



Serving the suffering church around the world



Mar 2007 Apr

Building Together

Leonid Popov
Village Pastor, Varenikovskaya, Russia
With Richard Shaw, Director of Praise

For we are God's fellow workers. You are ... God's building. According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:9-11 (ESV)

Dear brothers and sister in Christ, grace unto you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. It is time for the Lord to light a lamp in our area. Church of Evangelical Christian-Baptists of Varenikovskaya village is 100 years old. For many years we didn't have our own church building. In 1990 we bought a house in which we wanted to have our church services. The house was owned by a Christian family. One of the rooms was intended for meetings. The house is dilapidated, small, and the ceiling is low. In the summer time it is hot and stuffy, with no air circulation. We want to have a convenient, spacious place in which we would have classrooms for Sunday School and a meeting room. With God's help we purchased a neighboring plot



of ground, established a project and started to build.

We have 64 members and most are pensioners. We need help to complete the construction of the building, and we trust that the Lord will not leave us. We are asking for your prayer and financial support. We asking if you will help us build our church. As you can see, the foundation is finished. Now we need to buy the bricks. We need 30,000 bricks for a total cost of

about \$5,500. Thank you for your prayers.

Pastor Popov

Here is the foundation for the Varenikovskaya church, waiting for the bricks that will form the walls of the new building.

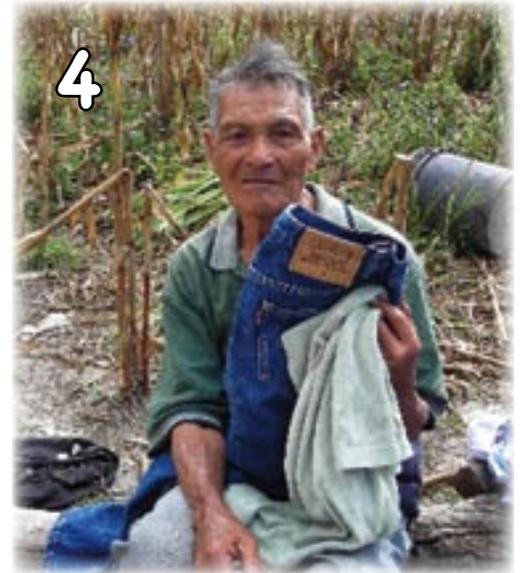
Two Churches...

Throughout the gospels Jesus makes it clear that we should never despise small beginnings. What may look insignificant at first glance is a tangible expression of belief that God is going to do great things. In this issue of the newsletter, we are featuring two churches under construction, one in Russia and the other in Honduras. The Honduran church construction, shown on the next page, is part of a work among the Lenca Indians. If you would like to join a team to help on a future church building project in Russia, Honduras, India, the Philippines, or some other country, please contact the Praise office.

Here's a great way to help our brothers and sisters in Christ. Your gift of \$55 will buy 300 bricks; your gift of \$550 will buy 3,000 bricks. Thank you for your partnership. Designate your gift to Russian Church Project.



Photos



1. This church building project in Honduras starts with a 'field of dreams' where clay bricks, which have been formed in a simple mold, are set out to dry in the sun. Using simple materials, which are readily available, results in a building that fits naturally in the local community.

2. When the bricks are dried, they are ready to transport to the building site for the new church. Willing hands of all ages get involved, and the bricks are stacked carefully so that they will arrive safely.

3. The walls of the new building are on the way up! While it is always appropriate for North Americans to come along side and help, doing things the 'Honduran way' gives the local church a greater sense of ownership of their new building. The church members have the joy of knowing that they have made a personal contribution to their new house of worship.

4. This Honduran man is showing the clothing he received as a gift from a brother in Christ from North America. Over the years Praise has collected good new or used clothing for our brothers and sisters in other countries. Your clothing items can be dropped off at the Praise office at any time. They should be clean and in excellent condition.

5. Every child loves to receive gifts! The children of Honduras are no different, and this happy girl is showing off kindness she can hold in her hand. We have a team leaving for Honduras the second half of May. Your cash gifts earmarked for Honduras outreach can make a difference in the lives of children and their parents.



