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# Cross Cultural Discipling Mission

## Benjamin & Karen Rees

### November 2008

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**IF YOU READ THIS ON THE INTERNET** and would like to receive this letter regularly (roughly once a month), please send your request to <[reesmission@gmail.com](mailto:reesmission@gmail.com)> and we will add you to the mailing list.

Began on 20 November 2008. Finished and began sending on 21 November.

Weather (21 Nov., 3 p.m.): sunny, clear and cool. Temperature, 22°C (72°F). Relative humidity, 52%. Air pollution index, (general) 55-90, (roadside) 80-105.

### **CHURCH 27<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION**

Many in the church felt that this year's church anniversary thanksgiving celebration was the best or one of the best in recent years. It was not as big or as splashy as between 1998 and 2002, when the church attendance was much higher and we were able to rent a larger hall for the celebration. But the attendance was very good in proportion to the number of regular members we now have, and the spirit was excellent. The day's offering was also excellent. Thanks to special gifts from many of the members, the church was again able to bring a guest preacher from the Philippines. This year it was Bro. Vic Dungo, minister of the Roxas Church of Christ in the province of Isabela. The theme was "Spiritual Body Building", and the messages were about building up the body of Christ, the church.

In the morning we met outdoors in the "Sunken Garden" in Kowloon Park. Last year, when we met there for the first time, we had some competition from some Indonesian Muslim ladies who were chanting their prayers or scriptures on the opposite side of the tiny amphitheatre. This year we had it almost to ourselves. After the service, we had a fellowship lunch prepared by the four work teams in the church. In the afternoon in our normal worship service and Bible study time we had an extended service of worship, thanksgiving and celebration. At least 79 attended the morning service, with a few more arriving just in time for lunch. In the afternoon, the room was full to overflowing with 112. A total of 131 different people attended some part of the celebration. In the evening, around 35 of our more active members gathered in another nearby park for supper and more fellowship before separating for the night.

\* Thank God that the numbers, the spirit, and the offering were all so good. Thank God also that there was so little distraction in the morning.

\* Thank God for the many ways He has blessed the church and us in the past 27 years. Pray for His continued guidance and blessing in the years to come.

### **OTHER ANNIVERSARIES**

The Mongkok Church of Christ celebrated its silver anniversary at the end of September. (The church is actually about 45 years old, but they count their official age from when they became registered with the government.) This is the Chinese church that my parents started and that Karen and I worked with between 1975 and 1981. The main focus of our work with the church was on training and encouraging the local Christians to carry on the work of the church themselves without missionary supervision or support. When they had caught this vision and

were on their way toward achieving the goal, and we were looking around for other work, God led some Filipinas to us who became the founding members of the church we are with today.

When we left, the Mongkok church was still small and struggling, and most of the members were in their late teens and early 20s. Today the church is thriving, with members of all ages, a meeting place they own, a couple of full time staff members, and a dynamic community outreach. At this year's anniversary, they presented me with a glass trophy in recognition of the work my parents, Karen and I, and others in our family did in founding and ministering to the church in its early years.

\* Thank God for the growth and success of the Mongkok church. Pray it continues long into the future.

At the end of October, the Ambassadors group in the Filipino church celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The guest speaker was Sis. Edna Palomique from a sister church in Hong Kong, the Fairview Park Christian Church. She spoke on "Honouring God in all we do." The group meets on the last Sunday of most months. They have a dual focus. They hold classes and workshops to encourage better money management and stewardship, and they try to train and encourage people to be more active and effective in evangelism.

\* Thank God for the good that has been done by this group through the years. The Philippines is a poor country, which is why so many of its people go abroad to work. Pray that this group, through its ministry, will help the ones in our church learn to make better use of what they have.

