

Prayer Letter

February 2009

My dear friends,

This letter comes with my love for you and to thank you for your faithfulness in prayer for our work in Thailand. I would like to begin by wishing you a happy New Year. I pray that it will be a year filled with the blessings of God. I apologise for not writing a prayer letter for a long time! I do write a monthly update which I send by e-mail each month and, I think for me, this has kind of replaced a regular prayer letter. However, at the end of 2008 I'm writing to share my news...

A milestone...

I have recently passed one of the milestones in my life! The milestone I am referring to is my 60th birthday. Many people choose to forget their 60th birthday and let it pass unnoticed. However, some people opt to celebrate their special birthday. I chose to celebrate mine in style so that I would have a day to remember for a long time.

My actual birthday is 25 November but I decided to throw a party for my Karen friends in Chiang Mai and some ex-pat friends on Saturday 22 November. (I purposely chose Saturday because I knew many of my friends would be free to come at the weekend). One of the best ways to bless the Karen is to feed them a delicious meal. We had some wonderful food and my friends and I ate together by the church here at the Bible school. Some sat at table while others picnicked on the grass.

After the meal we all went to the church to give thanks to God for the blessings I have received over the past 60 years. I was so blessed as the Karen Bible School students sang for me. One of their songs was based on 1 Sam 2: 30: "Those who honour me, I will honour". This song really touched my heart because my heart's desire has always been for my life to give honour to God. Thra Sunny, the General Secretary of the KBC, encouraged us all by saying that the very best thing anyone could do was to offer their life into God's hands and let him use their life to bless others. He said that I had done just that and that many Karens had been blessed through my life! I was really moved by these words. At the end of the service some of my Karen friends and ex-pat friends gathered around me and laid their hands on me and prayed. The prayers were prayers of thanksgiving for all the blessings I have received and prayers for God's guidance and leading for the days that lie ahead.



You cannot have a birthday party without cake. After the service in the church we all walked down to the big meeting hall in the Bible school to enjoy a piece of cake. Quite a few friends had made cakes for me, so there was cake for the 150 friends who came to celebrate with me. What a wonderful day! It's a day I will treasure for a long time.

Dedication of the Golden Jubilee building

My birthday celebration was followed by an even bigger celebration. On 5 December 2008 over 700 Karens travelled from their mountain villages to Chiang Mai to celebrate 50 years of work among the women of the Karen and to dedicate the Karen Women's Jubilee Building to the glory of God. For many years the Karen women have had a dream that they would have their own building. Their dream became a reality of 5 December.

The Karens gave me the honour of speaking during their worship service to dedicate the Jubilee Building. The title of my address was "Do you believe in miracles?" As I started to speak I asked the people gathered "Do you believe in miracles?" and they answered with a resounding "Yes." It has been an amazing experience to be part of the building experience. Yuleybay and I have had the privilege of seeing our Karen women dedicate themselves to raise money for this project. Some gave gifts of money but some did not have any ready cash to give. Therefore, whenever we went to visit the women's groups we gave the women the opportunity to give whatever they had. We were never disappointed! Every time we returned to Chiang Mai our vehicle was full of the gifts the women had given. We received gifts of rice, pumpkins, marrows, beans, cabbages, onions, garlicks, chillies, bananas, papayas, weaving products, brooms and even a live chicken! Sometimes we could not

fit everything into the back of our vehicle. The Karen women would joke and say “Your four wheel drive truck is not big enough, you need a six wheel or ten wheel truck.”

The gifts our Karen women gave realised BT 1,728,057. This for me is an amazing achievement. Moreover, the news of the Karen women’s giving travelled around the world. When our friends in the UK, Sweden, Japan and the USA heard about the women giving rice, vegetable etc, their hearts were touched and they also wanted to give. We did not ask for gifts. Instead our friends sent gifts to us and their giving has matched the giving of the Karen women. In total we have raised BT 3,573,276 and this sum has paid for the construction costs of the Jubilee Building.