Testimonies

Psalm 145:1-4

*I will exalt you, my God the King;
I will praise your name for ever
and ever.*

*Every day I will praise you and extol
your name for ever and ever.*

*Great is the LORD and most
worthy of praise; his greatness no
one can fathom.*

*One generation will commend your
works to another; they will tell of
your mighty acts.*

In this issue of the newsletter I have the privilege of sharing some powerful testimonies with you. I had the wonderful opportunity to meet these two men personally just a few weeks ago. Even though Praise has turned all of our work in Vietnam over to Voice of the Martyrs, I know that many of you still pray for pastors and churches in that country. You will be encouraged in your faith as you read their stories, and you will proclaim with the psalmist, “Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; His greatness no one can fathom!”

Richard Shaw

My name is Huynh Ngan Hung. I was born in Vietnam March 18, 1960. When I was 18 years old my parents sent me to hide in another province to avoid being drafted into the Vietnamese armed forces to go to war against the Khmer-Rouge in Cambodia.

After living away from home for a while, I received a telegraph from my parents telling me to return home as soon as possible. I was overjoyed at the thought of being home with my parents and siblings. I did not know that in just a few hours I would have to leave home again. My parents had already paid the boat operator for me to escape Vietnam to seek freedom somewhere else. At first, I was frightened and refused to go. I was fearful of living alone in a strange

land and facing the unknown. But my parents convinced me that any difficulties somewhere else would still be better than to die fighting the Khmer-Rouge in Cambodia. My heart was heavy. For me at the time, to leave meant I would never see my parents or Vietnam again.

The small fishing boat that I was on carried 116 people. After 3 days bobbing on the sea, we saw a vessel from the US Navy, but because of their mission they could not take us onto their ship. After checking to make sure we had some water and food, they sent us on our way. We were boarded and robbed by Thai pirates three times. The first time they took everything of value and let us go. A second group of pirates took the rest of what the first ones had left. After that a third pirate ship broke our boat into pieces. I will never forget the screams, shouting and crying of the 116 people at sea that day. We all tried hard to hang onto what was left of our boat waiting to die there.

Then a miracle happened. From out of nowhere a ship named AKUNA came to our rescue. We had lost all hope, but the Lord of heaven, earth and sea heard our cries and sent His people to save us. We were to learn later the AKUNA was manned by a group of Christians dedicating their work to save “boat people” like us from perishing in the sea. There was even a young Vietnamese sailor serving as an interpreter.

For the next ten days we were given food and medical attention by the crew of this ship. After they made sure that we were in good health the crew of the AKUNA took us to Indonesia to take refuge before resettling in another country.

I arrived in the US in the later part of 1979 to start a new life. My worry about living alone in another country soon went away. I met quite a few good Christians, who helped mold and guide me through my struggles as a young man in a strange land. I do not know how many of the 116

people on the boat with me that day came to know Christ as their personal Savior, but “as for me and my household; we will serve the Lord.”

I am so thankful that God is forever merciful. He had heard my cries. He did not only seek and save me when I was lost at sea, He also sought me and saved my lost soul. For this I will always be grateful to my Lord Jesus Christ who took my sins on the cross. I am now in the country of abundance. May God use me as an instrument to save the lost souls of this world.

*This poor man cried, and the LORD
heard him, and saved him out of all
his troubles. Psalm 34:6*

SPIRITUAL LIFE TESTIMONY VÕ MINH TÂN OLYMPIA, WASHINGTON.

Coming to know Christ:

In 1979 after two years in the new economic zone, my parents with 5 children returned to Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon). Without a place to call home, we wandered aimlessly in the daytime and slept in the market stall at night. Even though I was only 6 years old, I experienced hunger and knew how poor we were.

Through one of the new Christian families who also lived at the market, my parents became Christians. I was very young but I could sense the change in our family and I went happily to Church with them. I went to Sunday school, very attentive to the lessons and believed that was all I needed to do. I was a marginal Christian. Looking back on my life now, I know that all the lessons I learned in “Sunday School” as a child were not in vain, for those lessons were the ones that helped me fight the temptations and hardships in the years to come.

