I. The Chinese New Year Connection

Dr. Samuel Wang, Chinese Evangelism Resources Developer

The Chinese New Year, also known as Spring Festival or Lunar New Year, is the most important of all the traditional Chinese holidays. On February 10, the first day of the year of the snake, my family enjoyed our third Chinese New Year in Taiwan. This year was perhaps our best-celebrated New Year ever! We invited more than a dozen young people to celebrate with us who don't have homes and parents to go home to.

The way we Chinese celebrate this festival is reminiscent of the Jewish Passover as well as the marriage supper of the Lamb (Ex. 12; Rev. 19:7-9).

The Spring Festival is a yearly time to remove the old and bring in the new. Customarily, no debts are brought into the New Year; forgiveness is liberally offered to smooth relations as well as settling debts. The New Year thus becomes a symbol for rest, peace, and freedom from all debts and guilt.

There are other interesting similarities between Passover and the Chinese New Year. The Chinese New Year, like the Passover, is the longest festival in the year - a 15 day celebration from the first month of the lunar calendar. The door posts are decorated with red couplets that symbolize welcome and blessing. It is not clear to me which practice may have came first, the Chinese custom or Israel's painting their doorposts with blood. Also on New Year's Eve, every family customarily dines to welcome a new beginning in life and reminds Christians of the marriage supper of the Lamb in heaven prior to God's creation of the new heavens earth.

Is it possible that there is some distant connection between Chinese New Year and the Passover Lamb of God? I like to think so! Certainly Christian Chinese can celebrate our hope in soon return of Christ and the great marriage supper of the Lamb. Here is an opportunity to build bridges of understanding and proclaim Christ's provision for our past and His soon return. A new Eden home awaits us all.

--from the new CEART February 2013 Newsletter (see below) ~~~~~~~~ II. Life Sketch of Beth Armstrong Coffin [Part 3]

Kathy Marshall <colorcat3@comcast.net> Feb. 13:

Galen worked a few months in Camarillo, CA, before taking the medical exams in Winnipeg, Canada for licensure in British countries and sailing for Singapore. The freighter had very inadequate railings and 15-month-old Kathy was on a leash for the 6 weeks voyage.

When their ship docked in Singapore it was a home coming for Beth. Her parents and many other friends were there to meet their ship. One of them was Ah Sam who had worked for Galen's family in Nanning, China when he was a boy. Ah Sam was delighted to consider Kathy as her grandchild and take over as babysitter! Kathy was delighted to get off the leash and promptly climbed the ladder on the freighter's smokestack. Ah Sam was in tears until Galen climbed up and got Kathy down off the ladder.

A year after arriving as a greenhorn doctor in Singapore, Galen was the sole doctor for the 60 bed Youngberg Memorial Hospital for an entire year.
Beth was asked to teach a Home Ec class at Malayan Union Seminary and temporarily taught a Bible class until Amy Sherrard arrived to take over the class.

In 1952 at age four Kathy contracted polio and the family made their way via Pan Am Stratocruiser to the White Memorial Hospital in Los Angeles for Kathy’s rehabilitation. Galen stayed one month, but Beth and Kathy stayed 3 months while Beth learned to do some of the physiotherapy treatments and Kathy was fitted for two long leg braces. Back in Singapore Galen was installing a large tank in their home for Kathy's treatments.

After returning to Singapore, Beth continued Kathy’s treatments in the tank for several years. In addition to these treatments, she drove Kathy and her two little girlfriends to the saltwater swimming club for exercises and swimming lessons several mornings a week. In an attempt to keep Kathy less active for a portion of the day, she started a little afternoon kindergarten in her living room for Kathy and her neighborhood playmates.

In 1954 Galen was asked to spend a month in Sarawak conducting medical clinics in remote villages. Kathy stayed with a surrogate aunt and uncle while Beth went to Borneo with Galen. Most of their travel was by small riverboats or by walking for hours in the steaming jungles up one ridge and down the other, often in the pouring rain. When they reached the different villages they would be accommodated in the chief’s room in a long house. The long house was shared by the entire village and was built on stilts about 10 feet in the air. Access to the longhouse was by a notched log. Galen and Beth would sleep on air mattresses placed on the split bamboo floors while chickens and pigs rooted and squabbled on the ground beneath the floor. They learned to turn the mosquito net upside down to keep the bed bugs in the floor from biting them in the night. Meals were rice and simple vegetables the villagers cooked over little wood fires in the corner of the room.

Most of the villages were still headhunter's villages and the rafters were hung with human skulls from their raids on other villages. Beth was the first white woman ever to visit some of the villages. Because the villagers had never seen a white woman they would come up to pat her white skin, feel her brown hair, and peer up at this tall woman, all the while laughing, jabbering, and gesturing in their language about her.

