



ECHOES

The Church of Christ in Thailand
Ecumenical Relations Office
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THAILAND

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OUR MAN IN HAITI

The whole world has been shocked anew by the most recent natural disaster to strike our planet, the earthquake in Haiti, centering on the capital, Port Au Prince. Haiti is – or was – little known to the rest of the world. It has suffered from many devastating hurricanes in the past, but nothing compares with the present calamity. Its people are the poorest in the Western Hemisphere, perhaps in the whole world, and they have been struggling throughout their history to achieve justice and tranquillity, with little of either to show for it up till now..

The people of Thailand, and the CCT in particular, are united in expressing their sympathy to the people of Haiti, and pray that there may be a world-wide effort to speedily relieve their suffering, rehabilitate their way of life (such as it is !) and reconstruct their environment. The government of Thailand is encouraging its citizens to give to the relief appeal for Haiti and has made its own contribution to this end.

Meanwhile, we have received word that someone who once served here amongst us in the CCT has a dramatic story to tell about his experience at the heart of the action in Port au Prince.

If you happened to be watching the Fox News channel on the evening of January 18th (Bangkok time) you might have seen and heard someone who served with the CCT a little over 20 years ago. He was being interviewed by Fox anchor Geraldo Rivera about a week after the devastating earthquake struck, the aftermath of which has shocked us all.

Our man in Haiti was Rick Santos, who served as a CVT (Christian Volunteer in Thailand) from 1987-1990, teaching at Bangkok Christian College, and also working in the Ecumenical Relations Office for a time.

Around Christmas time we had an e-mail from Rick, which we reproduce on page 4 of this issue. He had gone to work as President and CEO of IMA World Health, which is a Christian (ecumenical) agency based in USA, and this helps to explain how he and three other American colleagues came to be in Haiti at this time. They arrived in Port au Prince and planned to take accommodation in the Hotel Montana. But they had no sooner arrived when, perhaps as the result of an aftershock, the whole hotel collapsed around them. As we understand it, he and about eight others were on the ground floor or fell through to it at the time of the ‘quake. Rick was pinned down for 50 hours where he fell. However, neither he nor any of his friends were seriously incapacitated; some had a little more freedom of movement than he did, but they were not finally released until they were rescued by a party of French firefighters.

We thank God for this escape from a happening which might have had much more serious consequences. We shall no doubt hear further details as time goes by. We first heard of this event from Perry Smith, who worked with Rick in Vietnam, both of them serving with CWS (Church World Service) at the time. Then, fortuitously switching on the TV at the right moment, we both saw and heard that all was well with Rick.

Rick and his fellow-workers will be far too busy now, but we hope later that we may have a further report on what he and his agency have been able to do for the wellbeing of the people of Haiti.

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See also Rick’s pre-Christmas letter on page 4 of this issue, which tells us about his new position and how he would have become involved in the Haiti Relief effort.

News and Notes

We remind our readers that, during the coming months, when your Editor will be in and out of hospital a number of times, those of you with access to the Internet will be able to catch up on some of the news you might otherwise miss by logging on to the CCT website - www.ero.cct.or.th The site-master is Acharn Mike Fucella. These days, in addition to his role as adviser to the CCT's Child Protection Program, he is also the adviser on ecumenical affairs to the General Secretary, and works from the Ecumenical Relations Office at CCT headquarters.

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The Thai government has made a donation of \$US100,000 dollars for relief work in Haiti and will also send 20,000 tonnes of rice to that country, It has also offered the services of doctors, nurses and engineers if they are requested. A public appeal has been launched, and other agencies, including Church World Service (CWS), which has its Bangkok office in the CCT Headquarters Building, have also joined in the effort. Because Thailand is so far away cash gifts are the best way to meet the need. As far as is known very few Thais were living in Haiti at the time, and none were killed in the earthquake.

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We first heard about Rick Santos and what happened to him in Haiti from Perry Smith.

Perry himself served as the CWS representative in Haiti (1977-1981), in Bangkok from 1975 to 1976 and again from 1991 to 1993. In between he and Rick were CWS colleagues in Vietnam. Perry, now retired and living in London, pays periodical visits to India, and takes the opportunity to renew his friendships in Thailand and elsewhere in the region. At present he is in Bangkok for a couple of months, staying at the Student Christian Center and brushing up his Thai at the Union Language School.

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The German Speaking Protestant Church in Thailand is a constituent congregation of the CCT, Pakh 6, and meets at 209, Soi 9 Pridi Phanomyong Rd., Sukhumvit Soi 71. The church celebrated its 50th anniversary on Sunday, January 17th. Acharn Sayam Muangsak officially represented the CCT on this occasion. We congratulate the church on half a century of witness. The church has met at several locations over the years and has only recently moved to its present meeting place. The present pastor, the Rev. Burkhard Bartel and his wife, Isolde, began their ministry in 2004. They expect to return to Germany in the middle of this year and no announcement has yet been made as to their successors. The photograph below was taken at the anniversary service, at which Bishop Martin Schindehütte from Germany was present and brought greetings.



