



Taiwan Times

Byron and Melissa Manners Newsletter

Blog: <http://taiwantimesblog.wordpress.com>

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Greetings again from Taiwan. Since our last newsletter, we have been busy with end-of-the-year activities. This time lasts longer on this side of the world because of Lunar New Year. Our first big activity was a joint outdoor service with four other churches on December 8. This helps our churches in Taiwan work together and also provides some of the finances for our national organization. After the service we ate a meal together. This has been a cold winter, so perhaps we should have done this in November.



The North Kaohsiung church went all-out for Christmas. One of our men had an idea for a program, and the assistant pastor wrote and rewrote the program until he was satisfied. The people reached out and invited others to come. Between the adults and children we had around seventy, which is more than full for our sanctuary. A student and I started with a dialogue about why we celebrate Christmas. It was probably the most extensive time I have spoken in Chinese in the church. The two worship leaders went back and forth telling the Christmas story between songs. Then I gave a short evangelical message from the first chapter of the Gospel of John. At the end Missy and the children had a birthday cake for Jesus. After the program we had a love meal together. I felt it was one of the best Christmas celebrations we have had.



Christmas day is not a holiday in Taiwan. However, that evening instead of having prayer meeting, we went to one of the big hospitals, caroled, and passed out literature and care bags. One man in our church is the head of the ophthalmology department. His wife is the head Christian chaplain. Our group visited four wards on one floor, while other groups covered the other wards.



January 12 was another big day. I picked Bradley Halter up at the high-speed rail station, and we made our way to the Qi-Jin church for my annual visit. Pastor Lee is Korean, and we agreed to trade pulpits that morning. I heard he did a great job preaching. Since he has an accent, my church's response to him set my mind at ease. I had a good visit with his church. It was almost full, and I met new people who were not there last year. One great characteristic of Korean Christians is they know how to pray, and it is obvious the Lord is blessing the Lees in their ministry.

That afternoon it was back to my church for our annual denominational meeting, which I had to chair for the first time. I challenged the people to try to reach out in new ways for Jesus this year. In the business meeting there were no elections, just a financial report made. A man in our church named Stanley takes care of that side of things, as well as filing the legal paperwork. We have to keep up with these things because Nathanael Bundy's visa is under this organization. We were a little pressed for time as our building was being bug-bombed that afternoon, but we finished up as they were announcing we needed to leave the building.



One of the announcements we made at the meeting was that we are starting an annual pastors' retreat. Before Pastor Hong passed away, he was quite concerned that the national organization care for the pastors and their wives. We had one meeting up north before Covid, but it did not continue. This year the four pastors in the south plus the pastor at the independent church that cooperates with us went outside our city for two half-days. Missy and I were just getting better from sickness, and Peter at Kaohsiung church could not come due to sickness in his family. Another pastor's wife had to take care of an in-law. In spite of all the problems, it was a profitable time. We had a meal together at a

nice restaurant. That helped prepare the atmosphere for a good devotional and discussion time back at the hotel. Some things came up that a couple of pastors were struggling with. By discussing them now, we perhaps prevented big problems down the road. Just like in the US, pastoring here is becoming more and more challenging.

On January 21 we had a 6.4 shallow earthquake north of us, the kind that can be frightening. We have had a lot of big aftershocks, so it has been a struggle to relax and rest sometimes. We had no damage locally, but our apartment has been shaken good several times. This has been an "exciting" year so far!



Thank you for your prayers,
Byron & Missy Manners