



LEGACY INSTITUTE

P.O. Box 575, Monrovia, California 91016
www.legacyinstitute.org
mail@legacyinstitute.org

Dear Friends and Fellow Laborers,

1 November 2011

Our Great God Almighty granted all our prayers at the Feast of Tabernacles. This year we decided to hold the Feast in the mountains of Northwestern Thailand in the



Khun Yuam Feast of Tabernacles group photo

province of Mae Hong Son. In past years, we were able to get permission to transport Karen refugee Church of God brethren from the border to Chiang Mai for eight days of



Leah and Elgie Gibson



Ctr: Kennedy Gibson & Nicole Boyd w/ Ganya & Norah Sexton

worship. The refugee feast-goers would stay at our school facility and travel daily the 15 kilometers into the city for services at the Empress Hotel, where Western guests would stay.



L-R: Brenda & Bill Grinnell, SawPoTtoo, SayNeeSay, TooMyaShwee, NayBluToo, SayNeePaw, Julius Ceasar, LayGayToo, SawSeyToo, NayMya, NawDawBleePhaw



L-R: Legacy Student Kathrine & SayNeePaw from Mae Surin Camp

This year, with the new government in power, I decided it would not be a good idea to try to transport them 12 hours away from their refugee camp homes in the mountains. There are just too many hurdles. Getting permission for refugees to travel outside their own province is impossible. We would have to seek local permission and the help of Thai Army friends to get them through the local police, national police, border patrol police, and military checkpoints that dot the route down to Chiang Mai. It always has been touch-and-go in the best of cases. This year it was just not an option. So, we chose a Feast site about 30 kilometers away from the Ban Mae Surin Refugee Camp, where most of our refugee brethren are housed. We found a facility that could accommodate local brethren, refugee brethren, and Western guests in a spartan, but beautiful, setting.

God provided a place in the mountains to hold the Feast.

The refugees were able to get permission to leave the camp. We arranged transportation to bring them from the camp to the Mith Khun Yuam Hotel where we stayed. The first group from Mae Surin Camp arrived in two trips of a four-wheel-drive pickup. Po Too, who lives in Mae Ra Ma Luang Refugee Camp some distance away, was able to come by bus with his two sons because they have official Thai I.D. cards. His wife was not able to come because she became ill.

Po Too is the Karen refugee whose house in the camp was washed away when the river flooded. The family is all safe and staying with friends on higher ground in the refugee camp. They lost everything in the flood, but we were able to load them up with rice, cooking oil, canned fish, and other foods to take back to their camp, as well as used clothing brought over by our U.S.A. Feast-goers.

God answered another prayer and we were able to gather all the COG brethren together.

Myo Zaw, our COG deacon in Yangon (Rangoon), was able to come with his wife TuMar and his son Bo Bo Zaw. He is always a welcome addition at the Feast because most of our Karen refugee brethren speak Burmese.

We also had no idea how we were going to pay for all the expenses. Refugees earn little or no money. Our Legacy students come from poor Hill Tribe families—so have no money and, as students, earn no money. Legacy ends up having to cover the expenses for most of the Feast-goers, with the exception of the Westerners and those few local brethren who have learned to save Festival tithe.

Why do we do it if we have to pay for most of the people attending the Feast? Well, it has to do with a scripture in the Holy Bible.

And thou shalt rejoice before the LORD thy God, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that is within thy gates, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are among you, in the place which the LORD thy God hath chosen to place his name there. Deuteronomy 16:11

It says that everyone is to rejoice before God, including the stranger or sojourner that is among us. I believe this scripture requires me to make a way for the poor and displaced to come before God. Even if most students are not Church of God members, they are still under my authority. I even gave them a choice this year. I said they could go home if they chose to do so during the Festival school break. Half of them came and the other half decided to help their families in the harvest.

So, up until the very end of the Feast, we were not sure we would have enough funds to pay for all the expenses. Yet, God blessed us with enough donations to cover all expenses at both Chiang Mai and Khun Yuam in the mountains. Once again God answered our prayers.

Gloria and I have been living and serving here in Thailand for over 12 years. This was not the first time we have been in the situation of not knowing whether we could pay all the expenses for the holy days or even keep Legacy running. Yet, by God's grace, we have been able to hold the Spring and Fall Holy Day Feasts and help the refugees get there. God always comes through, howbeit, in the very last hour. I can tell you that it is nerve-wracking sometimes—but it is a faith-builder.



L-R: Atiwat, baby BhumiTak and Fon



L-R: Legacy student Aja Shan, Bo Bo Zaw, Tumar & Myo Zaw

One of the great moments at any of the three commanded annual assemblies is when a person is baptized. This year, Bo Bo Zaw, the younger son of Myo Zaw and Tumar, said he was ready. Even if someone says they are ready, I still counsel them and ask God to show me by the Holy Spirit if this person is truly ready for baptism. I need to know two things: Is the person repentant and is the person ready to give their lives to Jesus Christ, the One who redeemed them with His own blood. I look to see if they have been showing fruits that demonstrate repentance by trying to obey Christ as much as they understand. And I discuss the seriousness of the life and death commitment that baptism represents.



