dictatorship* (UDD) clashed with the "yellow shirts" of the PAD and one person was killed and 43 were injured. PM Samak stubbornly and adamantly refuses to resign. He has now declared a state of emergency in Bangkok and has called on the army and police to restore order. The PAD members say that they will die before they will disperse! Things are getting ugly!

I pray that it will not come to bloodshed. My hope is that the king will soon intervene. He is a constitutional monarch with no political power. But none can withstand his MORAL power and influence! Legacy Institute has our outpost here. We are doing God's Work in Southeast Asia. We need peace and safety in order to operate effectively. Pray that God will bring an end to this crisis very soon and bring peace to Thailand so that we can worship at the Feast of Tabernacles without hindrance.

So far, tourists can travel safely and without hindrance (*except in the far South because of airport closures.*) All our students and volunteer teachers are unaffected by the turmoil because it is mostly centered in Bangkok and we are in Chiang Mai in the North. I am confident that this will all be over by the time our Feast-goers start traveling to Thailand. God is the God of the Feast! We are gathering to worship Him! We are obedient to His instructions. He will NOT fail us!

I wanted to get one more letter off to you before the Feast of Tabernacles and bring you – my fellow-laborers – up to date on recent happenings in Burma and Thailand.

May God bless all of you and give you safe journeys to your respective festival sites. May you all have a blessed and fruitful Fall Festival season.

UPDATE FROM THE HOSPITAL

12 September 2008

Dear Fellow-Laborers

I am dictating this part of the letter to you from my bed in the Bangkok Hospital. I returned from Rangoon on Sunday evening only to find that my heart was racing 100 miles per hour. I had a taxi take me to the nearest Emergency Room which was Phra Ram 9 Hospital several kilometers away. The doctors there diagnosed me as having heart arrhythmia and after examining me the doctors said I had congestive heart failure. This scared me. So, I contacted my old friend Dr. Lady Pharani Mahanonda, Secretary of the Queen of Thailand, and asked her to

find another friend, Dr. Kitipan, who also just happens to be the King's heart physician – to please come and give me a check-up and a 2nd opinion. Dr. Kitipan is a heart surgeon who operates his heart team out of Bangkok Hospital. He immediately rushed an ambulance over to Phra Ram 9 Hospital. He told my son Bronson (*who was in Chiang Mai*) to get me out of there immediately and to collect my things and be ready to go – as they might have to kidnap me out of Phra Ram 9 Hospital. Meanwhile Bronson packed his bags and flew to Bangkok with his family. Gloria was in California helping her mother and father and took the next flight out she could get. Phra Ram 9 Hospital did not



L to R: K. Jamjun (Hospital Supervisor), Dr. Vitoon (Heart Doctor), Leon and Gloria Sexton, TanPhuYing Chat Keaw (Secretary to the Queen of Thailand)

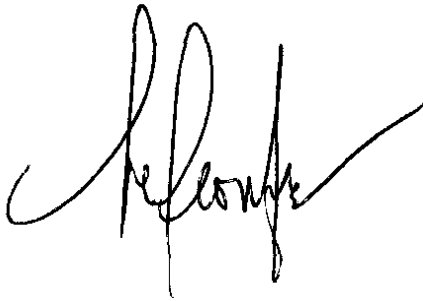
want to release me. But Dr. Kitipan with his staff and with the help of Dr. Lady Pharani basically told them they are taking me anyway. The kidnapping was successful and I am very glad it was!

“Hear my prayer, O LORD, and let my cry come to You. Do not hide Your face from me in the day of my trouble; Incline Your ear to me; In the day that I call, answer me speedily.”
Psalms 102:1-2 (NKJV)

I had a stroke and lost the mobility in my right arm and leg. I have made improvements and am beginning to move my right side again – slowly; and I have regained partial vision in my right eye. I still have a ways to go. On the 14th the CT scan showed that the swelling in my brain has gone down enough to where I am now off a drug that caused side affects and havoc in my body. Now my headaches are also gone. Physical therapy is getting into swing. I have asked my sister to add an update after my letter. She is in constant communication with Gloria.

I thank our Great God in Heaven and I am so thankful and grateful to all of you who are fervently remembering me in your prayers to God during this trying time. Thank you for all of your messages of love and concern.

In Our Lord King Jesus’ service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Leon Sexton', written in a cursive style.

T. Leon Sexton

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P.S. We are trying to get legitimate versions of Microsoft Windows OS and legitimate versions of Office and other Microsoft software sent here to Legacy School in Thailand. If you have purchased new software and have old copies of original software laying around that you no longer use, and wish to donate them; please send to Anita Showers at the address at the top of this letter. We can then acquire legitimate upgrades for your old donated software. We appreciate all you do for us!