Beth had always wanted a good size family, but nature didn't cooperate. During their first furlough home to Portland in 1955 they were able to adopt 7-year-old David to complete their family. They had fun introducing him to all the sights smells, tastes and activities of living in Singapore. When David and Kathy were beginning high school, Beth was wishing for an inexpensive family hobby. A friend suggested bird watching. The family gave it a try and has been hooked ever since. Everywhere Beth traveled she added birds to her life list.

During Beth and Galen's first two terms in Singapore Beth worked as an accountant, a teacher of grades 1-4 and compound hostess. She volunteered in all the Sabbath School departments over the years, was wedding co-coordinator for countless weddings and performed dozens of other volunteer tasks.

Galen's work at the hospital had very demanding hours with many night calls. He was on call a lot and called back the hospital often, but Beth always seemed to take it in stride without complaining. When they could get a few hours away, they enjoyed waterskiing and often invited friends, co-workers and students to join them. Many folks have memories of learning to ski behind their boat and eating the picnic food Beth prepared.

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III. Burma Vignettes-- Early Missionaries # 20-22

Mervin Myat Kyaw <mervinmk@yahoo.com.au> and his wife Nan are Karen Adventists who worked many years in Burma and Thailand and now live and work in Australia. He has written a manuscript covering Adventism in Burma from its very beginning to the present and of his work in Thailand.

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#20. Molly Rae (1913- 19)

The work of treasurer was capably cared for during the teen years by 3 fine ladies - first Molly Rae for a time, then Mrs. Shannon for a further period. Rachel Jones from America continued until the Myanmar Union was organised in 1919 and L. W. Melendy became the first secretary-treasurer of the Union.

21. Mrs. Shannon (1913- 19)
22. Rachel Jones (1913- 19)

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IV. Retiree Continues Denominational Work

Dale Bidwell <dbidwell@southern.edu> Feb. 21:

Just a short update on some of my activities:
1. January 13 I was in Chino, CA for the annual board meeting of Chinese Ministries International. Arlind Hackett is the CMI treasurer.
Daniel Choo, MD remains as CMI Board Chairman.

2. ADRA International has hired me on a contract basis to help with some accounting issues at ADRA Ghana. I left Chattanooga on February 18 and am scheduled to be back home March 15. The country of Ghana is not Asia, yet there are striking similarities. The Ghana Union Conference is being studied by the General Conference for possibly being divided into two Unions. Ghana has a sizable SDA membership.

V. Mark Finley & Evangelism Team in Indonesia [Part 3 of 3]

"Longtime evangelist Mark A. Finley; General Conference (GC) Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department director Jonathan Kuntaraf; GC Health Department director Kathleen Kuntaraf, wife of Jonathan; vocalist Charles Haugabrooks; and other team members held a series of meetings in Manado, Indonesia, August 31-September 7. This resulted in remarkable conversions, including that of a tribal chief on a remote Indonesian island.
Hope Channel taped the nightly meetings and aired them throughout Indonesia on its newly established 24-hour network there. Here are three reports Finley wrote of the event while in Manado.


"This morning we said goodbye to Manado and left to begin our 48-hour journey home. Our evangelistic in the Manado Convention Center ended yesterday. Fifteen thousand people crammed into every available space and spilled outside the building, where we had set up hundreds of additional chairs to accommodate the crowds. Cars were already beginning to pull into the convention parking lot at 6:15 a.m. By 8:00 the auditorium was full.

When the mayor of Manado arrived at 10:00, there was a major traffic jam.
Thousands of people brought their lunch and stayed all day until we closed the session at 6:00 in the evening.

"We transported the baptismal candidates in two trips on 15 buses to our baptismal site. We praise God for each person who has accepted Jesus as their Savior and been baptized.

"Following the baptismal service we returned to the convention center for an afternoon concert and my final sermon. More than 30 musical groups and about 1,000 people participated in the musical extravaganza held each evening of the meetings.

"In addition to our evening evangelistic meetings, our team has conducted an evangelistic/church growth workshop for pastors, participated in two church dedications, spoken to high school and university students, made numerous personal visits, and met with city government officials. The mayor of Manado is a friend to Adventists. He attended and spoke at both of our church dedications, and our closing Sabbath morning meeting, expressing his deep appreciation of Seventh-day Adventists.

"It is my earnest prayer that the Holy Spirit will be poured out in all His fullness so the work of God on the earth can soon be finished and Jesus can come. It is to this end that we continue to share His message of love and truth."

