

Historical Summary of the Christian Movement in Nan Province

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Introduction (2012)

In about 1990, the Office of History of the Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT), of which I was the head, undertook an ambitious study of the history of all of the churches and organized worshipping communities (called *muad*) of the CCT's Fifth District, Nan. My colleagues, Ach. Prasit Pongudom and Ach. Kummool Chinawong, and I conducted hundreds of interviews with members of every church and *muad* in the district, and we did extensive research into the documentary history of the district. For over two years we visited the Nan almost monthly. Our goal was to produce a body of historical knowledge that would help this remote and almost peripheral district of the CCT discover both its past and a vision for the future.

In the course of our research, the Office of History produced a good set of studies of the history of the Nan churches that includes two books written by Ach. Kummool on the histories of two local churches, a "memorial volume" history of a third congregation also written by Ach. Kummool, a history of the whole district written by Ach. Prasit, and a major report to the district based in part on this English-language draft that I completed in November 1992. Ach. Kummool and I also submitted an article to the Fifth International Conference in Thai Studies, London, July 1993, entitled, "Religion and Community Formation in Northern Thailand: The Case of Christianity in Nan Province," a revised version of which is now in HeRB 4.

Looking back on the experience of the years that we worked with the churches of Nan, I have a couple of lasting impressions. One impression is of the gracious way in which local church folks received us and the open, frank way they shared their stories with us. However little we achieved on the grand scale mentioned above, we did have a ministry especially to the older people in the district. We showed an attentive interest in their memories that almost no one else ever showed. They sometimes told us things we probably shouldn't have been told. I have poignant memories of sitting on floors of simple, furniture-less homes, notebook on knee and pen in hand, immersed deep in the memories of elderly Christians hungry to tell their stories. Our conscious philosophy in the Office of History was that the *chao ban* (local folks) in the churches were our instructors and we, with our fancy degrees and book learning, were their students. It was a fruitful, meaningful relationship.

The second impression that I have now is how incredibly powerful the past is over the present. As will be seen below, the Fifth District in 1992 was still operating on fundamental principles laid down by the old Nan Station of the Laos Mission (a.k.a. North Siam Mission and then American Presbyterian Mission in Siam) almost a century previously. It still wrestled with the same basic problems facing the station many decades before. And the officers and local church leaders in the district showed no inclination to try to change the basic way the district conducted its life based on the old-time missionary model. I remember vividly witnessing the work of an enthusiastic new-time Presbyterian missionary who was just leaving the district as our team began our research-and thinking to myself how little things change. His enthusiasm and his approach, which seemed so fresh and new at the time, simply replicated the forms of the past and were, finally, doomed to a limited, almost ephemeral success that did not address fundamental issues in an effective way.

The purpose of this "historical essay," then, is to provide interested readers with what amounts to a snapshot of the historical experiences of the CCT churches of Nan Province. I trust that those who are looking for citations and references will forgive the lack of them here. This essay was originally written twenty years ago for other purposes than academic ones and other audiences than the modest community of researchers interested in northern Thai church history. In fact, this relatively brief foray into local church history in Thailand is a piece with the other historical works found on this website. My research experience with the Nan churches, in fact, had an influence on my doctoral dissertation, which followed this essay by about ten years.

As always, I trust it will be useful to visitors to this website; and, as always, you are invited to Enjoy!

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Lowville, New York
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Introduction (1992)

The history of the Christian movement in Nan Province from 1895 down to the present reveals a number of significant patterns for understanding the present situation of the CCT's Fifth District, Nan, and the more general situation of the CCT's churches in the North. The basic contemporary structures and patterns of action of the Fifth District grew out of policy decisions made prior to 1920, which structures and patterns have been followed by succeeding generations. Recent attempts to change the structure have failed to do so. That structure is a centralized one based on the assumption, never proven or even tested, that the churches and *muad* (organized worshipping communities) of the Fifth District are unable to support their own system of viable local leadership and local programs, particularly Christian education. Missionary leadership in the first 25 years, thus, envisioned a centralized structure with a strong church, schools, and a hospital in Nan City. It did not envision a system of strong local churches and worshipping communities.

The purpose of this paper is to describe how Nan's centralized system came to be and how it has failed to provide a viable structure for carrying out church life and ministry in Nan Province. Summarized briefly, from 1895 until about 1908 the Nan Station experimented with two systems, a church-centered one and a station-centered one. For reasons of ideology, it chose the station-centered system. From 1909 until 1919 it fully developed that system and relied upon it from 1920 until World War II to continue its work and ministries. The founding of the Church of Christ in Siam (today's CCT) in 1934 did not change the system. After World War II, the CCT founded its national system of departments and other offices, but the basic structure of the Fifth District remained intact. Only CCT development work had any real impact on this district. Later attempts to put district workers into local situations did not substantially change the patterns of church life in the Fifth District, which remains in place even today.

It is the conclusion of the Office of History that meaningful change in the Fifth District requires, in the first place, a change in vision and attitude on the part of the district's leadership. Such change, secondly, requires replacing the station-centered, city-centered structure of the past and present with a church-centered structure which will put significant resources into the hands of the local churches. Such change, thirdly, requires support from the CCT, which means a significant change in the way in which the CCT relates to the Fifth District. To date, the CCT has had no conscious, coordinated policy of support for the Fifth District, and this lack of policy has seriously hampered the work of the district.