My Journey & Spiritual Growth:

I was baptized in 1986 at my home church “Tuy Ly Vuong” by

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Pastor Dinh Thien Tu. As a young man, all I wanted was to become successful in society and maybe live as a marginal Christian. Serving God was not at all in my life long plan, but God had another plan for my life. He did not want me to only know Him with my head; rather He wanted to capture my heart.

In 1990, just half a day after I completed the entrance examination to one of the High Schools in town I became very sick. In Vietnam, seating at the High Schools and Universities is limited; if a person misses the chance for the year he is eligible for the examination, the second chance does not come to those without a strong political connection (which I did not have). I was aware of God's providence and was very thankful. I promised to God and myself to be the best student that I could be.

Then in 1991, without warning I became so sick that I had to stop school for more than a month. Because of my good grades I was allowed to take the final examination and graduated from high school. I was so busy with my studies that church attendance and God were not a priority at that time.

Not long after I graduated high school in 1993, once again I became so very sick that my family had to rush me to the emergency room. My temperature was so extremely high that the only relief for me was to hit my head to the wall. Through all the medical tests, doctors could not find what was wrong with me. This time God got my attention. I realized that at any moment my life can be over and I have no control over it. I repented for all the years that I had gone astray and "done it my way" without regard for God. I started praying earnestly for God's guidance and gave my life to Him in service. A week after this, I was cured and back to my studies. I knew at this point I could not live without God, but because I had to work to earn a living and study at the same time, my time for God was very limited.

Again in 1994, I became very sick and (as before) the doctors could not find anything wrong with me. Yet deep in my heart I knew what was wrong. My Father wanted to remind me of my commitment to Him; of my promise to tend His flock. I prayed for healing, and once again God healed my body and my soul. I started to attend Church regularly and volunteered to be trained to serve in other areas of church work.

Being a Shepherd & Church planting:

In April, 1997 while still attending the University of Law, I accepted the duty to teach a baptismal course to a family of new believers in a small coastal town not far from Saigon. The people in this town rely only on the daily meager catch of fish to get by.

One evening after our time of fellowship, an old woman held my hand tightly. With tears in her eyes she said: "Up to this point my life was a chain of one miserable thing after another. Our new faith is the only thing that gives us hope. Please do not leave us in darkness any more."

I was so moved, I told her, "Some day I may not be able to be here with you. Please remember God will be here with you always." My heart was

heavy. I looked around to the many huts that people call homes and was reminded of Ezekiel 34:6, "My sheep were scattered, they wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill, my sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, with none to search or seek for them." I tried to calm my heart "Father, I am still in school and very young..." But I seemed to hear the voice of God booming in my head: "Who shall I send...Who shall I send..." I felt a lump in my throat. Was I not saved from the darkness and miseries like my brothers and sisters of this town? Where would I be without God's grace?

Knowing that I was called to serve this very town, I gave all I had to this mission field. Within four years after I graduated from college (1998) the congregation grew to about a hundred and a church was built in October 2002. I was ordained as the Church pastor in February 2003 and overseer of the western district churches (Can Giuoc, Can Duoc, Go Cong, Ben Tre...coastal region and Saigon suburb. After many trials and persecutions, in September of 2003, the church building was destroyed by the local authorities while I was in pastoral training in Cambodia. Thanks be to God, the body of His Son Jesus Christ is still alive today.

During my service and church planting, many times I was persecuted, denied food, beaten, strangled. I sometimes asked God why? Each time He reminded me of His suffering on the cross, and the martyrdom of His disciples. My suffering is so small compared to His love and suffering. I am glad to share with my Lord a little of myself to further His kingdom.

October, 2003 God brought me to America, working as an associate pastor for lay ministry at the Rosemead Church in California. January of 2005, I was called to be an associate pastor for a Vietnamese Church in Renton, WA and a year after that was called to pastor the Vietnamese Baptist Church of Olympia.

I am so thankful that God has called me to be one of His servants.