



## LEGACY INSTITUTE

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Song services on Sabbath in Yangon at MyoZaw's and TooMar's new apartment. L.to R.: SengPan with son NawNaw, ZinMuangZaw, KhawnYe, RoiSan, KhawnHtang, SengMai, LuLu, TooMar, Stelle, Anikaung, BoBoZaw, and Whitey.

21 February 2017

Dear Friends and Fellow Laborers,

### TRIP TO BURMA

Gloria and I have returned from Myanmar (Burma) and have great things to report. First of all, I would like to relay that the Church of God is continuing to better organize in Burma. Burma has been a backwater for the Church of God for many years; indeed, it has been an adjunct to Australia and continues to be for some COG organizations. Part of the problem has been a lack of trained leadership for the fledgling churches that have sprung up over the years in many parts of Burma.

The Church of God Seventh Day has evangelized in Burma and small church congregations have sprung up as a result. The Worldwide Church of God had two congregations in Burma, both pastored by a faithful Karen tribal church elder called Saw Ley Bey (now deceased). Living Church of God has at least one small congregation in the Delta region. There have been other COGs who have done some evangelism in Burma over the last 80 years or so. There may even be current COG affiliated small congregations of which I am unaware.

The problem has always been sustainability. Many times outside evangelists have blown into town, preached and baptized, and then have blown back to Australia, the U.S., Malaysia, India, or wherever they came from. Who feeds the sheep? They certainly cannot be fed and nurtured with tapes and CDs in English. Very few can understand English. Booklets in English do no good since few read English. What the new churches need is trained leadership to pastor them. You cannot pastor them from New York or Melbourne or Madras. They need trained onsite pastors and pastor's wives. This is something Legacy school has tried to provide by teaching leadership skills over the past 15 years.



L.toR.: SengAung, Gloria, Leon, MyoZaw on Sabbath

Children’s Bible Lesson—Level 1 about creation (from the ages of five to eleven). We will add these to our Legacy website. We are also making video tape CDs to send them with translation into their own language.

Gloria and I want to visit more often as my health permits. At this time, Thailand Immigration is making it very difficult to obtain visas for any young Myanmar nationals we might want to bring to Thailand for training. Until we get this visa issue resolved, we cannot bring young people to Thailand from Myanmar. Please pray that God opens the door to once again allow visas to Thailand. Some people might ask, “Why don’t you just move to Burma?” Good question. The answer is multi-faceted. First of all, we can only get a 30-day visa. Secondly, there is no real freedom of religion. All non-Buddhist religions are severely restricted. Non-registered religious organizations cannot own land, build a church building, or gather for worship services without permission. Known Christian evangelists have had their applications for permanent residency denied. It is very problematic for a foreign religious worker to reside in Myanmar. Others might ask, “How are the Anglicans, Baptists, Catholics, and Seventh Day Adventists able to have such large churches, schools, and universities?” The answer is that those religious organizations have been registered with the Myanmar government for a very long time.



Singing “You Shall Love the Lord with All Your Heart“ on Sabbath special music by SengPan, KhawnYe and LuLu.

We have been able to acquire local permission to build a church building and hold worship services in Jawk Taing, Burma, because it is remote and not located in or near a large metropolitan area. The church there is pastured by Seng Aung and his wife Seng Pan, both Legacy graduates. They both came to meet with us in Yangon (Rangoon). For five days we discussed so many important topics, such as visiting outlying areas (some very dangerous

because of military fighting in the north), the booklet topics, church steeples and bells, prophecy and world events, health, Sabbath school, etc. Seng Aung had to return on Friday so he could take care of Sabbath services in Jawk Taing.

Gloria and I were able to discuss Passover and Unleavened Bread plans with them, as well as developments in their local church area. Church members are faced with sickness and with no nearby hospitals. The closest is 45 minutes away and cannot even compare to the standards we know, even in Thailand. Food is not always adequate either. Government schools operate from Monday through Sabbath (which is mandatory)—so the Seventh Day Adventist schools are a good option, but more expensive. Pastor Seng Aung helps out where lack of funds are needed.

Legacy Institute sponsors education for a number of young people so they can later acquire good jobs. We will talk about our sponsored students later in this letter.

Seng Pan holds Sabbath school during church time for the small children; and from 4-6pm for the older youth. Seng Aung and Seng Pan will also hold a Summer Youth Program from March 10<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> for Church of God and other local children that love to join in for the activities—and at the same time learn the Truth. They will learn Bible, leadership, English, music and sport. She is assisted by Ney Bloo Htoo, Hser Ney Paw, and Htoo Gay (all Legacy graduates that have returned to Myanmar.) The Tulsa Church of God has a program of correspondence between the youth group of Tulsa and the young students in Jawk Taing. The Tulsa church also sends monthly funds to help with this wonderful project. Now they are able to get the needed writing materials, Bible books, cd's, and other needed items—plus the special Sabbath school snacks.