Chapter One: The First Era (1895-1908)

The first fourteen years of the history of the Christian movement in Nan Province set the direction for the whole course of that history. The period started with high hopes and the founding of the Nan Station by the Laos Mission, Presbyterian Church U.S.A., in 1895. It ended on a more tempered note in which hopeful and worrisome trends intermixed with each other. The Laos Mission established the Nan Station during a period of geographical and institutional expansion, which saw the establishment of a station in Lamphun in 1891, Phrae in 1893, and Chiang Rai in 1896. During the years from 1890 to 1900, however, the mission also faced serious staff and budget limitations. Nan Station, thus, from the first had to compete with the other stations and institutions of the Laos Mission for scarce resources, including personnel and funding. Being the most distant of all the stations, it never did compete very well particularly because the Laos Mission never gave a high priority to the work in Nan and at times even considered closing the station.

The missionaries in Nan constantly faced a number of problems, which limited their effectiveness. They were small in numbers. They lived in an isolated station that was hard to reach (five days travel from Phrae). They suffered a great deal of sickness, loneliness, and even mental depression. These pressures sometimes resulted in serious personal tension between missionaries. The mission sent mostly new or unwanted missionaries to Nan, many of whom stayed only a few years. Others had to take long sick-leave furloughs in the United States. Thus, the station had little continuity in its work and had trouble sustaining its programs and activities. Laos Mission policies and attitudes, furthermore, held that northern Thai Christians should not be given primary leadership roles. While the missionaries were themselves a small, weak band in Nan, they did not rely on indigenous resources to compensate for their own weaknesses.

In addition to all of these problems, the people of Nan showed little interest in Christianity and often acted afraid of the foreign missionaries. Even when friendly, they refused to consider changing religions. In some cases, local officials actively resisted Christianity, which meant that the people under their control dared not show an interest. In other cases, converts experienced repression and sometimes simply quit Christianity rather than face social isolation and persecution.

In spite of these early problems, the Nan Station founded an active, alive church in Nan in 1896. Part of the credit for the early success of the Nan Church goes to the leadership of Elder Kham Ai, a Lampang Christian who moved to Nan with the Peoples. During those times when there were no missionaries in Nan (for example, from November 1898 to April 1899), Kham Ai took charge of the station and church. The people of Nan liked and trusted him, and a number of converts approached him about Christianity because they were afraid to go to the missionaries. The Nan Church had other elders with strong leadership skills, particularly Elder Nan Panya, who worked as a medical assistant and latter as an evangelist, and Noi Pee. Thus, the quality of northern Thai leadership in the Nan Church provided a point of strength and of hope in these early years. The fact that the Nan Station emphasized worship and Christian education (including literacy education) also contributed to the Nan Church's early growth. At various times, the church under missionary leadership held Bible studies, learned how to sing hymns, memorized the Presbyterian Shorter Catechism, and had stewardship training. For several years, the congregation worshipped together every day and the missionaries often used worship for Christian educational purposes. The strong Christian education and worship life of the Nan church provided another point of strength and hope in its life.

The success of these early years took place while the missionaries still lived in simpler homes and had not built up a large structure of institutions and physical plant. Their programs were informal and sometimes held in the people's homes. Missionary leadership combined with capable northern Thai church leaders, thus,

created a strong church life in a congregation located close to the missionary compounds. This is not to say the life of the Nan Church was without problems. In fact, there were many problems including numerous behavioral problems by members. The missionaries sometimes had to discipline members and even expel some from the church. Christians also suffered persecution. Yet, overall, the Nan Church was a strong church, one in which at least one missionary believed the Spirit of God was moving.

The Nan Church in its early years had good northern Thai leaders and an emphasis on worship and Christian education, all of which contributed to its strength. The Rev. Robert Irwin, a missionary in Nan from 1896 to 1900, also contributed to the creation of a strong congregation. Irwin was an innovative and controversial person who disagreed with the general missionary attitude about not trusting northern Thai church leadership. He believed the churches could lead themselves, and in his missionary work he emphasized the creation of strong local churches and leadership. Irwin instituted two creative measures aimed at strengthening local church life. He encouraged the Nan Church to organize its own day school under the guidance of a school committee responsible to the Session of the church. Irwin had two goals: to educate Christian children; and to train the Nan Church to self-reliance by giving it a practical experience in self-government. His plan for a church-related school revealed his general missionary strategy, which was to do everything to the strengthening and spreading of local churches. In other stations, the station itself ran the schools and generally excluded church leaders from exercising authority. Irwin was controversial because he always sought to give authority to the churches and their leaders.

Irwin, unlike any other missionary to serve in Nan up to World War II, had a practical vision for the church in Nan Province. Nan covered a large territory and travel was very difficult in those days. The missionaries could not adequately evangelize rural areas or care for rural Christian groups from Nan itself. Furthermore, missionary itineration was expensive at a time when the station had only limited funds. Irwin devised a plan for dealing with these problems by sending capable leaders to live in rural centers to create and lead churches. He actually placed elders in Muang Thoeng and Chiang Kham, which was originally under Nan, and at first his plan succeeded. But then the Laos Mission removed both Muang Thoeng and Chiang Kham from control of the Nan Station and put them under the Chiang Rai Station. [see KMN, pp. 46-47]. Confusion and controversy resulted. Even so, about 1900 Nan sent Kham Ai to live in Chiang Kham, and he succeeded in establishing a relatively strong Christian group there, thus suggesting that Irwin's plan could have succeeded if it had been consistently implemented in several localities for a number of years. First of all, he adapted his plan to the limitations of distances and funding. It was a practical plan adapted to the actual situation in Nan. Secondly, the plan solved the problem of creating a network of well-led churches. It did not emphasize evangelism but rather the building of Christian communities through evangelism and pastoral oversight. Thirdly, Irwin intended to locate adequate authority and resources for church life in the local churches rather than centralize authority and resources in Nan.