[Several readers of this series who have worked in Indonesia have written of their pleasure in hearing such marvelous news. We join them in this rejoicing, for we spent three marvelous years back in the 1970's in the Manado area working at the newly established Mt. Klabet College. We did appreciate the opportunity of visiting many of the churches in that almost Christianized province. We used to tell friends that you don't ask, "Is there an Adventist church in this town?" but rather "WHERE is the Adventist church in this town?" Now this is true more than ever before! -- CHT, Sr.] ~~~~~~~~

VI. Palawan Mission Trip

Wendy Harris <wrguptill@gmail.com> Feb. 22:

We just came back from Palawan earlier this week, helping with another big mission trip group-- from Maryland area, Michigan, and California. We had such a blessed time! The group was almost 30 this time! We helped organize the medical missions during the day and three different evangelistic meetings in the evenings in the same areas. The venues were in the depressed areas around Puerto Princessa. The people especially appreciated the eye check-ups and free glasses, the gentle dental care, and the personal counseling and prayers. Oh, and the hand prostheses for those with no hands!

It was a real blessing to be able to work with the pastors and laymen in each of the areas where we ministered. We left all the patient forms (which included the counselors' notes on who was interested in Bible studies etc.) with each pastor or layman so they could follow up. One church told us they were already following up on 25 patients that had
indicated they wanted Bible studies! Some of the patients and Bible interests that had been studying for awhile already made their decisions for Christ and were baptized on our last Sabbath. That was a great privilege for us to witness!

A big thank you to Dr. Norbert and Dr. Gigi and the GVM ministry for organizing and sponsoring the group, as well as for all the donated meds and supplies and donations they left behind for us! What a huge blessing! Thank you also to Pastor Malabad at the Palawan Adventist Mission for hosting the big group and doing such a great job!

During the mission trip, Dwayne took Sean and Pris (new missionaries) to Brooke's Point to get oriented and also to let Sean get more hours in the Cessna to work on his 10 required hours for his Philippine license. Pris ended up staying to help with the medical missions which was a big help. We also appreciated very much Briane, who also came on the trip to help with the counseling and evening meetings.

Dwayne and Sean helped arrange for equipment to come and finish the airstrip in Brooke's Point and they helped finish the fence around one end of it. They were also able to take some aerial shots of the Adventist Academy up the road which were needed for their plans for development.

We're back in Quirino (our place) again and getting a lot accomplished on this airstrip finally too, praise God!

VII. CEART February 2013 Newsletter
[a new newsletter from which we will be gathering numerous news items for the FED e-News.]

Global Mission Center for East Asian Religions & Traditions Office of Adventist Missions General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists PO Box 15 Nakhon Luang, Phra Nakhon Sri Ayutthaya 13260 Thailand

Dear Friends and Partners,

Greetings! We are pleased to have arrived safely five months ago and are settling into our work here at CEART. We have already enjoyed ten years of mission service in Southeast Asia and we look forward to further service in spreading the Gospel and preparing for Christ's soon return.

It is my prayer that this newsletter will bless you with helpful information and encouragement as well as challenge you to invest yourself more deeply in reaching out to East Asians.

For Christ,
Pastor Greg Whitsett

Who Does CEART Target?

I am often asked who exactly the Center for East Asian Religions and Traditions is focusing on. That's a great question!

Most of you know that CEART is the new name for the Buddhist Study Center, a ministry in the Global Missions department under the umbrella of the General Conference Office of Adventist Missions. The new name reflects that the focus is somewhat broadened to be more than Buddhists.

The image below demonstrates graphically the size and nature of the eight religious groups of the world of which there are five major ones: Abrahamic, Dharmic, Taoic or East Asian, indigenous, and secular. Of these, CEART focuses on Buddhists (which are part of the Dharmic religions) and all of the Taoic or East Asian religions plus secular peoples who are traditionally associated with the Buddhist and Taoic groups. Incidentally, CEART is interested in these peoples regardless of where they live in the world although we have special interest in reaching them in their homelands.

Annual CEART Meeting Adjusts Focus

Since 2003 the Ministry Among Buddhists Meeting has focused on training pastors, teachers, and expatriate missionaries in best practices for reaching Buddhists. The meeting has enjoyed good attendance and most have considered the meetings a success. So why would we want to change the meetings formula if its working?

Most of those attending in years past are workers in Thailand and bordering countries who return year after year. CEART would now like to focus on developing a global network of mission specialists that we can partner with to equip the Church in using best practices for reaching East Asian peoples.

So this year we are inviting specific missions to appoint one or two delegates to attend the conference. Also, we will be inviting key mission professors and ministry leaders. Under this new focus we have renamed the meeting, CEART Mission Issues Leadership Conference.

We invite those who are interested in participating or in making a report on their ministries to contact us to arrange plans to attend. Below are the details.
2013 Dates: 8 am, May 21 -- 1 pm, May 23.
Location: Asia Pacific International University, Saraburi, Thailand
Registration Deadline: April 20.

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