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Bangkok, Thailand

December 5, 1999

Dear Friends,

I am writing you from Bangkok, Thailand. Today celebrations are going on all over the country to mark the king of Thailand's birthday. He is 72 and is the longest reigning monarch on earth - longer than Queen Elizabeth or any other. He is probably the most-loved king on earth as well; revered by the people because of his example. The reason I mention this is because the king and queen of Thailand have had a long relationship with the Church of God for over 28 years starting with Herbert W. Armstrong who first visited the king in 1971. Since Ambassador Foundation halted its foreign projects, involvement with these enlightened monarchs has been through private contact.

Why do I call them enlightened? "They aren't even Christian!" one might comment. The answer is that in the 20 years that I have had the honor of knowing them, they have demonstrated time and again what Paul meant in Romans 2: 14-15:

"For when the Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things contained in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts. . . ."

King Bhumibol has demonstrated for over 52 years on the throne that the welfare of the Thai people comes first in his life. He could have led a jet-set lifestyle or built thousand-room palaces for himself like other royals have done. Instead, his palace in Bangkok has dairy cows, handicraft training centers and experimental rice plots. For most of his reign until just recently, he spent much of the year traveling to the remote provinces of Thailand, sometimes by foot and packhorse, initiating projects to help his people at the grassroots.

He does have a heart condition which now limits his ability to travel, but his wife Queen Sirikit has picked up the slack and spends much of her time traveling out to the provinces to take care of his royal projects as well as her own.

Again, why do I call them enlightened? Because, even as Herbert Armstrong noted many years ago, they, more than any other rulers on earth, demonstrate righteous leadership. They see their role as not to be served, but to serve; not to receive, but to give. The king and queen are constitutional monarchs and therefore, have no political power. But their power to influence the nation reaches far beyond any absolute monarchy. Their power lies in the respect and love of the people of Thailand. It is a respect and love that can only be EARNED, never demanded because of position. As a result, no one, not even the most jaded politician, goes against the word of the king.

In John 13 Jesus, just before His betrayal, knelt down and washed the disciples' feet. They protested this humble act by their Master as too demeaning for Him to perform. The Christ then taught them a most important lesson in the necessity of humility in Godly leadership:

“ Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.”

The king and queen of Thailand have been washing the feet of their people for over 50 years. They are examples to us of the kind of leaders God expects us to become.

Tonight, Gloria and I watched the colorful fireworks being set off and listened as the entire population of the city sang a song of praise in unison to honor their king. It was a moving testimony to the power of right example. The important question is, will we in the churches of God learn anything from their example?

Kachinland COG Update

The monsoon is almost over in Kachinland and Lazum Brang is excited about getting the church / bible school building started. But things aren't so easy for the people in Myanmar. Below are excerpts from his most recent letter:

“By the grace of God, we, the church members from Kachinland, all are very quite well now.... On October 18, I have purchased a big church compound, which is located at the central place of our hometown in Na Mawn. I paid it for 90,000 laps (USD \$300), but I also have to pay extra funds -- 2,000 laps to the council office of our hometown. I thank you so much for your kind helps with your generous heart.

“Mountain bike is very useful in my ministry. I daily use it as a motor cycle wherever I go around here and there. Every Sabbath day I play keyboard in our church service. I am very much thankful to you for your kind assistances....

“...Our church compound is over 200 feet long and nearly 100 feet wide. We aim to build here a wooden chapel and a Bible Seminary School. At present time teak wood plank is very expensive here. One ton is 30,000 laps (approximately \$100 US) So, we are not able to buy the planks completely for this church building. But, we will try to buy the teak wood posts. The size is:- 6 inches by 6 inches and 18 feet long....at least 12 posts of teak wood is needed for our chapel here....

“...Through your kind supports, our family is not getting trouble at present time. But in the whole Burma and Kachinland, so many families are getting trouble anywhere. Because, the main food - rice is very expensive every where. It becomes triple price, so many poor families can not buy rice enough; and they eat mixed foods - rice and banana.

“I thank God so much for our church of God members can eat rice every day by the blessings of God. Every day, I am teaching bible, distributing literature, and writing letters to the church members those who are living very far places.

*“May God bless you and your ministries in Asia very abundantly.
Lazum Brang”*

Jack Aung Min Prayer Update

Many of you have been praying for Jack, a Karen church member who was hospitalized for appendicitis last month. He is fully recovered and is petitioning the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) to obtain "person of concern" status so that he can immigrate with his family to America. Jack and his family are currently staying in Bangkok and live under the constant shadow of possible arrest by Thai immigration authorities because of the Thai government's crackdown on illegal immigrants. Please continue to pray for their situation. If you would like to write words of encouragement, please do so at:

Saw Jack Aung Min, PO Box 5, Phrakanong, Bangkok, 10110, Thailand.