Irwin, thus, combined a vision for the church in Nan with practical wisdom concerning what to do to make the church strong. In later years, other missionaries in Nan had visions equally powerful to that of Irwin, but they were not visions for the church in Nan. Some sought a strong, impressive missionary presence. Others envisioned using Nan as a base to evangelize Luang Prabang. Still others envisioned a Christianized Nan Province. All of these visions presupposed a strong missionary base in Nan City itself. Only Irwin envisioned a system of well-lead, self-sufficient local churches. His vision was another point of strength and hope in the early years of the Nan Church and Station.

The nature of Christian service in Nan provided still another point of hope. The missionaries and the church provided healing and hope to people in need in the province. Although many people refused to use it, still missionary medicine (aided by northern Thai assistants) healed many people of physical suffering and introduced an important channel for the introduction of Western medicine into the province. The station and the church opened up new roles for women by providing them education, opportunities to exercise religious leadership, and eventually professional positions as teachers, nurses, and church workers. It also aided some who suffered intense persecution from being accused of causing demon possession, a few of whom found

liberation in conversion to Christianity. In fact, the Christian liberation from the power of animistic spirits led directly to the formation of the first rural Christian community in what is today Nan Province. In 1906 more than ten Christian families migrated from Nan to Muang Chung, up the river from Nan a few kilometers to occupy "spirit-infested" land vacated by the local people. They went at the request of local officials in the area. Christianity, thus, lifted burdens from people's lives and even provided new economic opportunities.

In spite of these points of real strength and hope, the problems facing the station still loomed large. In 1905, the Rev. C. H. Denman moved temporarily from Chiang Rai to Nan to help fill in because of a shortage of missionaries in Nan. He observed that the northern Thai leadership was not as good in Nan as it was in Chiang Rai. He was not sure if the leaders were just of a lower quality or not well trained. Since Nan did have a number of capable leaders, it was more likely that the problem was one of training. We have already seen that the missionaries faced many serious restrictions and problems in their work. Those limitations had a serious impact on all of their work, including their training of leaders. Peoples made this point in 1908 when he wrote that the mission was failing to do a good job in Nan. He discussed the health and other problems facing the small missionary force there, arguing that the station had lost missionaries, time, influence, and prestige in Nan over the first fourteen years of its history. This situation, he claimed, discouraged the local Christians. The station still waited for someone to take things in hand and teach, train, and deepen the faith of the Christian leadership in Nan. Some church leaders themselves complained about their lack of understanding and knowledge. Christianity, Peoples wrote, was still dark to them, and he openly admitted that the station was not doing its duty by those leaders. The station needed "men of power" to come to Nan as missionaries and get things moving.

Although the Nan Station began in the 1890s with a strong commitment to local church Christian education, it failed to sustain that commitment. The station was weak in the 1890s yet did a lot of Christian education work. After 1900 it was still weak and still did Christian education, but it did less. Why? The question of vision provides an important part of the answer. After Irwin left in 1900, missionary vision looked to the expansion of Christianity beyond Nan, and even more importantly, to the creation of a large, impressive, diversified mission station that would include a hospital and boarding schools as well as numerous large, well-built buildings. The achieving of this dream actually had little to do with the creation of a strong Christian movement, although the missionaries at times thought that it did.

Indicative of this lack of vision for the church in Nan was the missionary desire for well-established boarding schools instead of a small church-run school such as in Irwin's time. Kate Fleeson established the first missionary-run school, a temporary one with only 12 children, in 1897. In 1902, two years after Irwin left, the Rev. David Park started a small school, which was again a missionary school rather than a church school. In 1903 the Parks opened a boarding school for a brief period. And then again Park started another boarding school in 1907. In doing so, he wanted to build up the character of Christian children and to destroy the "superstitions" that still infected the converts, by educating their children away from those superstitions. Another missionary, writing in 1909, urged the need for a school on the basis that it would enable the Christians movement to have a wide influence over the province by providing Christian teachers for government schools. Dr. Peoples about this time lamented the sad physical condition of the school building and the struggling nature of the school. He wanted a large, impressive school. None of these concerns were directed towards creating strong churches.

The other missionaries, in sum, envisioned a station-centered rather than a church-centered Christian movement in Nan. They sought a strong center as a base from which to create strong institutions including churches. Irwin, on the other hand, envisioned a church-centered movement in which strong churches would be the base for the center. It is of the utmost importance to the history of Christianity in Nan to understand to understand that the vision of a station-centered Christian movement in Nan became the actual structure for that movement. In fact, the Fifth District of the Church of Christ in Thailand today still functions upon a station-centered model, one created by the majority vision of the missionaries who served in Nan between 1895 and 1908, excepting only Irwin.

