

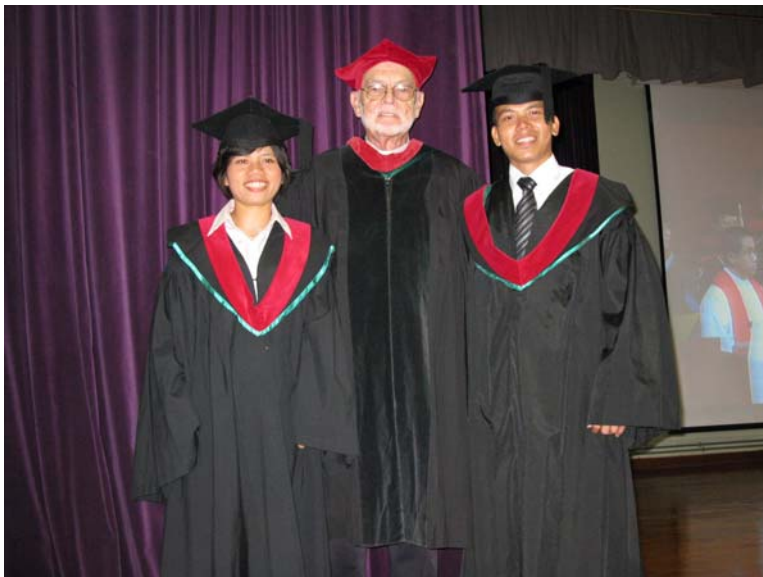
Report from Asia: Hong Kong

May 28 - June 7, 2011

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ELCA Global Mission Volunteer

I was met at the airport by my two Bataks, Ronald in Old Testament and Eleven in Homiletics and Theological Librarianship, ready to graduate. They are so appreciative and affectionate for all we have done for them. Ronald's mother and Eleven's 2 sisters came for the graduation ceremony having taken their first plane ride ever. (See photo below.)



My apartment in the dormitory had just received a coat of varnish over everything the day before my arrival...you can imagine the smell. A plumbed flush toilet and working air conditioning helped. (C32 with humidity at high 80%).

I taught the Doctor of Ministry "Collegiality Seminar" for 5 days 9:30 AM until 4:30 PM. The idea of collegiality is a hard one for the Asian to grasp. They are very shy about critiquing each other and must at all times "save face." Some of my subjects were: Conflict Management, Pastoral Care, Homiletics, Passive Congregations, and Leadership styles. There were one lay and 7 clergy; this included a student from Myanmar, one from Viet Nam and the remainder from Hong Kong. (See photo below.)



I ate in the dining hall with the international students. The menu is a bowl of rice, a dried fish, some vegetables and sometimes chicken or pork, bones included. In the early mornings in my varnish-permeated room I drink coffee and eat Dragon Heart fruit and some oats enlarged with hot water...and always peanut butter.

Sunday was graduation held at the very large Shamshuipo Kowloon church. I marched with the faculty and watched my 3 Bataks graduate. Others included: Bachelor of Theology 13; Master of Arts 11; Master of Divinity 28; Master of Theology 10; Doctor of Theology 5; Doctor of Ministry 6. In addition there were about 25 graduates from night school awarded their diplomas earlier in the day.

After the ceremony about 25 of us ate together in a Chinese restaurant. Many speeches were made as is the Batak custom.

On Monday I met long time student and friend, Karen Tai, for lunch. We brought her to John Muir hospital in East County for her Clinical Pastoral Education some years ago. In the evening I met Mona Lau, a nurse who had received her M.Div. and was already serving in Tibet working in an orphanage full of abandoned Cerebral Palsy children. Joining us at King Ludwig's Beer Hall was another former student now serving as chaplain in a local High School, Stella Ng. They both consider me their spiritual father and we have been close for several years. They didn't want to say a final farewell and escorted me on the train, one on each side, and then holding hands to the bottom of the mountain where we parted when I got in the taxi up to the seminary..

On Tuesday, I packed up my clothes and books and headed for the airport accompanied by Eleven and Ronald. Realizing this may be the last time we meet brought tears in both old and young eyes.

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