Therefore, on the day we dedicated the building we saw a miracle before our very eyes. When I was preparing my address the Lord brought to my mind the story of the feeding of the 5,000. In John’s gospel we read of a small boy giving five loaves into Jesus’ hands. He gave everything he had into Jesus’ hands and Jesus used his gifts to bless many people. It seems to me that the women of the Karen and their families have been giving whatever they have into Jesus’ hands. Jesus has been pleased with their gifts and has blessed them abundantly. Their giving caused others to give and, therefore, by working together, the Jubilee Building could be built.

Now we have our own building and we want this building to be used for God’s glory. The building is three storeys high and is a multi-purpose building. It will be used for our women’s office and all our administration work will be done there. The Tabitha Handicraft shop is in the building and we will be able to sell the beautiful weaving products that our Karen women have made. There are spacious rooms for holding seminars. The Tabitha Handicraft Project will be planning to hold seminars in weaving, product development and natural dyeing and the women’s department will hold women’s leadership training seminars and the Bible camps too. We have a kitchen, a dining room and good bathrooms and toilets. It is a really beautiful building.

On the day that we dedicated the Jubilee Building it was a great joy for me to see the faces of our Karen women as they walked around the building. Their eyes shone and lovely smiles lit their faces. They were all so proud of the building. We all praised God together and said, “The Lord has done great things for us and we are filled with joy” (Psalm 126: 3)

In the next few weeks we will be buying furniture for the building. We have enough money to buy the essential things we need for the building and will buy other things when more money is given. So, I ask you to praise God with me for the provision of the Jubilee Building. Once again I would like to take the opportunity to thank you all for the gifts you gave towards the Jubilee Building.

Asian Baptist Women’s Union Assembly in Kolkata

In January 2009, a group of us will travel to Kolkata for the ABWU Assembly. The assembly will be held from 7 to 12 January. Women will be travelling from all over Asia to attend this assembly and we are looking forward to being with them. Five Karen women will be attending the Assembly and Emi Osato and I will accompany them. The theme of the Assembly is “Rejoice, rejoice, reach out” (Phil 4: 4) Please pray for us as we travel and pray for God’s blessing on all the meetings. We are all looking forward to times of fellowship and the opportunity to learn many new things.

My return to the UK

This is a big year for me as, at the end of May, I will be returning to the UK to retire at 60! I have been working with BMS World Mission since 1975 and it does not seem possible that 33-plus years have passed by! I would ask you to cover me with your prayers as I say all my goodbyes here. It is going to be so hard to leave the Karen people as I love them so much and really enjoy working with them. Please remember Yuleybay and our ten Karen women’s workers in your prayers. They will be carrying on working amongst our Karen Women. They are a wonderful group of women and I am confident that the Lord will use them to do great things.

We are now looking for a Karen national co-worker to work with Yuleybay. I believe that this is the way ahead. Please pray that the Lord will lead us to the right person. We are very grateful that BMS is helping us to support this new worker for the next three years. It is good that the Karen women and BMS can work together in this way.

Please also pray for me as I sort through things in my house in Chiang Mai. I have lived in the same house for 16 years so I have a lot of things to sort out. I will bring some things home but I will also be giving a lot of things away. As I think about doing this it is good to hold on to the truth that, when everything is changing, God does not change. The Lord has been so faithful to me over the past 30-plus years and I know he will continue to lead and guide me into the future. I wonder what he has for me to do in the UK. I am reminded of his promise in Jeremiah 29: 11: “For I know the plans I have for you” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future”. This is the promise I will hold onto. Thank you for being so faithful in praying for me and my work amongst the Karen.

I shall look forward to hearing from you. I will close with a blessing:
*“Abide in the love of the Father who upholds you,
Abide in the peace of the Son who enfolds you,
Abide in the power of the Spirit who sustains you”*

Love and every blessing, Jacqui