
Cross Cultural Discipling Mission Benjamin & Karen Rees April 2010

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

Written in stages between April 22 and 27. Weather – (3:55 p.m. on 22 April), overcast and muggy. Temperature, 23°C (73°F). Relative humidity, 93%. Air pollution index, (general) 15-40, (roadside) 50-76.

OUR DAUGHTER'S GETTING MARRIED

Since this is a mission prayer letter, I usually tell church and other mission news first, and leave personal and family news until later. This time, though, I think there is one bit of family news that trumps all the rest. Our daughter, Megan, is engaged to be married. Her fiancé is Matthew Aaron Robertson. He is from Monett, Missouri. He is a member of the Countryside Christian Church in Monett, and he works for a computer software company. They plan to marry on May 29 at the College Heights Christian Church in Joplin, MO, which is where Karen and I got married. Their wedding will be two days before our 39th anniversary.



As you can guess, his name is causing a little confusion in communication, since our son's name is also Matthew. Karen and I have always called our son Matthew, so between ourselves we have been calling Megan's fiancé Matt. But both of them go by both Matthew and Matt among other people, and even Megan refers to both of them by both names, interchangeably. Their initials are the same, so that doesn't help.

We had not planned to go to the U.S. again so soon after our trip last year, but of course we couldn't miss this! We plan to go on May 18 so we can have some part in the final preparation for the wedding. After our anniversary we will fly to Oregon to visit friends, supporters, and possibly a few relatives out there. We will leave on June 15 to return to Hong Kong.

- * Thank God that Megan has found a good Christian man to marry. Pray for God's blessing and guidance for their marriage.
- * Pray that Megan can cope well with all the stress she is under. Besides the stress of preparing for a fairly large wedding, she has a very stressful job, and is also preparing for a certification test in her career field of Marriage and Family Therapy.
- * Thank God that we were able to make suitable plane reservations; pray for all aspects of our trip.

URGENT HEALTH-RELATED MATTERS

I have cataracts in both eyes. The one in my right eye does not yet affect my vision, but everything I see with my left eye is now fuzzy, and the ophthalmologist says that the time has come to remove the cataract and replace it with an implant. Surgery is scheduled for this coming Thursday afternoon (the “wee hours” of Wednesday morning, U.S. time)

Meanwhile, I have a tooth that has become very sensitive. I saw our dentist on Monday morning. We are not sure which of two teeth is the problem. He replaced a large old filling in one, but I'm not sure if it helped. One complication is timing.

I have the cataract surgery and follow up later this week. Next week the dentist goes on vacation and won't be back until just before we leave for 4 weeks in the U.S.

My blood pressure, which seems to be affected by stress, has been rising again as we get closer to time for our trip and are having to focus more and more on preparation for that.

* Thank God that Karen doesn't have any pressing health problems right now. (She does have problems with one knee and has to be careful of that, but there have been no recent changes regarding this.) Please pray for my health needs – first for the cataract surgery, then for the tooth and for the blood pressure problems.

CATCHING UP ON CHURCH AND MISSION NEWS

It has been a very full three-and-a-half months since I last wrote one of these letters, so there are a lot of activities to report.

Christmas activities went much as predicted in our early December prayer letter. The Faith Circle group, which plans many of the fellowship activities, held a Christmas party during the Bible study time on December 13. They held a drama contest in a park on Christmas day. After the contest, the three teams each presented us with a sack of groceries as a Christmas present. We had our personal family “Christmas” (ate “Christmas dinner” and opened our presents) on December 29.

Ruders' Visit: My cousin David Ruder and his wife Dian were here again, January 9-18. As usual, they did teaching in the church related to music and worship. Both are musicians and David is a worship director in a large church in California.

Chinese New Year: This year Chinese New Year day was on Sunday, February 14. Since the government always gives three days of “statutory holidays” for Chinese New Year, and Sunday is always a holiday, they gave new year's eve off and the official holiday was February 13-16. That was probably good for Chinese families since custom dictates that homes must be spotless before the new year starts, and families have a major family meal on Chinese New Year's eve. It was not so good for our church members who are mostly household helpers, since they have to clean the house and prepare and serve the meal. So few, if any, got that day off. At Chinese New Year they are also usually expected to help with the entertaining that families do at this time. So many feel fortunate if they get two days off. On the Monday, the Faith Circle held a Sports Fest at a small park down the road from us. On the Tuesday, the Sri Lankan Tamil family we have been working with invited the church to a barbecue at a beach near where they live. The weather was cold and the place is fairly remote, so only a few went, but those that did had a good time.

