

STICKY RICE MINISTRY

Lao Attached Field Newsletter

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THE RISE OF THE KHMU



The Khmu are the Aborigines of Laos. They lived in the land well before the Lao tribe (originally called the *Tai*) retreated from southern China and occupied the land around the 7th and 13th Centuries. It is believed that there are around 500,000 Khmu in Laos, making the largest minority in Laos. Most of them live in northern Laos. While some 10% of Khmu have embraced Christianity very few of them are Adventists. LAF's work among the Khmu has not been able to take a solid start due to the lack of Khmu gospel workers.

We have been praying for opportunities to reach the Khmu tribe with the gospel. For years the Lord has been silent in answering our prayers and the work among the Khmu has been extremely slow. I must admit that I was somewhat disappointed and discouraged about this. I used to blame myself why I cannot speak Khmu anymore. You see, when I was young, my father was a teacher at Khmu villages and I grew up speaking Khmu fluently. But, now I can only remember a few words just enough to ask for food and drink, certainly not enough to preach the gospel. I was really angry at myself.

Then, last year the Lord sent us Doctor Somdy Chanthabong (pictured above). Doctor Somdy is a real Khmu medical doctor who through many miracles accepted Jesus Christ as His personal Saviour. Some of you might recall a story I reported earlier about his son's illness. As a medical doctor he could not cure his own son. His medical friends could not help him either. Finally, through prayers his son was miraculously healed by Jesus. Since then Dr Somdy never stopped talking about Jesus who had healed his son. Now, officially retired, Dr Somdy treats his patients at his house and he would pray for his patients and tell them the story of Jesus healing his son again and again. Through his witnessing several

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Dr Somdy examines a local man who complained of having pain in his lower back

families have joined him and his family worshipping at his house. Dr Somdy told me that he would like to turn his house into a place of worship. In order to do that he plans to knock down two bedrooms to enlarge the living room to accommodate more members.



This could become the first Adventist Church in Xayaboury

Dr Somdy lives in a village just about 15 minute drive from the city of Xayaboury. It is a simply house with two bedrooms and a kitchen at the back. His plan is to knock down the bedrooms to make space for church worship and to rebuild the kitchen area into bedrooms and kitchen. But he needs funds.

One may think that funds should not be a problem for a retired medical doctor like him. Well, he has been a doctor for all his life and after retirement this unfinished house is all what he has. You see, he and his family are now living on the income he gets from seeing patients at his house. The villagers are poor and that means he cannot charge them much. I witnessed the man who came to him for lower back pain. After



Praying for the sick is what Dr Somdy does everyday

giving him a proper examination the man was diagnosed as having kidney and liver problems. He was given an injection and some medicines to take home. The doctor only charged the man around \$5 for all that. Even that amount the man had pledged to pay him some more later.



Ouch! There goes the needle.



Worship at Dr Somdy's house on Wednesday night, 23 December 2015

My fear is that Dr Somdy's membership will outgrow his living room, which can only hold 20-30 people maximum, before he could save up enough to renovate it. Once the bedrooms are taken off up to 50 worshippers can be accommodated inside his house. It will be a small Khmu Adventist Church in Xayaboury.

Dr Somdy told us that the authority had visited his house and learned that he had held worship services in his house. The authority representative who visited him gave his verbal permission to him to hold worship services in his house. Some of you may not understand why it is such an issue to hold worship services in some parts of the country? Yes, up to now, it is still difficult to hold worship services in some areas. However, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has a good relationship with the central government and we continue to work with the government and local authorities to resolve some local problems. Please continue to pray for us on this matter.

Like I said, as for worshipping at Dr Somdy's house, it is permissible. All I need from you, my dear friends, is that please pray for us that the Lord will provide us with some funds to help Dr Somdy renovate his house, knock off the two bedrooms and rebuilt them in the place of his kitchen area, as soon as possible. Like to "strike when the iron is still hot." I am not an architect, so I do not know how much exactly it will cost. But, whatever amount we can help Dr Somdy he would be most grateful. He had not asked us to give him financial support, but just told us about his plan. I just think that it would be great if we could help him out. In this way, we can have a decent church at Phonsa-at Village, Xayaboury Province. Remember, just two years ago, we had no Adventists in this prov-



Dr Somdy, his wife, his daughter, and his son-the guitarist

ince. Dr Somdy's church will be the first Adventist church in Xayaboury. I need \$5,000 for Dr Somdy if you can help. Please join us in prayers that God will provide funds to raise up His church for His Khmu people in Xayaboury.

