

A letter from John McCall in Taiwan

September 12, 2008

The joy in the journey

Dear Friends,

Because of family concerns, I have recently decided to return to the United States next January, at the end of this term. It has not been an easy decision, but one which I know is in God's will. When I returned to Taiwan from the United States in August, I shared the news with my friends and co-workers here. Since returning I have had the opportunity to be with many of my former students who are now serving as pastors, and it has been a tremendous encouragement to see their faithfulness in ministry. While it will be sad to leave this land, which I love, it gives me great hope to know that every day they are serving Jesus Christ in a variety of different settings around this island.



Eating fish with aboriginal pastors.

Two weeks ago, a number of my aboriginal students invited me to a village where we had a cookout on the side of a river. Two of the aboriginal men speared fish for our lunch. That evening they took me to a restaurant where they all shared what God was doing in their lives. It was a joy for me to see that despite the challenges they face in mountain and city churches, they are still working hard to be the light and salt of Christ. Their salaries are often very low, and there are a number of societal problems, but these young pastors are seeking to lead their church members and communities into the fullness of life which Christ offers.

decided to meet in four years to share together their experiences of ministry. We met at my home, and each person had an opportunity to share their joys and struggles in their families, in their ministries, and in their lives. It was a privilege for me to hear them reflect together on the ways they had grown in the good days and in the bad days.

Photo of John McCall with six other people, five of them young adults and one a child perched on the shoulders of a young man.

One of the students, Ju-tung, is serving a small church with his wife. He is a gifted preacher and is deeply reflective. The church only has three elders, and they don't like to spend money. Every time this pastor has a new idea for service, the elders immediately say that there is no money. In spite of this negative environment, Ju-tung and his wife have made the commitment to continue at this church. The Sunday school and youth group are both growing, and there is a renewed connection

This past week the former students in one of my preaching seminars came back for a retreat. When they were students, they



Some of the former students from my preaching class meet four years later for a retreat. (On the far right is the pastor serving at the east coast church. Next to him is the evangelist whose church is not yet able to ordain him.)

between the church and the town folks. A church in the capital city of Taipei asked this couple to come to their church, but they politely declined saying that they are called at this time to nurture the folks in this small east coast town.

Another student has passed his exams to be ordained, but his church only has 21 members. In order to be ordained, a church must have at least 30 members. A larger church asked him to come and be ordained in their church as their pastor, but he also declined. He said to me, "It's not about me and my ordination. It's about the folks in this church." He is working hard with his church members to continue to build the church. Children and youth are now coming, and people are serving with joy.

It is these small signs that give me hope for the church in this land. In my 13 years of service in Taiwan, I have seen the kingdom of God breaking out in small ways. I have seen the powerless do mighty things in God's name. I have seen my former students become servants of the Servant Jesus Christ.

I am a different person because of what I have learned in this land. It has been a privilege to walk with my fellow Taiwanese and to learn from them. I will also remain eternally grateful for your support over these years. I often share with the Taiwanese church that I have been able to be their colleague in ministry because you all have been my colleagues in ministry. Thank you for your faithful prayers and financial support!

Next spring I will be on interpretation assignment in the United States. I will also be seeking to discern where God is calling me to serve next. The PC(USA) will appoint a couple, Jonathan and Emily Seitz, to teach at our seminary beginning next fall. It would be wonderful if you could continue your support by becoming partners with the Seitz family.

Gratefully,

John McCall

The 2008 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study, p. 108