By 1908, the Nan Station started to create a large, bureaucratic structure in the city of Nan. It lodged the great bulk of its resources, leadership as well as financial, in the center. This strong center, evidently, could maintain a strong local church also located in the center, the Nan City Church. But a trend already began to appear in the first decade of the station's life which cast a dark shadow across the life of Christian groups not located in the immediate vicinity of the station. From an early date the missionaries complained about the problems of trying to visit rural Christian groups. The groups were scattered. Travel conditions were extremely difficult. No visiting could be done during the long rainy season. Other work constantly intruded. From the beginning, the station at the center had great difficulty just visiting rural Christian groups, let alone providing the more constant attention and leadership the city church received. And even in the city, the indications are that by 1908 the station was not providing adequate Christian education to the church. The station, furthermore, tended to use its northern Thai leaders to augment its non-church station work. Dr. Peoples, in particular, employed several of the best leaders as his medical assistants. The station-centered vision thus drew leadership towards the center and invested it in activities not related to the formation and perpetuation of strong local churches.

The station did not entirely lose Irwin's vision, however. As we have seen it seen Kham Ai to lead the Christians at Chiang Kham, and he did an admirable job there. In 1906 and 1907 the station also engaged in training a few young men to return to their home villages as Christian leaders, and one missionary even termed such work the "ideal way" to do missionary work. Yet, by 1908 the station had Christian communities in only two rural communities in present-day Nan Province. Those were at Muang Chung (founded 1906) and Ban Sop Sai (founded 1908), from which grew the present-day Dhammaporn Church.

The picture that emerges from the first fourteen years is a mixed picture of hopeful and worrisome trends. On the hopeful side, the station had established a strong church in Nan and a relatively strong Christian group at Chiang Kham, had experimented with church-centered strategies, had provided hope and liberation for groups and individuals in need, and had shown that it had leadership capabilities among the converts. Worrisome trends included the vision of a station-centered Christian movement based on a small and weak missionary staff, improper utilization of leadership, an inability to minister to rural Christian groups, and a decline in Christian education and training. In the years after 1908, the hopeful trends would diminish and the worrisome ones grow.

Chapter Two: Decade of Expansion (1909-1919)

The station's situation in 1908 was desperate, and it even looked like the Laos Mission might close it down for a lack of missionary personnel to staff the station. In the next few years, the situation improved dramatically. At its 1908 annual meeting, the Laos Mission assigned the Rev. Hugh Taylor family, veteran missionaries from Lampang, to Nan. In 1909 it assigned the Rev. Marion B. Palmer family, a very promising younger family, to the station. The Taylors joined the Peoples in Nan in 1909 and the Palmers arrived in 1910. Miss Lucy Starling was assigned to Nan at the 1911 annual meeting.

The Rev. Hugh Taylor stands with Dr. Peoples as the two most important missionaries to work in Nan. Although they had a number of personality differences over the years, they shared a common vision for the Christian movement in Nan. Both men believed that evangelism was the heart of all missionary and church work. They both believed in the expansion of Christianity not only in Nan Province, but also its expansion to from Nan to surrounding territories in the Northeast and in Luang Prabang. They agreed that they could not entrust northern Thai church leadership with pastoral leadership, and they worked out a system of itinerating evangelist-pastors to work with the growing number of rural Christian groups. They also worked hard to promote the growth of Christian institutions in Nan, particularly the establishment of two boarding schools, to which schools they entrusted the Christian education of Christian children from all over the province. The Palmers, along with Miss Lucy Starling, played a key role in the actual development of the boarding schools.

It is difficult to date the founding of some of the small, early Christian communities associated with the Nan Station. For example, the group at Muang Chiang Khan under Nan Kanti Wong already existed by November 1909, with a membership of ten adults in three villages. The station established several other groups in the period from 1909 onwards. In that year, Nan Kruang from Muang Ouwan came into the city looking for someone to go and teach a group of potential converts there, and a small Christian group started under his leadership. Also in 1909, Nan Tommawong, from a Wiang Sa isolated family accused of demon possession, joined Dr. Peoples' evangelistic class, converted, and went back to teach his family about Christianity. The first baptisms of the Wiang Sa group took place in 1910, and that group became one of the station's strongest, to the extent that it started its own parochial school in 1917. The year 1910 also saw the baptism of four families at Muang Pan. By 1911 there were also groups at Ban Thalaw, under Boon Ta, and at Ban Samai, under Nan No, although it is not certain when these two groups were first started. In 1913, the mission had its first contacts with another group, one that became one of the strongest rural groups in Nan, this at Ban Some. The group had a strong leader in Nan Tha. The first baptisms, evidently, took place in 1914, and afterwards there was a period of intense persecution by non-Christian neighbors. Some Christians fell away, but the group held on and grew. Eventually this group built its own chapel and had a parochial school of its own. Yet another group founded during this decade was the Christian group at Ban Saan, which had its first baptisms probably in early 1919.

At about the same time that the Ban Some group was being formed in 1914, the Laos Mission permanently transferred the large Christian community at Chiang Kham from Nan to Chiang Rai. Kham Ai continued to lead the group and was carrying out an important medical ministry in Chiang Kham. The mission transferred Chiang Kham to Chiang Rai because of governmental administrative changes that removed the town from Nan's provincial jurisdiction. There was no longer much contact thus between Nan and Chiang Kham.

During this decade, the Nan City Church remained generally strong under the direct pastoral leadership of the missionaries, primarily Taylor, Peoples, and Palmer. It seems to have expanded its work with women by having a Bible study group, which met on Wednesdays and separate prayer groups for older and for younger women. The church maintained a large Sunday School program under the leadership of one elder. The Palmers

were musically talented, and under their leadership the music program improved a great deal. The boarding schools involved themselves in the worship and social life of the church, providing special music and programs during the church year. As early as 1912, the church had an assistant pastor, whose duties included visitation of members and of rural groups on Sundays. In 1915, the church helped pay Nan No's salary as an itinerant pastor to the rural groups. It is difficult to tell whether the church remained as active as during the first years of its life, but it certainly was much more active than the rural groups. Through the presence of many rural Christian children in the boarding schools, the city church must have had an increased role in providing models for worship and activities for the rural groups.