Afterglows and Open House : Since both the drama contest and the sports fest were held at parks very near where we live, we invited people back to our place afterward for supper and additional fellowship. We also had our traditional New Year Open House on January 1. All three events were good times of sharing.



Christmas Day afterglow at our apartment



Chinese New Year barbecue at Mui Wo

Faith Promise: This year, besides making promises about money, people were also asked to make promises about serving God and helping in the church. The number of promises returned on paper was disappointing, but several people assured us that they had made commitments in their hearts; they just preferred not to write it down for various reasons.

Keswick: Besides our work in the Filipino church, I also serve on the committee that plans the annual Hong Kong Keswick Bible conference. This runs for about six days, in English, and features expository preaching and teaching by some well known preacher from overseas. This year the speaker was Ronnie Stevens of the Danube International Church in Budapest. In

2012, the speaker is scheduled to be Randy Gariss, from our main supporting church, the College Heights Christian Church in Joplin, MO.

Resurrection Sunday: On Sunday morning we held our mid-morning outdoor “Son-rise” service. In the afternoon we had a special programme in our usual meeting place in the YMCA.

Ching Ming: This Chinese holiday always falls somewhere close to Easter. This year the festival was the day after Easter, but since that was on Easter Monday, which is a “general” public holiday (which some people get but not all), the “statutory” holiday (which everyone is supposed to get) for Ching Ming was moved to Tuesday. That caused confusion for some employers and some of our ladies were not sure until the last minute which day they would get off. On the Tuesday we had a Prayer Walk, with the theme, “Walking with Jesus” on The Peak of H.K. Island, followed by a hike down to the city below. The attendance was small but the spirit was good.

* Thank God that all these special activities went reasonably well.

* Pray for the other activities coming soon: another outdoor fellowship on the May 1 International Labour Day holiday, and then Mothers' Day in the middle of May.

* Pray for all those who made faith promises of any kind, whether for money or for service or both, and whether they turned it in on paper or merely made commitments in their hearts.

ADDITIONAL PRAYER NEEDS

At the end of last year and the beginning of this year, the church took up some special offerings specifically for the rent of the meeting place. This extra money has enabled us to stay in the room in the YMCA for the time being. However, only one month since then has the regular giving been enough to cover the budget (including the rent), and one month it was well under the amount needed, so the money is going fast.

* Please pray for an improvement in the giving, and for wisdom from God about what is best to do about this need.

We have three groups of officers in the church: the deacons/deaconesses, led by myself as elder (with other elders when we have had men qualified), and the officers of the Faith Circle and Ambassadors groups that plan various fellowship activities. When the church was larger, we had a half dozen or more officers in each group. Usually we have elections for the church officers in January and for the other groups in February. For the last few years it has gotten progressively harder to find enough people able and willing to take on these responsibilities.

This year the Ambassadors came out the best, with three people willing to serve as officers, and two of last year's officers willing to help, even though they didn't want to continue in the official position. No-one was willing to accept nomination to serve as officer in the Faith Circle, but Karen, who is the adviser for the group, did manage to find four who are willing to do the work as long as they don't have to have the official position.

Several of the women who served as deaconesses last year are leaving Hong Kong this year. Rather than start with an almost new slate we decided to postpone this election. This will allow these women to continue to serve until they leave. Meanwhile, three women (two who are fairly new in our congregation but who had a good background of service in churches elsewhere) have been appointed as apprentice deaconesses to get experience in how our church does things. (Unfortunately, one of these recently lost her job and has had to return to the Philippines, though she hopes to find a new job and come back.) We hope they can be confirmed as full deaconesses by the church sometime after we get back from our trip to the U.S.

* Please pray for the leadership needs of the church. Pray for wisdom and guidance for those who have agreed to serve this year, that God will raise up others to help in these ministries, and that there will be good cooperation and harmony among all the leaders in the church.

Benjamin & Karen Rees, CROSS CULTURAL DISCIPLING MISSION

Address: 85 Broadway, Flat B, 5/F, Mei Foo Sun Chuen, Kowloon, Hong Kong.

Tel: (852) 2742-6484. (Fax by arrangement at the same number. Call first.)

E-mail: reeshk@netvigator.com or reesmission@GMail.com.

Forwarding Agent: Penny Graves, 3300 E. 13th, Joplin, MO. 64801-5825, U.S.A. Tel. (417) 659-8105. E-mail: pgraves@joplin.com