



WERE YOU THERE ?

“Were you there when they crucified my Lord ?”

NO !

Of course you weren't there ! It all happened long before you were born, almost 2,000 years ago.

All you can do is to try to imagine what you would have done, how you would have felt, how close to the Cross you would have dared to go.

There were, of course, many that day who had claimed to admire the prophet from Nazareth, especially when He had exposed the hypocrisy and callousness of the religious establishment. They had gone along with the crowd – even counted themselves among His followers – but never following so closely as to compromise themselves in a way that put themselves at risk. They did not crowd around the Cross on Golgotha to share His passion.

Those of us who read these words would claim that we have followed more closely than that in the footsteps of Him who set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem, no matter what awaited him there. We have heard him say, “If any man (or woman) would come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow me.” Like Peter we have dared much and given up much to follow Him. Like Peter and the rest of the Twelve we vow that we are prepared to die for Him.

But when it came to the crunch there is no record that Peter was to be found in that little band of followers - John, his mother Mary and the other women - who stood at the very foot of the Cross.

Let us not be too harsh, however, in our judgement of Peter, lest, in so doing, we condemn ourselves. He was there- at least he was in Jerusalem - when they crucified his Lord. He had got that far. He had come a long, long way in his walk of faith and trust. We do not know exactly where he was when Jesus breathed his last. He was near at hand. But the fact remains, he does not appear amongst those who stood in the very shadow of the Cross itself.

Fast forward to the present.

Are you there when they crucify your Lord ?

We crucify Him afresh when we sin, when we allow selfishness and self-centredness prevail, destroying the image of God in our own lives and in the lives of others. He is crucified anew whenever acts of injustice, cruelty and discrimination are perpetrated against one of the least of His brothers and sisters, and we let it pass unchallenged. But how many of us are to be found at the places of his crucifixion ? How close do we come to the agony and despair of our 21st-century Golgothas ?

Not as close as we might. It is almost asking too much to expect us to witness Him being crucified afresh. We are prepared to come as far as Jerusalem, but not as far as Calvary.

Do we then stand condemned ? In one sense, “Yes, we do.” All have sinned . All have held back. All but a very few shrink from “being there” at the very end. But is that all that is to be said ?

What does it signify that Peter was not there ? Perhaps, in the end, his absence is the most explicit witness to what the cross of Christ really means. The cross of Christ is not an instrument of judgement but a channel of grace, of salvation, of redemption, of a call to begin again. In the sequel, Peter is not condemned for holding back. Nor is he redeemed by where he was or where he wasn't, what he did or did not do. God, in his love and grace remembers that Peter –all of us – are but dust. In the post-Resurrection world, where grace and forgiveness reign, Peter is re-commissioned. “Feed my sheep ! Feed my lambs !” and is once again set to work at the tasks of the Kingdom. As are we.

HFG

Letter from the General Secretary

Dear friends and partners in the Gospel,

Greetings from the Church of Christ in Thailand

As you will be aware Thailand has been faced with some very tense political situations leading up to and following the military coup in September 2006. Our society is presently marked by divisions and mistrust of one group against another. People display their allegiances by wearing different coloured shirts and lambasting each other in the media. As I write the capital, Bangkok, has been hit by a wave of demonstrations over this last weekend by the 'red-shirt' faction, supporters of the former Prime Minister Taksin Shinawatra and opponents of the present government and the so-called 'elite' whom they allege have illegitimately installed the present regime.

At the moment the government and the red-shirts have reached an impasse and the tension is escalating. Please pray for us - that people will remain calm and a peaceful and just solution will be found to the present conflict. Pray also for long term reconciliation, that our nation once again will be united for the common good.

Yours in Christ,

Rev.Sayam Muangsak

General Secretary

15th March 2010

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OFFICE OF CHILD PROTECTION (OCP)

The CCT decided in 2006 to set up an Office of Child Protection in order to ensure that, as far as possible, opportunity for child abuse, in all its forms, would be eliminated in congregations and institutions related to the church, and that when there were allegations of abuse they would be handled fairly and transparently.

Initially, Acharn Mike Fucella was commissioned to set up this programme, and he still acts as an adviser, reporting to the General Secretary. However, Alastair Muir, a former police officer in Glasgow, is now the Project Manager, based in Chiang Mai. In Bangkok Khun Jirapat Junawat acts as Co-ordinator, assisted by Khun Karuna Wongwanna. Together, the team carries out an educational function, and guides leaders in ways to ensure that its objectives are being implemented.

The OCP is financed from various sources, and seeks support from those who understand the importance of its work. However, those who contribute to the cause need to know that their donations are being used in appropriate ways and in a financially responsible and transparent manner.