This brief survey of the rural and city groups in Nan Province indicates that the Christian community was growing and expanding geographically during this decade. And it was during this decade that the Nan Station developed a policy for church leadership. In 1916, Dr. Peoples described that policy. It depended, first, upon eight to ten itinerating evangelists, some of whom worked all year while some worked only during the dry season. The station selected these men from "the Christian communities of the Province, being men who in knowledge and disposition give best promise of efficiency in such service. Several of them have already served a number of years in the work." During the eight months of the itineration season most of them went out in pairs regularly for three to four weeks, and then they returned to Nan to discuss their written reports in open sessions. After that they would spend eight to ten days in study, during which time they went out on itineration on Saturdays and return on Mondays in order to spend as many Sundays as possible with Christian families and groups. They generally spent the four months of the rainy season in study and took only two or three short tours, a couple of weeks each, chiefly to groups far removed from the city or to non-Christian areas of special interest. Peoples wrote, "Even while at study weekends are always spent in the country and the experiences of the day are reviewed and discussed in Class."

In 1916 the station had 32 centers, each with its own leader appointed by the missionary, chosen by the people, or who emerged through the course of events. These leaders did not receive any payment. Each "...looks after the interests of the little company and takes charge of the Sabbath services." The station distributed a Sunday School Magazine, which "furnishes the chief guide to and material for their Christian instruction and growth. When the evangelists reach these centers they are well prepared to train the leaders in the understanding and use of these helps."

Dr. Peoples observed that the station had a conscious policy of not placing pastors over local groups. He gave three reasons. First of all, he believed that the station didn't have leaders with enough knowledge, experience, and depth of character to serve in permanent positions. The leaders they had needed periodic instruction from and contact with the missionaries if they were to grow. Secondly, the mission didn't have a literature that would allow isolated pastors to continue to study and grow on their own. Thirdly, he stated that the paid evangelists did not like to be dependent upon the support of local groups. They felt that such salaries constrained them. He concluded, "It seems that the present policy is preferable to that of locating the men. It is decidedly better for the evangelists themselves, and frequent visits from a growing man will doubtless more than compensate, to the people too, for the lack of a permanent leader who is meagerly equipped for his task."

Taylor called this leadership system a "natural" or "indigenous" system in which each Christian group had a "natural" leader, like a village kamnan. Each group helped pay for the itinerating pastor-evangelists and received at least two visits per year from those pastor-evangelists. He argued that this model worked and that the criticism that it did not create a pastoral system was unjustified. He wrote, "Why change and try to establish ordained pastors over these churches? We had tried it once back in 1894; and it failed, with loss of precious years before it was given up. Was there any reason for trying it again?"

This station-centered missionary system of church leadership for Nan, assumed that the elders and other church leaders available in Nan did not have the abilities needed to establish a pastoral system of church leadership. Taylor specifically argued that in the 1890s the Laos Mission tried to establish a pastoral leadership system in the Chiang Mai and Lamphun Stations and failed. There was no reason to think such a system would

work any better in Nan. The Nan elders required closer supervision, thus a centralized leadership system with the elders reporting back to the missionaries frequently seemed wisest. This system centralized power in the hands of the missionaries in Nan City and had three levels of authority. "Natural" leaders, often not very well trained, led the local groups. Itinerating teams appointed from the City visited the local groups and then reported back to the city. Key decisions concerning strategy were made in the city by the top level of authority, the missionaries.

The system was based on a lack of trust of the local groups to effectively run their own lives and on Nan church leadership to develop an effective pastoral system of leadership. Taylor, in particular, believed that history proved that northern Thai Christians could not be trusted to lead themselves pastorally. He found particular proof in events which took place in Chiang Mai and Lamphun in the 1890s, which events led the Laos Mission to hastily set up a pastoral system in those two stations, with mixed results. Later studies of that system show that if the mission had more carefully managed its pastors a viable pastoral system could have emerged. The system fell apart primarily from a lack of mission encouragement and support. Many missionaries, including Taylor, believed however that these events "proved" that the northern Thai made unfit pastors. In fact one has to doubt the correctness of Peoples' and Taylor's assumption in Nan. Over the years from 1895 to 1920, the station produced a number of very good leaders, such as Elder Kham Ai, Elder Nan Panya, Elder (Rev.) Tommawong, Elder (Rev.) Panya, and others, all of whom could have been good pastors and number of whom exercised capable local church leadership. Dr. Peoples' evangelistic training class had fifteen nan in it in 1914, that is fifteen with a high level of formal Buddhist training. While not all of these men would have made good pastors, it seems clear that the Nan Station in this decade had a wealth of leadership. The indications are that if there had been a vision for strong local churches much could have been done to train and encourage a corps of local pastors. This was not done. The idea was rejected out of hand. Dr. Peoples and the Rev. Taylor, instead, remained firmly committed to a strong center from which ministry radiated out into the rural areas.

