

Of Things Aud and New

Glimpses of Grace in Taiwan

Going the Distance, Going for the Goal

One late afternoon, I was feeling restless. The solitary nature of casting vision about a small, faraway country was weighing on me a bit, so I decided to go on a walk to talk things over with God before diving into the practical details of raising support. "Please give me a friend right here in New Haven who has a particular concern for Taiwan," I prayed.

When I returned, I was stunned to find an email in my inbox from a Taiwanese woman I'd never met. She was living in New Haven and had heard about my plans to go to Taiwan during a chance visit to my former church, located

nearly an hour away. "I would really like to get to know you more and see what you will be doing in Taiwan," she wrote.



Old friends at a partnership lunch in Chicago

As I see God going out of His way to provide companions that will enable me to go, I am conscious of the fact that I am running a marathon, not a

sprint. It sobers me that 2 out of 3 missionaries never return to the field after their first term of service. Now, there are wise, God-given reasons that missionaries choose not to return. But because lasting fruit usually takes years of cultivation, I hope to stay in Taiwan for the long haul. To do this, a team of partners who share God's vision and love for the people they are trying to reach is essential.

In this newsletter, allow me to invite you deeper into this journey by giving you a better overview of this work. Turn the page and read on...

Please Pray:

- For my own **growth in prayer and maturity** throughout this year of preparation for life in Taiwan.
- For a **strong base of prayer support**.
- For **100% of my financial support** to come in **by May 2009**.
- For strong, meaningful **partnerships with churches** in the US.

Banner Photo: My grandparents' grapefruit tree in bloom last winter. See my last newsletter (available online) for the story.

Visit my new website: www.audreylintaiwan.com

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"Huh...aren't you in Taiwan now?" (And Other Frequently Asked Questions)

- A:** Not yet. By OMF policy, I cannot leave for Taiwan until I have raised 100% of my financial support.
- Q:** When are you leaving?
- A:** I'm scheduled to leave in May, 2009, provided that I have all my financial support by then.
- Q:** Isn't this a long time?
- A:** This is the average in OMF. Also, we feel it's important to take time to build a **strong prayer team** that truly shares the vision. I'll need this to persevere and bear fruit.
- Q:** How much do you need?
- A:** \$35,093 per year.
- Q:** Can I give online or set up automatic deductions from my bank account?
- A:** Absolutely! Check out my website at www.audreylintaiwan.com.

Why Taiwan?

In my last newsletter, I recounted how God used a dream to confirm that He is calling me to go to Taiwan. However, the dream was simply confirmation of a decision that I had made after much consideration and prayer. There are compelling reasons that led me to choose this course before the dream was fulfilled. Here are a few:

Taiwan is unreached, especially the working class majority. Although the gospel has made some headway among the middle class and the elite, the working class is largely unreached. Less than 0.5% of the working class are Christians, yet most Christian ministries work among the middle and upper classes. Since Taiwan as a whole is less than 3% Christian, the opportunities for working class folk to hear the gospel are already few, even if you ignore the deep divisions that separate working class people from their more privileged neighbors (I will write more on this in coming updates). In Taiwan, where 2/3 of the population is working class, why should socio-economic status determine access to the gospel?

Few missionaries go to Taiwan. Its Westernized, modern exterior gives it less exotic appeal, and somehow gives people the impression that the gospel is prevalent there. In the last 7 years, OMF Taiwan has only had one new long-term worker.

Taiwan is strategic. Taiwan, a center for international trade, is also a regional transit point for illegal drugs and a key player in supply and demand of the region's human trafficking. Taiwan's powerful, wealthy Buddhist organizations have also given it a leading role in the spread of Buddhism, bankrolling Buddhist organizations around the world. If the gospel were to bring change in these areas of need, it would have international ripple-effects.

I can fly under the radar in Taiwan better than anywhere else. Being of Taiwanese descent helps me to connect more quickly to people in Taiwan because of my cross-cultural upbringing, and because I don't look like a foreigner. I also grew up speaking Taiwanese, the heart language of the working class, who prefer it over Mandarin, which is the language of the schools.

Why Wanhua?

Wanhua (pronounced "ONE-hwa"), is the name of the neighborhood that I'm moving to. When I started feeling that God might be calling me to Taiwan, Wanhua was the place that caught my attention above all.



A hard-working bamboo seller, one of Taiwan's working class majority.

I want to serve and live with the materially poor and marginalized. Over the past ten years, God has been challenging me to live a life that is interconnected with my neighbors who are poor by socio-economic standards. Some of these relationships came through working in formal ministries over the years—coordinating the work among the homeless at my church on Chicago's south side, interning on the pastoral care team at a health clinic in another inner-city neighborhood of Chicago, and working at a small community health organization based in a low-income housing facility in New Haven. Other relationships have simply grown organically, through friends or acquaintances in the neighborhoods I lived in. Some of my richest joys and most challenging growth experiences have come out of these friendships. But not only do I value relationships with the materially poor, but I believe that we can't be neighbors with the poor without also loving them in a way that includes getting invested in their physical well-being (James 2:16).

Wanhua means "ten-thousand glories," an ironic name for a neighborhood that has



A "betelnet girl" hawking her wares. Betelnut is a mild narcotic popular among working class men.

gained notoriety for being the place where the "dregs of society" hang out. It is a low-income neighborhood of Taipei that is known for its gangs, prostitution, homelessness, crime and poverty. But unlike many US inner-city areas, there aren't storefront churches on every corner; in fact, it is Taipei's center for temple worship and a place where the gospel is most inaccessible.

There is a strong base in Wanhua for relationships and community development. In 1991, OMF established a church in the neighborhood that was especially geared towards the needs of the area's homeless. Over the years, the church has become a strong presence in the neighborhood, and several years ago, OMF turned "The Spring," as the church is called, over to Taiwanese leadership. The church has been a base of support for work in the community and a natural network for new relationships there. I can't say enough about how priceless it is to have co-workers who are loved and respected in Wanhua through more than a decade of living and serving there.

A door opened in Wanhua for me to step through. Because The Spring is now led by Taiwanese, one of the OMF-ers who had been leading the church was freed to begin reaching out to the area's prostitutes. She was praying for a co-worker to join her (OMF forbids her to go alone for safety reasons), and it was just at that time that I began inquiring about OMF's work in Taiwan.

The team in Wanhua is also envisioning the development of a family center to reach the neighborhood's families, a natural extension of the work they have been doing with at-risk kids. They hope to address the huge needs for counseling, training, and mentoring that the families face. They have been praying for workers to join the team so that this can be made possible.

I think I could ramble a long time about reasons I'm going to Taiwan, but besides a sense that God is leading me in this, perhaps what has most compelled me are the people I have met there and come to love. I'll add these stories to my website in coming months. I hope you'll journey and pray with me... I could use the company. ©