Enter Mr.Andre Harkes, a citizen of the Netherlands and an employee of the German industrial giant, Siemens. He took three months leave from his regular employment in order to carry out an objective assessment of the way the OCP was fulfilling its mission. The assessment is being made in conjunction with "TEAR Australia", an Australian NGO, which is one of those organizations supporting the OCP, and to whom Mr. Harkes will report.

Andre arrived in Thailand on 2nd February, 2010 and will be here until the end of April. During that time he has been working with OCP in both Bangkok and Chiang Mai. He has been helping OCP train local leaders in better managing their tasks, and to this end has put together a power-point presentation which can be used when presenting the objectives and recommendations of the Office of Child Protection. At the same time it is expected that his report can be used to encourage other organizations to provide financial support for the work of child protection.

“ON THE EDGE OF PREJUDICE AND PERSECUTION”

The second part of a review of Dr. Konrad Kingshill's autobiography

The second half of Dr.Kingshill's autobiography deals with his war-time move to U.S.A. (he nearly didn't make it !); his academic training and work as a nuclear physicist; his post-war service in the U.S. Navy; and finally his engagement with Thailand and the CCT between 1947 and 1988, with only a few brief interludes elsewhere.

As a young man Konrad was attracted to mathematics and the physical sciences and seemed destined to make his career in those fields. The interventions in his life which, fortuitously (providentially?) finally led him into entirely different spheres of service were not always such as he would have chosen for himself at the time. When he first agreed to come to Thailand as a short-term missionary in 1947 he was led to believe that he would be employed setting up a science department in a newly-established tertiary educational institution. Instead, he spent his first three years in Thailand teaching senior secondary students at The Prince Royal's College. When he returned to the U.S.A. he finally abandoned nuclear physics as a career path. (You can read his reasons on p.148). A meeting with a Cornell University academic led him to undertake a graduate course in Cultural Anthropology. This brought him to Thailand for a second time (1953-54) to carry out a one-year on-site research project on life in the Buddhist village of Ku Daeng, "The Red Tomb", 10 kilometres south of Chiang Mai, as part of the requirements for his work on a Ph.D.. The degree was conferred in 1957.

During this time Konrad was technically on leave from PRC and the American Presbyterian Mission (UPCUSA) as he states in the foreword to the work setting out the results of his research, "*Ku Daeng – The Red Tomb*", first published in 1960.

As we saw in Part I of this review, Konrad defined his role in Thailand as being that of "a teacher, elder and administrator." From the time of his arrival in Thailand, and throughout the rest of his life until now, he has been an ordained elder in every congregation of which he has been a member. In that capacity he encountered a wide variety of pastoral situations calling for his ministry. His classroom teaching took place mainly at The Prince Royal's College in Chiang Mai, although he taught at Bangkok Christian College from 1963-68, also at the secondary level, where it took him some time to be fully accepted. At PRC he was an active participant and leader in the "Friends of the Cross", an association of Christian students, which, among other activities, sent out student teams to conduct Sunday worship in village churches. He also worked with the CCT 's Youth Department in introducing religious movies as a means of evangelism.

Throughout his ministry Dr.Kingshill conscientiously worked within the structures of the Church. "I assumed from the beginning that I was there at the invitation of the PRC and was responsible for activities initiated by the CCT. This was also the policy of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions at that time"

In 1966 Dr.Kingshill was appointed Superintendent of the CCT schools throughout the country. In this position he sought to establish uniform standards for all the schools, attended meetings of local school boards whenever he could, and sometimes had to ward off challenges from "old guard" administrators. He was also in the vanguard to carry forward the long-deferred establishment of Payap College, gradually nudging reluctant government officials who resisted the idea of non-governmental tertiary institutions. Payap College finally opened in 1974, and ten years later was elevated to university status, the first privately-administered university in the country. Konrad modestly refrains from speaking much about his part in all that, but there can be no doubt that his was a decisive role in effecting the final outcome, which, in a way, was a long-deferred completion of a task he thought he was taking up when he first came to Thailand in 1947.

Another very significant accomplishment was to introduce the "Provident Fund 1969" scheme. This eventually led to the establishment of uniform financial provisions upon retirement for CCT staff members in almost every kind of ministry carried out in the name of the CCT. It also became a resource whereby staff could borrow money for purposes such as home-building at affordable rates of interest.

Konrad's autobiography is not written in strictly chronological order. Readers would be well advised to turn first to Chapter 20, which does supply a time-line of his life and work, into which other parts of the narrative can be slotted.. The same chapter provides a summary of his main spheres of service, but also mentions some "extra-curricula" activities.of the kind which most missionaries find themselves called upon to perform but which were never taught in theological seminaries.

We could not have done without this account of the contribution made by Dr.Konrad Kingshill to the life of the CCT in its formative years in the second half of the last century.