From the very beginning the station-centered strategy for church leadership failed to provide rural Christian groups with adequate pastoral support because it depended too much on day-to-day missionary leadership. Although the missionary situation in Nan improved after 1908, the station still did not have enough staff to maintain effective church work. The Taylors left for furlough in 1911. When they returned in 1913 the Palmers left. The Peoples had on-going health problems so that they had to go on furlough too. The missionaries could seldom visit the rural Christian groups with results recorded by Lucy Starling in April 1914. She wrote "Many [Christians] had either gone off entirely, or had become disaffected, and the work to be done here was along lines of disciplining erring members, awakening the careless and indifferent, and in giving spiritual food to the weak in the faith." In other words, the station failed to follow up with intensive work in its new groups of Christians, leaving them weak and allowing many to leave Christianity entirely. This was a pattern repeated time and again in the history of Nan Station and the Fifth District.

Things did improve somewhat beginning in 1915 when the station had a stronger missionary force, especially in 1917 when the whole force was present the whole year. Taylor noted that the City Church, beginning about 1915, showed a concern for the isolated country Christians by contributing to the salary of Nan No who worked as an itinerating pastor to the small, isolated groups. An assistant pastor from the City Church had spent some time visiting out groups since 1912, but it is not clear if this was Nan No or not. Taylor also wrote that the city church was growing in numbers and spirituality, the schools were booming and were of good quality, and the hospital was carrying on its share of the work. He wrote, "We were in the period I feel may be called 'The period of Gratifying Spiritual Growth.'" Taylor's "Era of Gratifying Spiritual Growth" did not last very long. By 1920 the Nan Station's mission staff was again severely restricted, by the death of Dr. Peoples and the transfer of the Palmers to Bangkok.

This system of church leadership could not meet the needs of rural groups for pastoral leadership and training. First of all, the missionaries could not provide leadership themselves. They were too few in number. They had too many other duties to perform. Travelling was difficult for them. Furthermore, even when the missionaries did travel into rural areas, they emphasized evangelism rather than pastoral work. On a 1916 rural

tour, the Taylors took eight trained evangelists with them. Each day after breakfast the missionaries and evangelists studied the Bible and prayed together for an hour, and then two teams went on ahead to visit near by villages while another team stayed behind to continue to talk with the people at the place they stayed overnight. The rest of the group headed straight on and at noon would stop at a village to give a gospel talk. They then went on to the place where they would stay the night and hold evening services there with people from several villages attending. The only time they varied this routine was when they visited Christian groups. Dora Taylor wrote, "There we remained from two to four days, reproving, exhorting, and encouraging the little groups who receive but yearly visits from the missionary." As this suggests, the Christian groups received relatively little attention.

This station-centered system also made it difficult for the station's pastor-evangelist teams to effectively work with rural groups. First of all, the three or four working teams could not visit most groups more than a few times a year and had to waste large amounts of time in travel to and from the scattered groups. Secondly, it removed some of the most qualified local church leaders from their own groups and based them in the city, from which they travelled to other groups. While it is true that a fairly large number of evangelists benefited from closer training and supervision from the missionaries, Dr. Peoples' Training Classes, started in 1909, lasted for only a few years and strongly emphasized evangelism rather than pastoral care. Dr. Peoples himself was often unwell, further limiting his training classes' effectiveness. Thirdly, the pastor-evangelists, like the missionaries, tended to emphasize evangelism in their tours into rural areas.

By way of summary, the station-centered system of church leadership failed to provide effective pastoral care, training, and leadership for rural Christian groups. Nan Province's extremely poor transportation and communications system alone made it virtually impossible to maintain effective pastoral contact with the rural Christians. Nor did the station have the resources to put large numbers of itinerating pastors out into the field. Thus, the station-centred system, from its inception, tended to be haphazard, poorly coordinated, and unable to meet rural group needs.

The years 1910 and 1911 marked the beginning of permanent boarding schools in the Nan Station, and this change had profound impact on the life of the rural groups. When the Palmers arrived in February 1910, they took over responsibility for the boys' school and great success in developing its program into one of the best in the Laos Mission. In 1911 Miss Van Vranken started up the girls' boarding school, which was taken over by Lucy Starling in 1912 and grew less rapidly than the boys' school, but did grow nonetheless. By 1913, Nan Station reported that it had about 85 families with children, and from these 85 families one hundred children were in the two schools. The station observed, "Every boy or girl educated adds to the efficiency of the church. If the church stands still the rest of the work suffers." In other words, the justification for bringing so many children from both rural groups and the city church was that educating them in the schools strengthened the church and rural groups. Palmer spent much of December 1914 visiting the out-stations "in the interests of the schools." Enrollment in the boys's school reached 75 in early 1915, of whom 40 were boarders. Almost all of the boys in the school were from Christian families. By 1915 Taylor completed new buildings for both schools and both schools had begun to send graduates to Chiang Mai and to Bangkok for further training. In 1916, the boys' school officially changed its name to Lincoln Academy. At about this same time, the girls' school officially became Rangsi Kasem School.

An article written by Mrs. Dora Taylor in 1914 shows that the missionaries intended that the two boarding schools emphasize training Christian children and youth. She wrote, "These youth are our hope for a leaven wherewith to leaven the whole. We are sponsors for an education which shall bring them into right relationship with God." Mrs. Taylor justified using city boarding schools for these purposes by stating that Christian parents were new Christians who did not fully understand Christianity and showed the continuing influences of "heathenism." They still feared the spirits and held animistic-style wakes. "So it is necessary that we gather the children of the church into our boarding schools and turn their fear into faith. We are busy in these days training these youth not how to make a living but to make a life, each one of them, with Jesus Christ its foundation." The schools taught the children the Bible, hymns, and good habits such as promptness,

obedience, and self-control. The students also learning agricultural and home-making skills. Taylor concluded that the schools sought to build up the character of Christian children in their formative years before the world dominates their lives "Then," she stated, "they will learn to know Jesus and His love and they will learn to live in His service and in His church."

