

IMPROSOS in Myanmar



Dear Faithful Partners and Friends,

"What is Christmas, if there never was a Savior wrapped in a manger? What is Christmas without Christ?"

So goes a contemporary Christmas song by Kutless, *This Is Christmas*. We sang this during our evangelistic caroling. Christmas is the biggest non-Buddhist festival celebrated yearly in Myanmar. In fact, it could be the longest over all, since traditionally, the whole month of December is considered Christmas with lights in the streets, malls and even in public parks! Of course this does not mean everyone knows what it truly means. We are in a culture that celebrates or practices anything, even in their own religion, without asking why. Though Christians do not have a unified belief about the accuracy of Christmas, we can always use *Christ* in it who came as the Person of the good news. Reaching the unreached starts with what is familiar and proceeds to the unfamiliar. We caroled at about 50 cheerful homes where our hosts listened to the message of the songs as well as our comments about Christ in Christmas and prayers.



We not only reach out, we also edify. A missionary here from a different denomination posted on Facebook about his change from being a pre-tribulation to a post-tribulation rapturist. He sparked confusion among most of his friends who are also our friends. Thankfully they also read my comments on the post and wanted to learn more about the chronological order of eschatology. Though most believe in the pre-trib rapture, evangelical churches in Myanmar are too weak to show their members why believers would not go through the wrath to come. After a brief presentation, one of our friends organized a group (mostly school teachers) to come over and listen to the teaching as I presented the Word rightly divided.

One common comment of the group was, "We never heard God's Word explained this way!" We spent five 1½-hour sessions on the Blessed Hope and Judgments. Currently we are doing another 3 sessions on rightly dividing the Scriptures.

January 6th marked the first anniversary of Grace Believer's Church. This is the first year since we separated from our former national partner. We wanted TCM missionary, Genesis Maraak of Thailand, to speak but he was held back by their family get-together. We are thankful Aaron Moon, pastor of Refuge Fellowship, a non-denominational church in Yangon, took the invitation and spoke about the priority the church should place on living with the spiritual blessings of Christ in the heavenly places. Three of our non-Christian neighbors came to join the celebration activities, and at the same time, heard a message about God. It has always been our priority to establish good relationships with our neighbors in order to continue our worship and other church activities without complaints from them. We are glad that we have already established friendships, and two of them even sent food.



We are blessed this new year with opportunities. Just a week ago we started ministering to a group of university students through English classes. For months we hung an advertisement for English classes at the entrance of our driveway. At first we thought no one paid it any attention, but now, we have to readjust our schedules in order to accommodate students flocking in. There are eight seamen joining our new classes. Teaching English is an outreach because we can use biblical materials as part of our curriculum and introduce the Lord. It is interesting that even if the students know that Christian material will be used, they still come with interest and excitement. We might not be able to witness a big conversion, but we can open relationships and, at the same time, establish our relevance in Myanmar society. We need this in order to gain more contacts with people.

Starting March 24 our second quarter of this year will be spent in the Philippines. This will be our three-month break away from the field after two years of full engagement. This break however, is already scheduled with important events. At the beginning of April we will attend Kelly's high school graduation. How quickly time has passed. She was born in a local



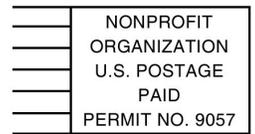
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hospital when we first planted a church in Nakuru, Kenya in 2002, and now she is ready for college. One of the times worth celebrating for us missionaries is the success of our kids' schooling, especially when they've done it on their own while we were serving in another country. We truly see God's blessings and protection. Kezia, our second-born will have her wedding on May 23. This again amazes us how fast time goes by. She was only 1½ years old when we first set foot in Kenya as missionaries. Now she is a bride. As Filipino parents, we are responsible for a huge part of the expenses of our children's wedding celebrations. This is an act of "blessing" their independence as there will be a new branch in the family tree. Please help us pray that we can do our part since this quarter we will have heavy financial burdens.

Our quarter break will be spent attending major conferences, too. The last week of April we will be at the national annual conference of Grace churches in the Philippines. This will be a time to minister to church leaders in the Philippines on the challenge of taking part in missions. The venue in Butuan City will take 5 to 6 hours of travel from our home city by car, and we will also spend for registration, accommodation and food. The biggest and most costly event for us will be the South East Asia Grace Conference (SEAGC) of TCM at the end of May. Since we are serving in this region it is a must that we (Gardner, Ledith and Kelly) participate in this biggest mission conference. As the TCM representative in Myanmar, I will present reports of the movement and development of our field. The chosen venue is one of the prestigious hotels located in the middle of Cebu City. Again, please take us with you to God's throne with these needs.

Both TCM missionary families will be away from Myanmar for the entire second quarter since Dan and Amy Banac will have their furlough in the Philippines, too. This will leave our young church continuing on its own. However we have confidence that Pastor Mawi and his wife, Christmas, will be able to hold the rudder until we all come back. They will take up most of our ministries temporarily with the support of some intern students from our Bible training. We planned for this during our planning meeting for the whole year. Pastor Mawi will attend the SEAGC, and hopefully his wife, too. This will truly encourage a strong partnership and familiarity with how TCM operates in outreaches and church planting in the ASEAN Region.

We remain thankful for your very important contributions in our desire to reach our field for the gospel. You are marks of God's hands moving and sustaining our needs in prayer and resources. You are definitely the fan that keeps blowing on the fire of our desire to push through the odds. May you enjoy the blessings of your commitment in our partnership.

All for God's glory,

Gardner and Ledith Improso

Yangon, Myanmar