

STICKY RICE MINISTRY

Lao Attached Field Newsletter

Special Edition— September 2015

Building Up the Future of the Lao Church—Pt. 1



The Lao Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church is just like these toddlers who are trying to build a house. They are gathering bricks and stones, correct raw materials for construction, but they do not have the skills or brains to build a house. They are just too young. Without help from adults they can never succeed their dream.

True, the Adventist message might have been brought to Laos since 1957 by Pastor Richard Hall and his wife Jean Hall from United States. But they and their then young pastors, Pastor Mun Lansri (from Thailand) and Pastor Abel Pagan (now living in Fresno, USA) only worked for 3.5 years in Laos and had to evacuate because of the Indochina War.

Then, the very young Lao Adventists, only three years old, were left without a shepherd until after the year 50 years later when the Adventist Church officially resumed its work in Laos in the year 2000s. So, in reality, the Lao SDA Church, that was in induced coma for 50 years, has just been resuscitated a few years ago. So, as of now, it does not even have an office where its mission staff could work. It does not have a school where its children and young people can go to learn about God in their early childhood. It does not have a medical clinic where its members can get proper treatment and Christian care when they are physically sick. It does not have infrastructure and it still lacks human capacity. It is still learning how to walk by itself.

“Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.

It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep.”

(Psalm 127:1,2, ESV)

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The Vientiane Church in the shadow of the 6 storey Booyong Bank next door

The Vientiane Church that was built by Pastor Angel Biton in 1973 now faces a challenge from the government's new urban development policy. If it will survive it has to catch up with the modernization of the Vientiane inner city development. Towering over the roof of our church is the Booyong Bank which makes our church now rather looks like a chicken hut.

But, this Vientiane church building is more than a church. The Lao Attached Field office (LAF) is cramped into the back of this church. There are 12 young people living behind this church in one cramped room as well. Besides, during worships, there are not enough seats for people to sit inside the church. Even after adding extra chairs still people have to sit outside. When it rains or on a hot and sunny day it is difficult for people to sit outside. With more baptisms it means more members are being added to this church regularly. Last month, 22 August 2015, 22 people were just baptized and 9 more also accepted Jesus as their personal Savior. So, 31 more people added! There is not enough space for everyone! But, more people in Vientiane are now seeking God. How can we accommodate them all?

We need to build a new and larger church! The plan is to build a new church with 500 seating capacity. One floor will be dedicated to LAF office and a language school where more people will find God. We will also have a health food restaurant and health food store on the ground floor for passers-by and our English students to learn about healthy living. ADRA Laos will also occupy one floor which will make a one-stop services to those who want to contact Adventist organizations—office, school, health, and community services are in one place. The location is the most prominent in all of Laos! It is just a walking distance to the Victory Monument which is located at the center of Vientiane City, the Vientiane Bus Station, and the Vientiane Shopping Mall. Thus, the new Vientiane Church will be visible to all. The new lighthouse of God will shine bright and clear in Vientiane City (see location map on the other page).

But, there is one problem. Like the toddlers above, who are trying to build a house, the Lao SDA Church is too young to stand on its own feet. It does not have enough funds to either build this church or build its capacity. Unless it gets help from its mature brothers and sisters around the world it cannot possibly achieve its dream. Below are what you can help with the construction of a larger church in Vientiane. You can:

1. Give a donation of \$1, \$5, \$10, \$30, \$50, \$100, \$200, \$500, \$1,000, \$10,000 or more
2. Help us raise funds by doing fundraising activities or collections from your friends and acquaintances

3. Share our needs or share this newsletter with others.
4. Pray for us, asking God to inspire others to help us.
5. Come to visit us to see what else you can help the Lord's work in Laos.

My brothers and sisters, could you please consider sacrificing a little bit of your money or your time to help us raise funds to build this historic church of Vientiane? In mathematic terms, it does not need to be very much of your sacrifice. For instance, if one member of your church will just give \$1 towards this church building that will be sufficient. But if you give more than \$1, let's say \$3 (a price of an ice-cream) that would be much appreciated. In Laos, we currently have 1,300 members. And I can promise you that we will do our very best to contribute. As poor as our members are, I promise you that we will at least contribute \$1 each. But, I am sure we will do more than that. So, if members in Thailand give \$1 each, we will receive at least \$10,000. And if members in Sabah Mission will give \$1 each, we will surely receive more than \$30,000. Therefore, please prayerfully consider helping us finish the construction of the Vientiane Church. There is no better location to build a lighthouse of God than in the center of the Capital City of Laos (see below).

The cost of the construction of a 5 storey building with a 500 seating capacity church, a language school, a health food store and restaurant, an ADRA office, a Lao Mission office, and a training center for our lay workers (a mini bible college) is a staggering \$1.6 million. However, the Southeast Asia Union Mission (SAUM) has committed \$450,000. The Southern Asia-Pacific Division (SSD) has committed \$300,000. The General Conference (GC) has also committed \$300,000. The Crocodile Foundation (CF) has given \$300,000 towards it. ADRA Laos has agreed to pay 15 years rent worth of \$175,000. So, it leaves to Lao Attached Field (LAF), the toddler, to come up with \$75,000 to make up the \$1.6 million for the construction.