Christian education in Mrs. Taylor's view had two goals. First of all, it sought to make the children a "leaven" in Nan society, that is an agent for change. In other circumstances, the missionaries termed this goal an evangelistic goal. Dr. Peoples once defined evangelism as "the changing of the ideas, the customs, the faith, and transforming the character of the people." The schools were to be agents of this change by preparing Christian children to bring about social change. Secondly, Nan Christian education trained the children to lead Christian lives of service to God and the church by teaching them new skills, new values, and a deeper understanding of the Christian religion.

Mrs. Taylor's reason for using city boarding schools is of importance. She claimed that the missionaries had to remove Christian children from their parents' and local Christian communities' influence because they still showed the marks of heathen influence. The missionaries could not trust local Christian communities and families to conduct effective Christian education. Just as the station did not trust and train its best leaders to be pastors and developed a centralized system of pastoral care, so the station did not trust and train its Christian groups to carry out their own Christian education. It placed Christian education in the city boarding schools. There were certain advantages to this system of Christian education. It meant that during this decade the children's training was in the hands of theologically trained Christian educators. It exposed the children to the relatively active life of the city church, thereby giving them a working model for church life. And it allowed students to make lasting friendships with students from other Christian groups, thus building Christian unity in the province.

Even taking into account these advantages, however, this Christian education system had disastrous consequences for the church in Nan. First of all, not all children went to the boarding schools even though many did. Thus many other Christian children were left in ignorance of their faith. Secondly, this system made no provision for adult Christian education, which was vital for newly formed Christian communities. The itinerating missionaries and pastor-evangelists did some adult work, but it was haphazard and infrequent. Thirdly, it appears that at least some of the best students did not return to their own communities but stayed in the city or even moved away from Nan entirely so that the schools helped draw strong leaders and members from rural groups. Finally, the idea developed in Nan that Christian education and training for lay ministry was not the responsibility of local groups and their leaders. These were city and institutional concerns.

In the years before 1908, the Nan Station experimented with two different visions of and systems for church life. Irwin tried to put in place a church-centered system which put mission resources, especially leadership, into local groups. Dr. Peoples and the other missionaries favored a station-centered system, which located ministry resources, program, and control in Nan City. After 1908, Dr. Peoples, the Taylors, the Palmers, and Lucy Starling fully established the station-centered system. It was a system based on a lack of trust of northern Thai church leadership to effectively lead and on Nan Christian communities and families to learn how to do their own Christian education and other ministries. While it did have some benefits, this system made the fundamental mistake of denying local Christian groups the skills and resources they needed for their own lives. In a time of poor roads and communications, it failed to give effective pastoral leadership to these local groups. It also failed to establish strong traditions of Christian education and ministry in the local groups, which as a result became entirely dependent upon the station for meeting local needs. The decade between 1909 and 1919, thus, was a key era in Nan church history, one which confirmed the basic structure of church leadership and ministry which is still in use today.

Chapter Three: Era of Transition 1920-1934

In the decade 1909 to 1919 the Laos Mission invested a number of competent missionary couples and individuals in the Nan Station including such veterans as the Peoples and Taylors as well as competent younger missionaries such as the Palmers and Lucy Starling. These missionaries successfully developed the station's work, particularly in schools and construction, so that by 1920 Nan Station was stable and had a wide range of programs. The station-centered structure of ministry seemed to work quite well. The problem facing that structure was that it required a very strong center, well-staffed and well-financed, in order to work. That problem became apparent in the years after 1920.

A number of themes marked the years between 1920, when Dr. Peoples died, and 1934, when the Rev. Hugh Taylor retired. Taylor was the only missionary present throughout the period. Dora Taylor died in 1925. In late 1926 Taylor married Julia Hatch, a veteran missionary in Chiang Mai. Irene Taylor, the Taylor's daughter came out to work at Rangsi Kasem School from 1920 until 1926. Otherwise, a few younger missionary couples came for three or four years each before leaving Nan permanently. None had much of an impact. Thus the first theme of this era was a dwindling missionary presence. The gradual rise of northern Thai primary leadership comprised a second important theme. In the schools, at the hospital, and in the rural groups, local leadership all but replaced the missionaries. In his autobiography, Taylor wrote that the Taylors would have been overwhelmed by the work had it not been for the "efficient force" of northern Thai preachers, teachers, and medical workers. At the same time, however, Taylor's evangelistic vision for a "Luang Prabang Station" supported from Nan dominated much of the work of this era. The evangelization of French territory, thus, formed a third theme for this period. Finally, a fourth theme emerged around an attempt to return to a more church-centered structure of ministry in the mid-1920s, an attempt which failed.

As we have seen, from 1895 onwards the Nan Station valued the importance of evangelism and emphasized evangelism as the heart of its work. During this era, both the missionaries and the church leaders in Nan continued that emphasis, but they largely directed their efforts to areas beyond Nan. In 1916 Elder Sing Tong of Nan went to Chiang Rung as a carrier for the Presbyterian missionaries who went to establish a mission station there. He married a Chiang Rung woman and stayed on as a "missionary" himself. In 1919 he visited Nan and gave a talk at the church in which he described the hardships and problems of work in Chiang Rung. His talk inspired the whole church to the point that three families volunteered to go work in Chiang Rung. In 1922 the promising young couple of Kru Muang and Kru Tiam Tah went to Chiang Rung for a three-year term, returning in 1925. In 1927 they returned for a second term, this time staying until 1931.