MAIL BAG

We bring you a few more paragraphs from letters and greetings received over Christmas and the New Year.

Jane Glassman enjoyed holidays with family and friends in the year just gone by - pillion-riding on a motorcycle, jet skiing, and sailing on Lake Chautauqua were all part of this adventurous time. A bad attack of shingles caused a lot of discomfort for many months, and was still lingering on when Jane wrote. Her son Dan picked her up so that she could join the family at Bemus Point for Christmas. *“It was very special because I saw all of the grandchildren and other friends making the time so fulfilling.”* Jane thanks all those who sent Christmas cards and letters. *“I have appreciated them so much.”*

Josepheen Maclean When Josepheen and her late husband Gavin moved to the Bishopspark community in Christchurch New Zealand they were looking *“for a place where many responsibilities were handled for us, giving us time to enjoy. We were aware that we were surrounded by others in the same age group and it was good to be with them. But living on my own I find myself more aware of my friends and neighbours as community, and I am more involved in what is happening in the village. It is really interesting to be part of such a rich interchange, and it has been what I have been most involved in the past two years. As one of the fitter people here too I have been able to do more in the community.*

During the year Josepheen was one of 20 sculptors invited to take part in the Heritage Festival in Oamaru (between Christchurch and Dunedin), working in the famous local limestone for two weeks. *“We enjoyed each other’s company and some good work came out of it.”* Her daughter Clare is perpetuating the family’s devotion to the arts, and to music in particular, and has submitted a PhD. dissertation on the theme of how God speaks to us through music. She has also been appointed a “resident composer” at a music center in St.Louis.

Josepheen concludes, *“The Sunday service is still the highlight of the week for me. I am glad we have festivals. It doesn’t matter if we are not sure of the actual days, We know that what God said He was going to do He did, and the coming of a helpless babe has radically and fundamentally changed existence. There is a reality and a purpose behind the changing images and events of this world that gives us hope – and also joy.*

Nancianna Nott, long-time resident of Powell, Wyoming, where her late husband was state senator, is now living in Bentonville, Arkansas, and has made new friends and taken up new activities. She says, *“There are so many opportunities which I never knew existed here. The city library, our church and the Helping Hands Thrift Store are all newly located. The Wellness Center for Seniors is a model to be duplicated across the country. I usually go there to swim and walk. When I’m not reading I go every Friday to H.H to fold fabric and price it. I decided to teach S.S. to 4-5 year-olds to get back to teaching...*

“Even though my heart is in Wyoming I am delighted to be in Kansas. It’s sweater weather, moisture in the air; pansies blooming in the winter; low, slow, puffy clouds; and a community feeling that I belong here.”

Roy and Gillian Myers devoted a third of their long annual resume to tell us of their regular return visit to Thailand in September to help out at the Kwai River Christian Hospital. As in the previous year they were accompanied by their daughter Niki, who was with them for the first three weeks. They speak of Bangkok - *this amazing city of high rises interspersed with gated beautiful homes, plagued with traffic worse than New York. After Kanchanaburi – pineapples, rice paddies and cattle.*

“Driving through this beautiful land one reaches the hospital arriving in time for me to do a caesarian section on a pregnant woman. Our stay was very busy and most fulfilling. Our day started at 8 a.m. and ended at about 5-6 p.m. We saw about 60 outpatients after ward rounds on 40 patients every day and I scheduled surgery every afternoon.... 50 major and 40 minor procedures. Gill had her hands full with the TB program..... The staff is still committed to excellence. There is a Burmese licensed doctor there now.” (Dr.Sha Kler Law - Ed.) “He is a joy – speaks two forms of Karen, English and Burmese. This is a great asset to the program. He has been well received by the community and has a charming wife and a lovable little girl. I taught him the basic surgical procedures he will need to cope with emergencies. We hope he will be able to remain at the hospital.” (He’s still there !- Ed.)

Roy and Gillian concluded their letter by saying, *“Our love and concern go out to all who are suffering at this time and hope for a brighter year. It has been a time for reflection and re-evaluation of life and our goals. Perhaps we do not need all the material things that seemed so important. Hopefully we will become oriented to our fellow travelers in our world. Our time in Thailand shows us every year how*

people survive and enjoy life with much less than we do. We are thankful for our wonderful neighbors and friends who are there for us when we need them and even when we don't. Good friends and great children are our blessing and good health is a real plus. One cannot ask for more."

Don and Lois Chandler sent a donation for "Echoes" in December which we have already acknowledged in a previous issue. They said, "*We enjoy receiving it by mail. Thank you very much. God bless you.*" They also wish to report a change of address, which now is:

Mr. and Mrs. D Chandler, 38064 Megan Place, Lisbon OH 44432, U.S.A.

