

August 8, 2013

Dear Praying Friends,

Thank you for your continuing prayers for our family, our church, and our ministry. Yesterday was the first day of "Ghost Month" here in Taiwan, which is the seventh month on the traditional Chinese lunar calendar. Throughout the day, the overpowering smell of incense and of burning offerings filled the air in our neighborhood, while people performed their baibai (worship) in the doorways of their homes. Taiwanese believe that their departed ancestors are free to roam the earth during this month, so they set out tables of food, drink, cigarettes, and smoking incense, and they burn paper "hell" money in burn pots as a sacrifice to the spirits. The most important observance will be held on the 15<sup>th</sup> lunar day. During this religious holiday called "the Feast of the Hungry Ghosts," extended families will gather to worship at the family god-shelf and burn paper money for the ancestors to spend in the afterlife. Although Taiwan is a modern, secular society, traditional religion is still widely practiced, as the odor of incense yesterday reminded me.

It also reminded me that we are living and working in a Satanically dominated environment. It just "so happened" that when Marla taught the ladies' meeting yesterday, her topic (the next lesson in order in the textbook) was the healing of the demoniac of Gadara, which dealt with demons and demonology. "We wrestle not with flesh and blood." Please pray that God would protect Marla and I personally from Satanic temptation, and that he would give us spiritual strength and dependence to accomplish God's work here behind enemy lines.

We've been disappointed in our attempts to organize the church legally with the government. Just as we were about to submit our paperwork, a political reorganization that combined our county and city jurisdictions redefined the rules, so that we no longer meet the criteria for eligibility. At present we are stymied. The only other possibility that remains to us is to purchase property; this would allow us to obtain a legal identity. Although this is one of our long-term goals, it is not something that will happen soon. At present, we are still negotiating with our landlord to renew our lease without too big of an increase in price. Pray for the Lord to move his heart to be favorable to our requests.



In May we felt the need to stop our children's church ministry for reorganization. Our co-worker, Dolly Wong, is heading a training program for all those interested in participating. Pray that God would raise up committed leaders, workers, and helpers from the congregation for this strategic ministry.

Marla and I spent two weeks in June in Singapore and Malaysia speaking for two church family camps. One of the churches in which we ministered has been a long-time financial

“Good news from a far country” Prov 25:25

supporter and prayer partner of our ministry. Matt preached for the Chinese speaking congregations and Marla taught the children.

In June we held our first church wedding. Both bride and groom are members of our congregation. Most weddings in Taiwan are civil weddings; the only real "event" is the traditional wedding feast. However, in this case the couple desired a Christian wedding in which the gospel could be clearly presented to unsaved family and friends. The pastoral message communicated the gospel, and both bride and groom shared public testimonies of salvation during the course of the ceremony.



We led a group of 21 teens and leaders for a combined youth camp during July, which was held in a mountain setting about an hour's drive from Kaohsiung. Seven other fundamental Baptist churches from around the island also participated. About five of those who attended from our church did not have any previous contact with our ministry. Matt preached daily in the morning sessions and the son of a missionary colleague, a rising senior in Bible College, spoke to the teens in the evening. We were disappointed that there were no salvation decisions or other important decisions during the week. However, one of the new teens from our church did make a profession of faith the next weekend during a follow-up activity. Please pray that we would be able to disciple him and draw him into the life of the church.



The next event on our calendar is VBS, which will be held August 19-23. Pray that we would draw in new children from the community and that we would be successful in making contacts with new families. One of the workers in our congregation is organizing the VBS program.

We've had a few more individuals receive baptism since our last letter. Marla and I also continue to conduct various personal Bible studies and discipleship studies with new believers and unbelievers. Pray that these would bring forth fruit. We've also been encouraged that some of our more mature people are beginning to hold Bible studies of their own with both believers and unbelievers. Finally, when the Bible Institute starts up in the fall, both Marla and I will be teaching classes.

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BJU is cancelling its Doctor of Pastoral Theology program; this news put Matt's continuing education into question. However, the school has transferred him with no loss of credit into their developing online M.Div. program. This will allow him to continue his studies from home. With our busy schedule, this may prove to be a challenge! Pray for grace and wisdom as he starts online classes in September. Lord willing, Sam Hung who is our pastoral trainee and church assistant will also be taking courses online as well.

Our children in the US continue working their summer jobs at BJU. They recently took a ten-day vacation and drove up to their grandmother's house in Michigan. That was their first long road trip alone. We thank the Lord for safety during their travels. They are now back on campus working their summer jobs till school begins in early September.

Please pray for Marla's mother who is still not progressing in her recovery from back surgery last year. She is mostly bedridden. Pray that a new course of therapy and treatment will improve her condition so that she can regain mobility. Pray also for her spiritual encouragement. Matt's father (age 93) was just released from a short stay in the hospital. Being so far away from both children and parents in their times of need is proving to be new trial for us.

Thank you for remembering us in prayer. Please bring all of the above items before the throne of God on our behalf. We need your prayers and God's provisions.

In Christ,

Matt & Marla Hanna (Luke, Rose, and Beth)