

Report from Hong Kong, June 2009

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After a nice gathering of our family in Boca Raton, Florida, for grandson Jacob's wedding, I flew to Hong Kong to take part in graduation and then teach a Doctor of Ministry seminar on Collegiality.

At the graduation two special graduates were Dr. Dewi Sinaga, the first female pastor Doctor of Theology in the 3 million + HKBP church in Indonesia, and Tio Sihombing, a graduate of the Balige Deaconess School there who received her Master of Divinity.

Dewi will return to the Batak seminary in Sumatra to continue teaching New Testament. Tio will return to the Deaconess school to teach Diaconal Ministry. I served as her advisor and Carol and I and some of our friends supported both of the women through the *Friends of LTS: USA & Canada*.

In addition to the part-time night students graduating from our Lutheran Seminary up on Tao Fong Shan mountain, the following were awarded their degrees: 3 English Diploma; 1 Diploma in Theological Studies; 1 Graduate Diploma; 2 Bachelor of Christian Education; 17 Bachelor of Theology; 16 Master of Arts (Theology); 24 Master of Divinity; 10 Master of Sacred Theology; 4 Master of Theology; 4 Doctor of Ministry; 3 Doctor of Theology.

The 5-day D.Min. seminar went from 9 until 5 each day and took all the strength I had! There were 16 students from the countries of: Viet Nam, Laos, Nepal, Mainland China, Hong Kong, Thailand, Myanmar and Cambodia (below). On Monday we looked at Pastoral leadership; on Tuesday, Congregations; on Wednesday, Ministry; on Thursday, Homiletics and on Friday, Stewardship.



I stayed in a tiny apartment on the mountain and climbed the 121 steps (it seems like they add more each year) up the mountain for class and lunch that was provided by the school. For breakfast and supper I was on my own. The large container of peanut butter I brought with me was a lifesaver!

Between class and sleep time, former students kept me occupied with their visits and calls.

Each year this seminary receives from 8 to 11 Ph.D. students from Mainland China. Some are believers, but many are not. They come here to do research for their dissertations. Years ago when we started this program, a young woman who called herself Crystal and whose name is Li Dan arrived. I helped her with her research and she trusted me. Eventually she was baptized in the Beijing church a Sunday that Condi Rice attended. This week after receiving her M.Div., Li Dan was installed as pastor in a new ministry for Mandarin speaking people in Hong Kong.

Gao Shen also came years ago as a non-believer. She and I established a close relationship. She learned of the Christian faith and was secretly baptized so as not to lose her scholarship from the Mainland government. Friday evening when I was picking up some developed film, a young woman ran to me throwing her arms around my neck and calling out "Grandpa!" It was Gao Shen. She had just come from Chinese University in the New Territories where she interviewed for a position as Professor of Christianity.

Gao Shen is the girl I wrote about some years ago when she sang in the LTS choir concert. She wore a white choir robe for the first time and while whirling around said to me, "Look grandpa, I am now an angel!"

The Hong Kong government has closed all day care, kindergarten, primary and secondary schools for two weeks because of the swine flu scare. That week they announced 49 cases...most not very serious. But because of the previous SARS epidemic they are gun-shy.

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