NOTES ALONG THE WAY

We have been informed of the death in December of **Betty Roberts**, widow of the late Dr. Tom Roberts. Dr. Roberts and his family served in Thailand for several terms in the period from 1960 to 1991, at Overbrook Hospital, Chiang Rai, Bangkok Christian Hospital and the Kwai River Christian Hospital, Sangklaburi. Tom died in 2008. We are gathering information for a suitable obituary concerning Betty and her role as a colleague and fellow worker here in Thailand. Our Christian sympathy goes out to all her loved ones and friends.

On the 1st of February 2010 the "Bangkok Post" carried a photo taken at "The Special Celebration of Legacy Service" hosted by the World Vision Foundation of Thailand. Featured in the photo were **Dr. Saisuree Chutikul**, the Foundation's chairperson, who was the Guest of Honour, and **Mr. Chusak Wuttiwaropas**. Mr. Chusak, a former Treasurer of the CCT, was completing his term as Executive Director of the World Vision Foundation. He is succeeded by Ms. Chitra Thumborisuth.

Drs. Roy and Gillian Myers returned to Thailand on March 3, 2010, where Roy will serve, pro tem., as Interim Director of the Kwai River Christian Hospital. The former Director, Dr. Kritsada Wuttayakun, has transferred to the government hospital in Sangklaburi, which, like KRCH, carries out a lot of treatment for free for people from the ethnic minority groups living in the area. We refer you to the letter on pp. 4-5. of this issue from Roy and Gillian, in which the Myers write about their period of volunteer service at KRCH last year.

A report appeared in the "Bangkok Post" in November last concerning a Habitat for Humanity project being carried out in the Ban Nong Kon Kru village, San Sai district, Chiang Mai. **Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, his wife Rosalynn** and about 3,000 volunteers from 25 countries started building homes for 82 Thai people, including some from ethnic minority communities. The number 82 was chosen to celebrate the 82nd birthday anniversary of His Majesty the King on December 5, 2009. When Habitat for Humanity Thailand (HHT) was founded in 1998 several persons associated with the CCT were involved in its establishment.

Since then, 5,000 homes have been built in 23 provinces, and another 5,000 are planned. The report went on to say, "The needy beneficiaries do not get the homes free. They are required to contribute by working on the project, and pay for the homes over a 10-15 year period. The two-bedroom homes being built in Chiang Mai cost about 185,000 baht each."

THAILAND RESPONDS TO THE HAITIAN EMERGENCY

It would be impossible to report in "Echoes" on all the natural tragedies which occur across the globe. However, following so closely after the earthquake in Haiti, we cannot but extend our concern over the similar events in Chile and Turkey. For the people of those nations, and for sufferers everywhere, we pray that they may find their refuge and help in God, who is ever at work in shaping the future out of the ambiguities of the past.

We have been following the press reports concerning Thailand's response to the disaster in Haiti. In our previous issue we reported a \$US100,000 donation from the government, along with 20,000 tonnes of rice. At the end of January the government announced that all state enterprises and state banks were open to receive donations, which would be directed to the government's donation centre, specially set up to receive donations from whatever source. The Thai Red Cross invited donations to the cause. On the 30th of January it was announced that a team from the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Health ministries would travel to the devastated area to assess how further assistance could be rendered by a follow-up medical team from Thailand. On 25th February the "Bangkok Post" reported that two more shipments of 4,728 tonnes of rice would be sent to Haiti. A government spokesman reported that 68 million baht had been donated by the general public. Thailand Rotary gave one million "to help rebuild Haiti", which supplemented 5.5 million baht from the public for the same purpose. (Cont'd. p.6.)

Haiti (Cont'd.)

These figures indicate a widespread willingness to assist the stricken nation, while leaving open the exact amount raised in Thailand for relief and reconstruction. However, Mr. Kenro Oshidari, Regional Director for Asia of the World Food Programme, (WFP) was lavish in his praise. "In my more than 16 years with the WFP I have never witnessed such a spontaneous and overwhelming response from the people of one country to another, particularly one on the other side of the world." (Bangkok Post 2.Feb.2010).

In an editorial dated 7th February, 2010 the Bangkok Post said, "*All Thais should take pride in the aid the country has given, but what is more important is that they do not forget Haiti in the days, weeks and months ahead. After the media coverage has become only occasional, the suffering left by the earthquake will still be felt every minute of every day.*"

Church World Service (CWS) works interdenominationally in matters of this kind, and is based in the U.S.A. Its Thailand office, located in the Head Office building of the CCT, made no specific appeal in Thailand for Haitian relief, but co-ordinated closely with its headquarters in America to cover the situation here.

Meanwhile, the Thai government has allocated another \$US100,000 to help Chile. There were no known casualties in that country among the 65 Thais known to be living there.

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29th March 2010