## **KAREN IN THE U.S.**

As I write this, I (Ben) am in Hong Kong as usual, but Karen is in the U.S. We had not planned a reporting trip (AKA "furlough") this year, and this is not a regular one. But several things came together to make this trip both expedient and possible. Karen's father celebrated his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday in October. The National Missionary Convention is in Tulsa, OK, this year, which is only about 100 miles from where her parents live. Our kids are both in Joplin, MO, which is also only a little over 100 miles from Tulsa, and only about 70 miles from where her parents live. The U.S. Thanksgiving Day is the week after the NMC, and Karen has not spent Thanksgiving with her parental family for years. We had enough frequent flier miles with Northwest Airlines that she could make the trip free of charge except for taxes, insurance and the like. Since I am not going, there is no need to find people to fill in with the church or look after our apartment here, which is difficult. So we decided for her to go for just over 2 weeks – from November 18 to December 5.

It was not feasible for her to go long enough to be there for both her father's birthday and Thanksgiving, but at least this is not long after the birthday. Her parents are really excited that this will be the first time for many years for them to have all five of their children home with them for Thanksgiving. Karen's priorities are to attend the NMC, spend time with family, and take care of some personal and mission-related business. She is not trying to visit a lot of supporters – although she hopes she will see some of our supporters at the missionary convention. We hope to make a regular reporting trip together sometime next summer. If any of you have any specific dates or events that you want to invite us for, please let us know ASAP.

\* Thank God that Karen could make this trip. Pray for safe travel for her, and that she will be able to accomplish all she needs to and wants to.

\* Pray for our plans for a regular reporting trip next year.

## **UPDATES AND OTHER ODDS AND ENDS**

Chitra, the wife of Raja and daughter-in-law of Rani (all of whom were mentioned in our July letter), had her baby on November 11. The baby is another girl. When we last talked to them, they had not yet chosen a name. Several aspects of the birth showed God's timing, and I'd like to tell the story, but time and space don't allow. I'll try to do so another time.

\* Thank God that everything worked out all right and all are well. Chitra now needs to decide whether to look for another job or to apply for refugee status as her husband and first daughter have. With “asylum seeker” status she (like Raja) could not legally work here, so she would have more time for the family, but they would be totally dependent on charity. If she gets a job, Raja would have to look after the kids, but the family would have more money and greater dignity. Pray for God's guidance in this decision.

\* Karen continues to have Bible studies with them, and they are attending meetings of another church that has also been helping them. They no longer pray to the Hindu gods, but do not feel ready yet to make a full commitment to following Christ. Pray that they will soon come to this point.

Thank you to several of you who pointed out that *The LOOKOUT*, and the *Christian Standard* are both available on the internet. Now that it costs too much for churches in the U.S. to send us their leftover papers, this is better than nothing. Unfortunately, it doesn't totally fill the gap left by the ending of the old way of doing things. Those of our members with easy internet access can read the papers online themselves, but unfortunately most don't have any access, while most of those who do only have limited time online and must use it for other things. As missionaries, we get one free print copy of each of these papers from Standard Publishing, and their very liberal copyright policy would allow us to make copies of any articles we want to distribute to the church. Unfortunately, this would cost too much to be practical to do for any but a few of the very best articles. Meanwhile, thanks to one church and one individual who each sent a final box of papers after the postage rates went up, we have a few copies of papers through the end of the year. After that we have some copies that we ourselves had leftover from previous years. They will last for a little while, although, being old, they are less attractive than newer copies would be.

\* Thank God that we have been able to use these leftover papers for so long, and for the blessing the papers have been to the many who have received them over the years. Pray that if there is some inexpensive way to continue with the old system we will soon find out what it is.

\* Thank God that the **OLYMPICS** and **PARALYMPICS** passed relatively uneventfully, with no terrorist attacks in or near the actual venues. Thank God that the **VISA** situation for visitors to mainland China seems to be getting back to normal. Pray that the situation for **HUMAN RIGHTS** and especially with regard to the persecution of Christians will also improve and continue to improve.



Mongkok Anniversary Presentation



Filipino Church Anniversary Choir



Filipino Church Anniversary Afterglow

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