A book reviewer should not go into too much detail about the contents of the book he is reviewing, or no one will buy the book, thinking they already know what it contains. But the previously unrecorded story of Konrad Kingshill's forebears is so fascinating that we present below a summary of that part of the book, believing that there will be many of you who knew Konrad during his long term of service in Thailand who might otherwise miss it. So below is Part I of the review, covering nearly the first half of the book, which tells of his family's background and way its history was researched. Part II, in our next issue will cover his life in the U.S.A. and in Thailand. HFG

ON THE PRECIPICE OF PREJUDICE AND PERSECUTION Part I

One might not be able to tell from the title to which literary *genre* this book belongs. It is, in fact, an autobiography, authored by Dr. Konrad Kingshill. He retired from active missionary service in Thailand in 1988 after four decades of ministry which have left an indelible impression on the life of the Church of Christ in Thailand. Those were the years in which the CCT was consolidating its life, under God, following World War II. We shall be dealing with that part of the story in Part II. But the account of the earlier part of his life and his search for his "roots" is as remarkable as it is unexpected. It is far from being what might be considered the usual path of those who later volunteer to be missionaries – an uninterrupted trajectory from being an Anglo-Saxon Sunday School youngster to perhaps becoming, as Konrad did, an esteemed missionary teacher, ordained elder and administrator in a faraway country in the fabulous East.

The title of Chapter 5 "From Christian Watchmaker to Jewish Business Man to Christian Missionary" provides the sign-posts to watch out for. The story goes like this:

Some time around the year 1804 Albert Schulz, was born into a Lutheran family living in Königsberg, in East Prussia. A watch repairer and salesman by occupation, he fell in love with a Jewish innkeeper's daughter. Her father insisted that Albert convert to Judaism, which he did. He then changed his name to Abraham Königsberger – and this adoption of Jewish identity was to have a defining impact on the lives of his descendants.

The first part of Konrad's book traces the fortunes of the family from that point on to its outcome in the days of Adolf Hitler, whose obsessive plan to "solve" the Jewish 'problem' was to exterminate the Jews themselves. "Kingshill" sounds Anglo-Saxon enough - like "Kingsley" or "Kingston". But "Kingshill", the anglicized version adopted by the family in later generations, is a literal translation of "Königsberg".

Over the years the family in Germany prospered in a modest way. The next three generations from Albert/Abraham maintained their identity as nominally Jewish, but Konrad's parents and grandparents also had their children baptized into the state Lutheran Church and took part in some of its activities. But religion, whether Christianity or Judaism, seems to have played only a marginal role in their lives.

With the coming to power of Hitler in 1933 all that changed. Whereas before there had been spasmodic occasions when acts of discrimination and racial/religious profiling had been experienced, it soon became evident that now their very lives were endangered, and they could not escape being identified with the Jewish community at large. Peter, Konrad's older brother, was sent to study in England. Konrad followed a few years later, in 1938. His parents, with business connections to Britain, were able to emigrate to Ireland, but Konrad's maternal uncle, Alfred Sachs, died in a concentration camp.

(Part II of this review will appear in our next issue of "Echoes".)

MAILBAG

Christmas and New Year always brings a welcome flow of greetings, newsletters and contributions for “Echoes” expenses. We thank Gillian and Roy Myers, Hans and Gudrun Reimer, Ester Amago, Mag Bissett, Ruth Podgwaite and Anne Gregory for their contributions. Hans and Gudrun actually delivered theirs in person when they visited us before Christmas, although your Editor was not around to welcome them.

Turning to some of the letters received, we lead with the e-mail from **Rick Santos**, dated 18th November, 2009, which gives us further details of his new field of service. He said:

It has been nearly two years since I last visited you and the CCT. I have changed jobs again—I went from CWS to IRD, and now I have rejoined the ecumenical community again and have accepted a position with IMA World Health. IMA has as its Board and Members, CWS, PCUSA, UCC, Disciples, LWR, MCC, Episcopal Relief and Development, and others who you might know. Here is a link to our web write up about my new position. IMA is mostly Africa and health focused, though we work in India with CASA and, over the years, have provided substantial medical pharmaceuticals and equipment to many countries in Asia.

Over the summer, I was reminded of all the many friends I had and have in Thailand, when my good friend Acharn Sunit, a social studies teach from BCC came to visit me and my family this summer. Sunit retired from BCC in April and he visited other former teachers including Kevin Bowers, who pastors a church in West Virginia.

I continue to receive “Echoes” and wanted to thank you for keeping us all updated on the good work of the CCT and its many friends. I am not sure when I will next be in Thailand, but will stop by to visit when I do come. If Jirakorn and Waraporn are still there—give them my best, and to my many other friends at the CCT.

Best regards, RICK

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Mag Bissett, writing from New Zealand, expressed her appreciation thus:

Many thanks for keeping us in touch of what is happening in Thailand....I enjoyed reading your article about Kosuke Koyama, who was a friend of ours, especially of our son’s when he studied at Otago University during the time that Kosuke taught theology there. I have enjoyed owning and reading his book, “Waterbuffalo Theology”. With thanks, greetings and lots of good wishes, Mag Bissett.