It was really a great experience worshipping with Dr Somdy's family and his church members. They were so happy to see us pay a visit to them. Our plan is to send a pastor to go there and stay with Dr Somdy for a week or two to give training and bible studies to his group and baptize new believers the sooner the better. Dr Somdy is an educated man and a capable leader of his group. The problem is that he is now retired and old. We need a Khmu young man to go to study theology and come back to serve his own people. Dr Somdy's son is a good candidate, but he has not completed his high school certificate. So, please help us pray to God that He will provide a young man from the Khmu tribe for theological training. It is unthinkable that God would raise up a group of believers without providing a shepherd for it. God knows, but we have to identify such person.

THE MIRACLE ROCK HAS GROWN INTO ANOTHER KHMU CHURCH



The "Miracle Rock" that stopped Pastor Bounprany's car from crossing this river in March 2015

It was this "miracle rock" that raised up another Khmu church in Luang Prabang. You see, pastor Bounprany and his team were on their way to the other village that evening. It started getting dark and their car was stopped by this rock which was buried underneath the water. The villagers came to help and finally they managed to remove the rock, but Pastor Bounprany's car just refused to start. At the end, Pastor Bounprany was offered to stay the night at a house in this village. And it happened that the owner of the house, Mr Bouaphanh, was a long lost Adventist who was longing to come home.



The house where Pastor Bounprany stayed that night, now the first Khmu house church in Luang Prabang

Mr Bouaphanh used to study the SDA bible correspondence course and believed in Jesus. But though the years without help from the church he not only kept his faith alive, but shared



Pastor Bounprany baptized Mr Bouaphanh in August 2015

it with his fellow villagers. When we found him he had been worshipping in his house with several families already. Mr Bouaphanh is not a Khmu, but married to a Khmu woman

and speaks Khmu fluently. He has been living with the Khmu for all his life. He is also a village chief and a teacher by profession. He is well respected in his community which puts him in a good position of influence. Since his baptism Mr Bouaphanh continued to witness to people not only in his village, but also nearby villages.



Worship at Mr Bouaphanh's house as of 26 December 2015



Mr Bouaphanh's group now has 17 families and around 70 people. On the day we visited many people were not present because it was not a crop season and many went to different provinces to find extra casual jobs. While exciting at the growth of Mr Bouaphanh's group it worries me greatly. Surely 70 people cannot fit into his house during worship. For this reason, we have secured a piece of land in this village where we will build our church when the need arises. Another problem is that other Khmu people from nearby villages have requested Mr Bouaphanh to go and tell them about his new faith. On the day I was there, three elders from a nearby village also came to worship with us. They told us to go to their village and tell them about God.



Three elders from nearby village

Mr Bouaphanh told us that there are 5 other villages also re-

quested his visit. The road is not good and the distance between villages is between, very close, around 3 km, to very far, up to 40 km. Meanwhile, Mr Bouaphanh does not have a motorbike. He needs to find someone to send him to these villages and he would pay for the cost of petrol for the man. Although this way is possible, but very inconvenient. During the crop season it is much harder to find someone available and willing to take him visiting.