This LAF toddler cannot possibly come up with \$75,000 unless its mature brothers and sisters around the world help it. Also the church policy dictates that LAF must come up with at least 50% of its share (\$37,500) before the construction can begin. So, unless this LAF toddler can come up with the above amount the construction will be delayed, who knows until when. Meanwhile, the inflation in Laos was 4.1% in 2014. And if it stays the same in 2015 and 2016 it means that next year, 2016, the cost of construction will increase to \$1,664,000 and \$1,728,000 by 2017.



The new Vientiane Multipurpose Church building will have capacity to carry out God's work in Laos for years to come until the Lord returns

This easily writes off what the LAF toddler will raise if the funds delay in coming for a year or two (see: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/lao> and [http://www.indexmundi.com/laos/inflation_rate_\(consumer_prices\).html](http://www.indexmundi.com/laos/inflation_rate_(consumer_prices).html)).



The Vientiane Church site is located at one of the most prominent locations in Vientiane Central Business District

So, now you can see the dilemma of this LAF toddler. Through the rapid growth and environmental circumstances this LAF toddler is forced to build a bigger church to enhance its operation and expansion. This LAF toddler cannot do it alone. Unless it gets help from its big brothers and sisters it will surely die a premature death. It will be a terribly pitiful death since it only needs less than a cost of an ice-cream for its big brother or sister to save it.

To give you a clear picture of the growth of the Lao Church is that as of August 2015, we have believers in 16 out of 18 provinces of Laos. Two new provinces were reached just this year. The two provinces that we have not yet entered are Phongsaly, the very North province, and Xaysomboun Province, the newest province. We hope to reach all corners of Laos by 2020. To put you in perspective, in some cases, we had not gone in search of new



The LAF Building Committee meet with a Designing and Advisory company on 20 August 2015

members, but the Lord did. Just like Cornelius who sent his servants to find Apostle Peter to come and explain to him more about God (Acts 10) Lao people from various and distant areas would give us a call to go and help them accept God. Since we have believers spread out so much in the country we are now facing with a shortage of pastors or shepherds. So, this LAF toddler is not just struggling to build its infrastructure but it is also struggling to build up its capacity.

So, If you can and would like to help us raise funds by personal contribution, fund-raising program, collection from friends and acquaintances, sharing our needs, or praying for us, please let us know. We hope to begin the construction of this church building in October 2015. For information on how you can send your donation to us please contact me. May the Lord reward you and multiply your wealth as you consider investing in His business of saving the souls of the Lao people. Amen!



Ethnic Laven Church members in rural Laos are praying for a Laven pastor

Building Up the Future of the Lao Church—Pt 2

While it is important to build church buildings to accommodate more worshippers it is also equally important to train up pastors to minister to and care for the believers. The Lao church, as a toddler, who is learning to walk and to feed itself, cannot possibly train its offspring how to walk and feed others. So, the work of training the future workforce cannot be carried out by the LAF toddler.

While SAUM owns Asia-Pacific International University (AIU) and gives scholarships to students from different missions to come to study to serve God back in their respective mission the LAF toddler cannot send its students to AIU even it really wants to. There is a big mountain for this young toddler to climb! And that big mountain is the mountain of English Proficiency. You see, SAUM has ceased its ESL scholarship program at AIU. When SAUM made this ESL sponsorship program available several years ago, in 1990s, the LAF toddler was still in induced coma, and was not born then. Now, when this LAF toddler is ready to walk to AIU to study the ESL sponsorship program has been terminated.

In Laos, the LAF toddler does not have an English school like other missions. All it has is an English Language Centre which offers evening classes one hour per day, four days a week. How long will it take for a Lao student, who studies English 4 hours per week, to qualify for college study in English medium at AIU? Normally, it will take one year or 1,440 hours, base on 6 hours per day 5 days a week and 48 weeks per year, for a very bright student to study English to qualify for English medium college study. Base on this fact, it will take a very bright Lao student to study English 4 hours per week in Laos for 7.5 years to get his/her English to qualify for AIU study. Now, you can see the dilemma of this LAF toddler. Unlike its more mature missions that have English schools, the LAF toddler cannot afford to send its students to AIU for training because it cannot afford the ESL program, so, it cannot qualify for college program at AIU.

There are ways you can help the LAF toddler climb this ESL mountain successfully. With 164,385 Thai baht or US\$4,696 (based on current exchange rate) per year you can help a Lao student study ESL at AIU. Once they enter college programs then SAUM sponsorship kicks in. Another way is to offer a full-time ESL program in Laos taught by a native English speaking teacher. While this possibility may be feasible, and if there is a volunteer willing to come to Laos, I still do not know how we can obtain a visa for that volunteer as LAF does not have a business status. So, it looks like, at this stage, there is no other options apart from providing ESL scholarships for Lao students.

Alternatively, is to send Lao students to study in the Philippines where there is no strict English proficiency requirement. Even this option also requires money for their tuition fees.



Some of the Nyhon or Yahern members who yet to have their own pastor



One of the Nyhon or Yahern members who is ready to go to study to become a pastor



Some of the Laven members who yet to have their own pastor



Some of the Laven youth who are willing to go to study to become pastors

LAF has members from the Lao, Lue, Tai Dam, Hmong, Khmu, Ta Oi, Ngae, Laven, Nyahon, Phou Tai, and Tai Ngiaw tribes. If you can help sponsor these ethnic students to study to become pastors for their own tribes please let us know. An ESL Fund has been created at LAF for this purpose and a friend has already put in 40,000 baht. If you can help please contact me for information on how to donate.