L.to R.: SengAung, MyoZaw, Leon Sexton,  
and SawHlaEh

Gloria and I had the chance to meet the lay leader of a non-aligned COG group in the Sakangyi area of southern Burma. They attended this last Feast of Tabernacles with the Jawk Taing brethren. Their leader, Saw Hla Eh, traveled all the way by boat and bus to Yangon to meet with us.

The Sakangi group of about 20-30 people are subsistence farmers and day laborers who are faithful Sabbath and holy day keepers. This year they have decided to stay in their local area, to observe the Passover, two high days of Unleavened Bread, and the Sabbath in between. The travel all the way across Burma takes a heavy toll, especially on the children and elderly. All get carsick as they are not used to traveling by bus

or car. The day laborers lose work time because it takes at least two or three days travel time as well as four days of labor lost for days between holy days. They cannot afford to lose the pay they would receive. They also risk thieves stealing their chickens and other livestock while they are gone.

The United Church of God has provided them with some funds to get extra special food for the holy days. Our translator, AhJar Shan, is already translating the Passover instructions into Burmese to send to Saw Hla Eh. Seng Aung will lead the Passover in Jawk Taing. I will be staying in Chiang Mai and lead the Passover here.



Sabbath in Chiang Mai with AhJar translating for Leon Sexton

HserNaySay & HtooMya sing special music on Sabbath in Chiang Mai.



Whitey

Here are the young people that Legacy donations currently sponsor for education in Myanmar:

- |                |   |
|----------------|---|
| SengMai-29     | Third and last year in the SDA University                 |
| KhawnYe-20     | Summer School. Starts 2 <sup>nd</sup> year SDA University |
| Lulu-18        | Summer School. Starts 2 <sup>nd</sup> year SDA University |
| HserNeySey-20  | 10 <sup>th</sup> Grade SDA High School                    |
| DoiBu-16       | 11 <sup>th</sup> Grade SDA High School                    |
| HtooGay-18     | 11 <sup>th</sup> Grade SDA High School                    |
| NeyBlooHtoo-19 | 11 <sup>th</sup> Grade SDA High School                    |
| Whitey-19      | Computer Software Tech Class                              |

From the above names four are graduates of Legacy. Only one of the above was not able to complete Legacy due to the visa difficulties at this time. Three of the above graduates came directly out of a refugee camp and are blessed to continue their education near our



L.to R.: Back Row: The three university students, LuLu, KhawnYe, and SengMai. Front Row: NawNaw, SengPan, Gloria, and TooMar

church in Jawk Taing. Please continue to pray for all our brethren in Myanmar and especially for the success of these young people we are helping to receive an education.

### IMPORTANCE OF PASSOVER

The early New Testament Church did not have Easter. They observed the New Testament Passover each year on the evening of the 14<sup>th</sup> Nisan according to the Hebrew or Bible Calendar.

For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread:

And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.

After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.

For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

### **NEW TESTAMENT PASSOVER**

The night that Jesus was betrayed by Judas was the evening portion of the 14 Nissan of the Hebrew Calendar. The next afternoon was when the Passover lambs were killed. The lambs were killed the same time that Jesus—the Lamb of God—was crucified.

### **JESUS OUR PASSOVER**

Jesus fulfilled the Passover symbolism by dying for our sins at the same time that the Passover lambs were being killed at the Temple in Jerusalem. This was according to the instructions given to Moses. “And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening” (Exodus 12:6).

The Passover lamb was kept until Nissan 14 and then was killed late afternoon/early evening part of the fourteenth. The Passover Lamb was then eaten after sunset which would then be Nissan 15.

Jesus ate a meal with his disciples the evening before He was crucified. This was also the evening before the Passover Lambs were killed. During the meal, Jesus instituted the symbols of bread (His body) and wine (His blood) and commanded His disciples to continue to share these symbols on the same evening until He came back from Heaven.

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.

And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” (Matthew 26:26-28)

For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them (Acts 20:29-30).

### **FIRST CENTURY CHURCH KEPT PASSOVER ON 14 NISSAN**

But later, the Bishop of Rome (about 150-160 A.D.) changed the Passover to Easter. Easter was now celebrated to commemorate Christ's resurrection instead of Passover to commemorate His DEATH. This change caused division in the Christian Church between east and west.