Lao Attached Field (LAF) has recently appointed Mr Bouaphanh as one of its lay pastors or part-time missionaries. As you can see, the Lord has been with Mr Bouaphanh. He did not just raise up a church in his house, but also reached out successfully to other Khmu villages. Many villages have asked for his visit, but he cannot go and minister to them unless he has a motorbike. LAF does not have funds to buy a bike for him. We did not anticipate a surprise like this, that, in a short time, so many people responded to the gospel message in Luang Prabang, one of the most restrictive provinces. What shall we do now? Should we let go of the opportunity offered to us to expand the kingdom of God among the Khmu people in Luang Prabang? If not, would you think of a way to help secure a bike for Mr Bouaphanh and put him on the road to preach the gospel to the Khmu? I have asked around and if I just have \$1,700 I can get a brand new Honda Wave 125cc for Mr Bouaphanh and he will raise up more Khmu churches for the Lord. But if I don't have that much money and you will just give me \$1,000 I will buy a used bike for him. As bikes are made in Thailand and imported into Laos the prices are much higher than they are in Thailand. Used bikes prices do not drop despite their poor conditions. So, if possible I would rather go for a new bike for him and it will last much longer. That's all I ask from you. LAF will try to cover for his petrol and maintenance costs which are expected to be around \$50 per month. But if you feel that you would rather like to sponsor Mr Bouaphanh as your personal gospel preacher, by all means, please let me know. Bless your heart if you would do that.

I am already fascinated about how God led us to Mr Bouaphanh in the first place. I am more convinced that he has been chosen by God to carry the gospel to the Khmu people of Luang Prabang. He has proven to us that in such a short time he has won so many families for the kingdom already. I am sure he can do more if he has a bike to run around visiting people. So, please pray for us on this new mission to the Khmu. It was not us who initiated it, but God, after He had heard our prayers. So, you may like to partner with God and with us to give the Khmu people of northern Laos a chance to receive salvation through coming to Jesus and accepting Him as their personally Saviour. By just an initial amount of \$1,700 and then \$50 a month we have a great potential to reach hundreds of Khmu people of Luang Prabang for Jesus.

Strike when the iron is hot. If you hear God's calling you to partner with Him and would like to contribute to our Khmu ministry please let us know. But, if you cannot help financially, at the very least, please keep us in your prayers. Thank you.

LAF TAKES THE GOSPEL TO OUDOMXAY



Downtown City of Muang Xay, Oudomxay Province, Northern Laos



Oudomxay, Northern Laos, is a bustling province as it sits on a crossroad to Luang Namtha and on to China and to Phonsaly and further to China and Vietnam. Oudomxay has about 300,000 population. Out of the 23 ethnics, the Khmu makes up the majority, followed by the *Lao Lue* or *Tai Lue* whose ancestors came down from *Sipsong Panna* or *Xishuan Banna*, Southern Yunnan Province, China, in the 13th Century, and also the Hmong people who are the third majority. Before the *Lao Lue* the *Khmu* were the first people who lived in Oudomxay.

LAF has a plan to enter the four remaining unentered provinces of Laos by 2020. This year, 2016, we plan to enter Oudomxay first. Already we found a few interests in this province. One of those interests had received bible studies with us and received an MP3 device that contains sermons, bible studies, and hymns and worship songs.



The man is happy to receive his MP3 device and take it home to listen to the sermons, bible studies, and sing gospel songs.

In a few days, on Sunday January 11, 2016, LAF will send a pastor and his wife and their young son to resettle in Oudomxay to work for God there. Please keep frontline pastors in your prayers. There are still many challenges and restrictions in some areas. The gospel work needs a lot of careful moves with a lot of prayers and wait for right opportunities to share. It is possible but difficult. So, we rely on your prayerful support to make available God's salvation to His Khmu people as well as the Hmong. Our pastor is a Hmong pastor, but he can speak Khmu as well.

We met a man who related to our pastor through his family name. You see, in Hmong culture, family name has much more meaning

than any other culture. For instance, if you are a Hmong young man and you meet another Hmong young woman who is attractive to you, the first question you have to ask her is "What is your Surname?" If she has the same surname as yours, no matter how stranger she looks, you cannot start courtship with her whatsoever. Whether she is from China, Myanmar, Thailand, or Vietnam (Hmong also live in these countries), if she has the same family name with yours then she is your family. You cannot marry her. It is simple.



But, if you have the same surname it means you are relatives and you are treated as such. So, this young man is our Hmong pastor's nephew. That's give him a position of influence and therefore he was able to share the gospel message with the man which he gladly accepted.



This is the house that our pastor will stay and he will work from there. Please pray for our pastor and his wife as they take the gospel to the Khmu and Hmong people in Oudomxay. The rent of this house is \$100 per month. If you would like to be part of our work in Oudomxay please don't hesitate to let us know. Thanks.