Below is a recent letter he wrote to me concerning his appendix operation:

"I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you for my appendix operation. It was a wonderful time when you arrived and I visited you, and I suddenly had a stomachache and it was a very hard time for me as well. Because I do not know any body in Bangkok, only you are the one took care of me and sent me to the hospital.

"First of all I thank God that He had arrange everythings for me, He pour out His blessing through you and you have saved my life. I can never forget what the good thing you have done for me. I also want to say thank you to your family and the church members. Some of them are ordinary people, but they have their heart of helping other peoplse, as the bible said, love your neighbours as yourselves.

"My prayers will be upon you, your family and church members. May the blessing of the Lord guide you and all members in the US, and continue to use you in mighty way.

*"May God bless you and your family always. Your's faithful,
Saw Jack Aung Min"*

Note: The doctor commented that we got Jack to the hospital just in time to prevent a burst appendix. We still have an outstanding bill for the emergency operation that comes to the equivalent of \$1100 USD. (We petitioned the UN for financial assistance, but they will not help so far, as helping is a tacit recognition of official refugee status which they, as yet, have been unwilling to give Jack.)

Feast of Tabernacles 2000 in Thailand

The Feast, God willing, is definitely on for next year in Thailand. I just went over the itinerary with Frank Fish of Travel Gallery, Inc. who will be handling all the transportation and housing arrangements. The festival program will be entirely sponsored by Legacy Institute as an open site, not affiliated with any single COG fellowship. Speakers will be invited based on their ability to provide spiritual meat to God's people, not on their "ministerial rank" or what fellowship they attend.

We have a very exciting itinerary lined up which provides a balance of worship and fellowship opportunities mixed with rich and exotic cultural experiences. Whether you have been to Thailand for the feast before or not, it is sure to be a unique spiritual and cultural adventure.

Remember, there is NO GUARANTEE any of our Karen or Kachin brethren along the border will be able to attend this site. This is because they are refugees and have NO legal status in Thailand. Therefore, it is unwise and unsafe for them to travel. Perhaps by God's Grace, some will be able to attend, but there are NO guarantees.

For those of you interested in a complete itinerary and further information about the Feast of Tabernacles 2000 in Thailand, please contact Frank Fish at:

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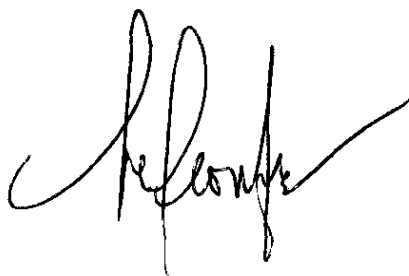
We hope to see many of our Legacy Institute donors and friends at next year's exciting festival in the golden Kingdom of Thailand. In the meantime, please continue to pray for our scattered brethren in Asia. Gloria and I are trying to make contact with some that have "fallen through the cracks" or just disappeared after the breakup of the WCG. At the same time we are coming in contact with brothers and sisters in Asia we never knew existed! (But God knew!!) Recently I received an email from an individual who brought to my attention an inaccuracy in my last Legacy newsletter. He writes:

"It is great to hear of the workings in Myanmar (Burma) as noted by the Legacy Institute. HOWEVER, this one portion requires an update: " we wanted to participate in the very first ever Feast in northern Burma." He continues:

"You are at least a couple of hundred years too late. The Menmasseh (Manasseh /Menashe) of Burma and northeastern India (numbering over 1 million) have been keeping the feasts there during that period of time. They use Hebrew prayer books and worship YAH Shua! This has been reported extensively over the last year from a variety of sources."

Wow !! Where are all these Sabbatarian groups coming from? The more I hear about these groups, the more I understand the meaning of Revelation 5: 9-10 and the more I recognize the fallacy of our "exclusionist" attitude as practiced in the past. We hope to make contact with some of these Menmasseh people in the near future, as God wills. Please pray that God will provide the means. Until next time, may God continue to bless and keep you all.

In Christian service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Leon Sexton', with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Leon Sexton

WHAT IS LEGACY INSTITUTE?

LEGACY INSTITUTE IS NOT A CHURCH. *Nor is it affiliated with any human church organization. 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.*

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