L-R: Bo Bo Zaw, Leon Sexton & Myo Zaw



Leon Sexton immersing Bo Bo Zaw

Michael Bo Bo Zaw was indeed ready. So I baptized him on the last day in the pool at the Empress Hotel. Everyone rejoiced! It was a very encouraging and spiritually-rewarding occasion. Bo Bo Zaw is the latest fruit from Burma.

Things are very difficult in Myanmar. Most people live under a cloud of despair and discouragement. The economy is in a shambles and the government is repressive. There is little opportunity for young people to get an education or find a good job. Thousands of young people just want to find a way to get out of Myanmar to live and work in another country. In Thailand alone, it is estimated that over 1 million Burmese have come across the border to find work. Exploitation of illegal workers is commonplace, but they keep coming. Life—even as an exploited illegal worker for ridiculously low wages—is better than what they leave behind. Living in one of the war-torn border areas of Myanmar can be even more despairing than living in the cities. Villages populated by ethnic minorities (such as the Karen or Shan) are periodically raided; their homes and crops burned, women are raped, and men, young and old, are taken as forced laborers to build roads or act as porters. There is not much hope for the future in Myanmar. That is why young and old flee across the border into Thailand.

The *United Nations High Commission for Refugees* (UNHCR) numbers 111,000 registered refugees in nine camps along the Thai-Myanmar border. Estimates of total refugees—registered and unregistered—are as high as 215,000. That is not all. Inside Myanmar are an estimated 446,000 *Internally Displaced Persons* (IDPs) hiding in jungle hideouts and refugee camps controlled by one of the ethnic armies fighting the central Myanmar government.

It is in this forsaken place of war and human misery that God has decided to work. Why? Jesus tells us why.

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. Luke 4:16-21

That brief sermon by Jesus began His earthly ministry. It is this same ministry that continues today. It is this same ministry that is going on in the border areas of Thailand and the war-torn villages of Myanmar.

It is humbling to be a small part of that great and glorious ministry. The Church of God members who live in refugee camps have no regular Sabbath services. They have no ministers to regularly provide sermons and Bible studies. They have no magazine in

their languages. The only booklets they might have are those few we translated into Karen and Burmese in the past. The Festivals of Passover and Tabernacles are times when they can come out of their refugee camps and be taught from God's Word every single day. With the help of Bill Grinnell and Nathan Albright, both from the U.S.A., they were fed with at least one sermon and one Bible Study each day with translations into Thai, Burmese, and Karen. I pray we can do even more to provide them with the spiritual food that will change their lives forever.



L-R: Bo Bo Zaw, Jeremy & Shawn Grinnell on millennial setting

All of you please help us in prayer. We have reached a crisis period at Legacy in Thailand. At the very moment we are reaching more and more of the poor and brokenhearted with the Gospel message, the economy in the U.S. is nearing rock bottom. Those who support this Work in Asia are hurting and it is becoming more difficult to dig into pockets that seem to have big holes in the bottom.

One moment I am deeply discouraged that we have to struggle to pay our bills. The next, I am elated that the angels are singing with the baptism of a new child of God. The Lord Jesus forgot to tell me that working for Him would be one giant rollercoaster ride! Yet we continue on, crying out to God that we might have the kind of faith that moves mountains.

He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint. Isaiah 40:29-31



Erika Pedersen



NawMya & SawSeyToo



JuliusCeasar & LayGayToo



Legacy student Bancha



Brethren on Elephants in the Jungle



Khun Yuam scenery in morning walk



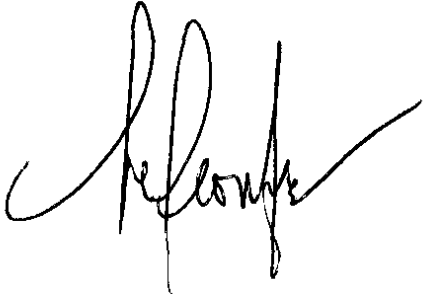
Elgie Gibson leading song service

Those words are some of the most encouraging I could possibly read in the pages of my Bible. Power and strength to keep going on and accomplishing His Will come from the One who is the source of all power and strength. We just have to remember that and call on Him.

God wants His Work completed. Legacy is a small, yet important, part of that great worldwide work. We are important to the brokenhearted who are imprisoned in spiritual darkness and physical bondage in the mountains of Thailand and the

depressingly poor villages of Myanmar. Please pray that God will give us the power and strength to overcome all the obstacles we face in continuing to carry forth the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to those who are lost in this part of the world.

In Jesus Christ's Holy Name,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Leon Sexton', with a large, stylized initial 'T' and a long, sweeping horizontal stroke at the end.

T. Leon Sexton

© Legacy Institute 2011