The WESTERN CHURCHES led by ROME:

- Easter on 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Spring Equinox
- Celebrate Resurrection of Jesus

The EASTERN CHURCHES centered in, and led by, Ephesus and Smyrna in general, continued the Apostle's practice to:

- Continue keeping 14 Nissan PASSOVER
- Commemorate Jesus' DEATH

**120 A.D.:** A letter of Church leader **Irenaeus** (who was born in Smyrna) shows that there was a difference of opinion and practice regarding the keeping of Passover or Easter that had existed at least from the time of **Bishop Sixtus** (Pope from 117-124 A.D.) in Rome. He is now called **Pope Sixtus**.

### THE 2 ANTAGONISTS

**Polycarp:** DISCIPLE OF JOHN; Bishop (Pastor) of Smyrna (A.D. 69-155)

**Anicetus:** Bishop of Rome—died 167 A.D.

**Polycarp**, who was over 80 years old at the time, went to Rome to defend the Passover. Bishop Polycarp could not persuade Bishop Anicetus to keep the Passover and not Easter. Eastern churches continued to keep Passover and Western churches, under Rome, began to keep Easter Sunday.

**195 A.D.:** Still the controversy continued. **The Eastern Churches** continued to keep Passover (Hebrew: *Pausch*) on 14 Nissan.

**The Western Churches** were keeping Easter. **Pope Victor** (Pope from 189-199 A.D.) wanted to make the keeping of Easter—not Passover—a law throughout the East and West.

**Eusebius** was a church historian. Here is what Eusebius records that **Polycrates** wrote:

We observe the exact day; neither adding, nor taking away. For in Asia also great lights have fallen asleep, which shall rise again on the day of the Lord's coming, when he shall come with glory from heaven, and shall seek out all the saints. Among these are **Philip**, one of the twelve apostles, who fell asleep in **Hierapolis**; and his two aged virgin daughters, and another daughter, who lived in the Holy Spirit and now rests at Ephesus; and, moreover, John, who was both a witness and a teacher, who reclined upon the bosom of the Lord, and, being a priest, wore the sacerdotal plate. He fell asleep at Ephesus. And **Polycarp** in **Smyrna**, who was a bishop and martyr; and Thraseas, bishop and martyr from **Eumeneia**, who fell asleep in Smyrna. Why need I mention the bishop and martyr **Sagaris** who fell asleep in **Laodicea**, or the blessed Papius, or **Melito the Eunuch** who lived altogether in the Holy Spirit, and who lies in Sardis, awaiting the episcopate from heaven, when he shall rise from the dead? **All these observed the fourteenth day of the passover** (*emphasis mine*) according to the Gospel, deviating in no respect, but following the rule of faith. And I also, Polycrates, the least of you all, do according to the tradition of my relatives, some of whom I have closely followed. For seven of my relatives were bishops; and I am the eighth. And my relatives always observed the day when the people put away the leaven. I, therefore, brethren, who have lived sixty-five years in the Lord, and have met with the brethren throughout the world, and have gone through every Holy Scripture, am not affrighted by terrifying words. For

those greater than I have said 'We ought to obey God rather than man'...I could mention the bishops who were present, whom I summoned at your desire; whose names, should I write them, would constitute a great multitude. And they, beholding my littleness, gave their consent to the letter, knowing that I did not bear my gray hairs in vain, but had always governed my life by the Lord Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

**Pope Victor** excommunicated **Polycrates** and other Eastern Church leaders because they wouldn't change from 14 Nissan Passover to Easter Sunday.

Easter is a Roman Church Doctrine. The Roman Church and Roman doctrines became the doctrines throughout the Roman Empire, and later also including Britain and Ireland. All modern Easter Sunday doctrine comes from the authority of the Roman Church.

The Church of God does not keep Easter and still meets on 14 Nissan of the Hebrew calendar for Passover, like the Apostle John, Bishop Polycarp of Smyrna, Bishop Polycrates of Ephesus, and so many others in the first- and second-century Church of God.

I find it fascinating to read the names of so many in Polycrates' letter who were faithful to our Lord even unto martyrdom. They kept the Passover as Jesus instructed. We do the same today. May God bless our faithful obedience to the way Jesus wants his memorial ceremony conducted.

In my Master, Lord Jesus' service,

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

T. Leon Sexton

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P.S. Please pray for AhJar that she will be able to receive her One-Year Visa on the 26<sup>th</sup> or thereabouts of March. She is very much needed here in Thailand to serve God's work.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polycrates\\_of\\_Ephesus#cite\\_ref-Eus-24\\_3-1](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polycrates_of_Ephesus#cite_ref-Eus-24_3-1). Eusebius, Church History, Book V, Chapter 24