Ester Amago often remembers the hard-working ERO staff in a special way at Christmas time.. She tells us that she has had a total replacement of her right knee but that she can walk well and drive. “Thank God for this modern surgery. Please extend my regards to all. God bless ! Ester.”

Dot Turnbull wrote on her Christmas card, “Although I am slowing down I continue to be involved in volunteer work here at Monte Vista Grove Homes and at my church, Knox Presbyterian in Pasadena.” Dot appreciates getting “Echoes” and extended season’s greetings to us all.

Phil and Melba McDaniel

“ May we all grow in wisdom and compassion in the coming year.”

Mailbag (Cont’d.)

Lois and Keith Dahlberg wrote and said, “As the years go by, we are coming to realize that most of our life-long friends are now over 75 years old... stiff joints, and our memory may contain some gaps, but we remain in good general and mental health with alert interest in the world around us, and the people in it. 2009 has been great for renewing family and school contacts. Lois got together with her Syracuse General Hospital nursing classmates and we attended the 55th anniversary of my medical school class.... Our own children and grandkids are mostly here in the Northwest and in Singapore, becoming more interesting and entertaining the older they get. Lois stays busy teaching Bible study class, listening to first graders read, volunteering at Hospice and at a local nursing home, and doing gourmet cooking. I serve as church treasurer and keep busy at writers’ club.... *May God guide you safely through the coming years. Our love to each of you. Keep in touch.*”

Marcia and Dave Beppler have been long-term promoters of the Huntingdon Presbytery/Pakh 5 (Nan) relationship, visiting Thailand several times in that connection. They live now in Foxdale retirement village in Pennsylvania but tell us that “there was a great deal of work getting our former home ready for rental families and then helping to maintain a high ‘happiness level’ of these families.”. They have holidayed in Maine and Cape Cod and met their new great-granddaughter in Delaware. Marcia and Dave (“mostly Dave”) have worked on Foxdale community committees. Marcia has enjoyed returning to some of her crafts activities, mainly piecing quilt tops and knitting. They conclude by saying, “We continue to seek opportunities for making international friendships. This year we got to know a Saudi Arabian family, a gal from Nicaragua – and we regularly meet with our Thai friends.”

John and Betsy Guyer report that Betsy had serious health problems in late 2009 but they were able to tell us just before Christmas that “she is still a bit weak, but has resumed most of her activities.” The big feature of John’s year was a three-week round-the-world trip to Thailand and South Africa in September and October. The letter states that, quite by chance, he arrived in Bangkok just before the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the CCT, and was able to attend the celebration gathering, meeting many old friends. In Chiang Mai, where he and Betsy served for over 37 years, he was given a VIP reception at McCormick Hospital. He was Medical Director there for the last four years before his retirement in 1990. In Africa he saw some of the fine work which their daughter, the Rev. Janet Guyer, is doing in the field of HIV/AIDS. She is working in six countries in southern Africa, and took her father up to Zambia to see more of Janet’s work. They also visited Victoria Falls, went on a game drive, and had a dinner cruise on the Zambesi River. The Guyers have continued to be active in many aspects of life at Westminster Gardens, in their church and the wider community.

Marj and Dick Gregory sent us warm greetings from Minnesota, reminding us that they have now been married for six years, and with news that three of their grandchildren were married in 2009. They told us they were praying that safety and wisdom be given to President Obama “as he struggles to deal with the overwhelming problems of our divided suffering country and world.” They also say they are active and well, “but also glad for times of rest!” They conclude their letter: *We hope and trust that all is going well with you and yours and that you are blessed with hope , peace and love, in this difficult time.*

“Thailand Now” gets away from politics for a change. The three items referred to all appeared in sections of the “Bangkok Post” for 25th January, 2010.

1. Thailand is playing host to an international conference at government-ministry level on the preservation of tigers in the wild. Countries from south and southeastern Asia are participating. It is estimated that only 200-300 wild tigers can be found in Thailand today, whereas, “a century ago, Thailand was an absolute haven for this carnivore”, according to photographer and conservationist Bruce Kekule. However he also states that, in the Huay Kha Kaeng and nearby Thung Yai Naresuan sanctuaries in western Thailand, the last great tiger haven in south-east Asia, tigers are thriving.
2. We can remember the time when growers of sugar cane in the Kanchanaburi Region were abandoning their crops because world sugar prices were so low. But today Thailand is the world’s second largest exporter of sugar. Brazil and India grow the largest amounts of sugar, but India also imports the commodity. Last year sugar had its largest annual price gain since 1974.
- 3 Six years ago the Islamic Bank was established in Thailand to provide banking facilities which conform to Muslim principles, including the non-payment of interest on loans. Now known as the “I Bank”, it has, for the first time, returned a modest profit of 300 million baht. It is facing rivalry from large foreign-based banks, especially from one in Malaysia, but the bank claims that it is well positioned in retail finance and also ready to take on larger foreign players.

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