



The Journey To Laos

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- Rural Women literacy

Giving hope to children in Laos -
in the front are two orphans



Lay Preacher Bible training



Giving Hope to the Children of Laos

Tsuchue & Joua Vang

Children under the age of 14 make up 43% of the population in Laos. Illiteracy rate among children in rural areas is higher than 40%, and generally affects tribal people. 90% of Lao United Methodist churches (LUMC) members belong to tribes and dwell in the country where education is limited.

A week from now more than 150 children who have never attended school will experience education for the first time. Some of the children are scared but most of them are elated and overjoyed. They had visited the school several times just to touch the school desks, practice to holding their pencils and can't wait to wear their school uniform (*white shirt and blue skirt or black pan for boy*). The look in the children's eyes tells a story of a dream come true. The mothers who stood beside their children during our visit, and listened to their conversation stand in disbelief of this opportunity.

On behalf of 150 children and their parents, aunts and uncles, they would like to say Thank You so very much to St. Mark UMC Greenwood SC, San Marcus First UMC San Marcus, TX, and Hmong American Community UMC Women, Milwaukee, WI. You made this a possibility 150 children. Your gift has given us/our children hope and a future. May God continue to bless you richly. A special thanks to the Lao UM Women leaders who worked diligently with parents, authority, and the school principle to assure that the project was executed and successful. (*To be continuing next issue*)

Lay Preacher Bible Training

We have successfully completed the fourth year of Lay Preacher Bible Training. September marks the beginning of training for year five. This past year LUMC experienced tremendous problems with our training due to political accusations of the Lao Authorities and fellow Christians in search of personal gain. We had to move the training to over a dozen places in three different provinces. Even with such difficulties, the Lord never let us down and he carried us through this difficult time. Lay preacher training is vital to the success of LUMC hence we will carry on. Please pray for us for success and safety. Our goal is to complete year five training by the end of May 2008, with certification on June 15, 2008. We trust in the Lord and we know He will guide us through another year. Thank You to "the Manning" (*To be continuing next issue*)

Soon the congregation in the Capital city Vientiane will have no place to worship. In the last six years we have been worshipping at a lay preacher's home. Due to political pressure, worshipping has been banned. We are looking for a new place to worship. We need your help & prayers.

Special Thanks to

- * WI Women water well and children school registration
- * First Aberdeen UMC, S.D (church development)
- * St. Mark UMC Greenwood SC school registration, Bibles, Hymns, and motor cycle
- * San Marcos FUMC, TX school registration and literacy
- * The Hmong Association of UMC hosting of Reception



Registration LUMC

In order for LUMC to legally operate in Laos, registration is the key. We request that this September you dedicate prayers for the registration of the LUMC with the government of Laos. The success of LUMC, development of the new Lay Preacher Bible training and the training facility itself can not exist without this key piece of the equation. Please keep the LUMC's leaders, and those who continue to risk themselves to lead churches in your thoughts. Your prayers are greatly needed at this time.

(To be continuing next issue)

Lao UMC's Continued Struggle

The 92/PM Lao decree on management and religious activities indicate that denominations are to be held accountable to its congregation in terms of teaching, preaching, religious Sacrament, Bible training, funeral service, wedding ceremony, sickness and other practices that relate to Christian life. In the past, other countries and denominations who came to Laos teaching God's word have not complied with the decree hence it has made it extremely difficult for the LUMC to become recognized by the government.

In light of this, LUMC has not received legal status and is not recognized as a legal entity. Even with this challenge and the risks associated with being a Christ follower, Churches and membership continue to grow. Twenty-six new congregations have asked to join LUMC.

Though we are excited for the growth, the Council and I struggle with not being able to recognize all of the churches as our personally commitment is that a trained Lay Person who has answered God's call leads each church.

We are in need of your prayers and support in order to provide Bible training to a new group of Lay Preachers. We also ask for prayers for the 26 new congregations that are waiting to become part of LUMC.

Feed and Cloth God's Children

Every night hundreds of LUMC children go to bed with an empty stomach, they wake up on dirt floors without a decent shred of clothes on their back, and go through out their day with bare feet. Laos was ranked the 135th least developed country in the world by UNPDs Human Development index in 2002. From 1960 to 1975 US dropped millions of bomb clusters in Laos, which resulted in the devastation of the land and its people. Thirty years later there are still numerous land mines and bombs scattered throughout the county that continues to kill and injure innocent people, especially children.

The children in Laos are afflicted by physical handicap, poor health and suffer spiritually and emotionally. Thank you to the Sans Marcos FUMC TX, River Hill UMC, MN, and St. Mark UMC, SC. It is because of their love and compassion that Funding for the Self-Sufficiency project, which was created by the women, children and youth ministries, was made possible and is helping feed and cloth God's children with nutritious food, and generating income to buy clothes and shoes.

This project is pivotal for the sustainability of the LUMC. For a small amount of money, you can help sponsor a female goat for \$50.00, a female pig \$45.00 or a 100 Kilograms of rice for \$50.00. This program is designed to teach our Christian brothers and sisters the necessary tools to grow and replenish resources. Rather than give a man a fish, we are providing him with the tools and resources to learn to fish for himself. Please consider giving as together in Christ, we are feeding and clothing his children. *(To be continuina next issue)*

As Missionaries to Laos we are asking for your support

Please select one of these vital mission projects:

- (1) Covenant relationship advance # 15074Z or # 15073Z***
- (2) Programs support advance # 14927A or # 14926A***