The Christians of Nan saw this missionary labor as a very high form of service, and they shared the missionaries' vision for spreading the Christian faith beyond Nan Province. They joined in particular with the Taylors in directing that vision towards French Luang Prabang. This was an old vision, going back to Dr. McGilvary, who on his last visit to Nan in 1897 went on to Luang Prabang, accompanied by Dr. Peoples. By 1920 Taylor began to seek the means to initiate Christian work in Luang Prabang, and in 1922 he took the first of many trips into French territory. He was very excited by what he saw there. After 1922, he and other missionaries began to make long trips to Luang Prabang each year, and Taylor's own writings suggest that he gave much of his attention and concern to that work during these years. He dreamed of a strong Christian movement there. His vision took on added urgency in late 1925 when he made contact with Kamu who seemed interested in Christianity and especially in 1926 when he visited a Christian Kamu village which had been converted by McGilvary and hadn't seen a missionary in twenty-five years.

In January 1926, at Taylor's suggestion, the now united American Presbyterian Mission agreed to designate Luang Prabang as a foreign mission field and to send northern Thai missionaries to work there. The North Laos Presbytery then appointed Nan Tommawong and Elder Boon Ta from Nan to go. These two men and their families took up residence in Luang Prabang for a three-year period. After the two northern Thai missionaries returned to Nan in December 1929, the station began to send some of its best leaders back to Luang Prabang to work. Elder Boon Ta and Rev. Panya went for an unspecified period of time in 1930. Over the next two years, Rev. Inseng visited Luang Prabang at least twice. In 1932 the North Siam Presbytery ordained Kru Muang and Kru Phat as evangelists to work with the Kamu in Luang Prabang. In 1933 Kru Phat and Kru In Phun Deetanna led another evangelistic team on a two-month trip into French territory. In sum, between 1926 and 1934 the station invested a number of its best leaders and a great deal of effort in evangelizing French territory. This fact had great importance for the history of the Christians in Nan during the years 1920 to 1934. At the last, the vision for the church in Luang Prabang weakened the work of the Nan Station with the Christian movement in Nan.

The absence of a large missionary force forced an important change upon the Nan Station. Northern Thai leadership had to take a larger part in the running of the station. This was seen immediately in the Lincoln Academy where Kru Khian took over from the Palmers. Before the end of the decade, Rangsi Kasem School was also in the hands of a northern Thai head teacher. In pastoral and evangelistic work as well, the northern Thai leadership had to take a more active role, and with that role came the desire to make changes. The first change came in 1922 when the Station experimented for the first time with dividing the rural groups into two sections, Northern and Southern, and placing a district pastor over each. This experiment seems not to have lasted very long.

In 1925 the northern Thai leadership formulated plans for a more significant change. The problem the station faced by 1925 was that there were not enough missionaries to carry out regular work into the rural areas, and at the same time the older generation of evangelists was dying or retiring so that there were fewer northern Thai workers as well. By 1925 the station was not able to care for the rural groups, which meant that they lacked assistance in maintaining interest and discipline in religious matters. At the same time, the drop in missionary itineration meant that fewer children were being brought in for the schools so that the number of boarding students dropped by nearly 50% from 60 in 1922 to 31 in 1925. This meant that the policy of using the schools as the primary center for station Christian education was also failing. Finally, the number of new Christians dropped off drastically as well because the lack of itineration meant that the station was doing little rural evangelism.

The northern Thai leadership proposed a drastic change, which was to disperse station leadership and resources into the rural groups by sending out at least two or three pastors to live with rural groups as full-time pastors. In 1926 Rev. Panya and his family moved to Sa while Nan No moved to Muang Poa. There were also plans to place a pastor at Ban Some. In the meantime Rev. Panya's wife started a school at Ban Some in 1926 while the people at Ban Some opened another school. Both schools had a large number of non-Christian children, but the purpose of both was still to provide Christian as well as general education. For the first time since Irwin's plans for starting rural churches, Nan Station seriously experimented with a more church-centered system of rural Christian life.

Taylor made it clear that while he supported this plan, it was initiated by the northern Thai leadership themselves. As far as we can tell now, that leadership saw that the central weakness of the station-centered structure of Nan Station was in working with the rural groups. The station constantly struggled to visit and to pastor the rural Christian groups, which comprised the majority of Christians in Nan Province. By 1925-1926 the station had reached a serious state. For three years there had been no visitation of many of the rural groups. Nan Station's 1926 annual report stated,

The thorough pastoral visitation of all the out districts has revealed the laxness that has arisen in the 3 years since our last rounding the Christian homes of the province. Tightening up of church discipline has resulted in the very unusual number of expulsions from the Church during the year of 8 members.

The whole process of itineration required great effort and also active missionary leadership. It was extremely inefficient. The northern Thai leadership apparently realized all of this and sought to re-orient the work to the rural groups themselves.

Their plan failed. First of all, the very lack of missionaries led to a period when the missionaries neglected leadership development even as the number of older, trained workers dropped off. By 1926, the station did not have enough trained clergy or elders to locate in rural areas. Thus, within a few years Rev. Panya had to come into the city to work with the City Church. And even though the station sent off five young men in 1926 to train at the seminary in Chiang Mai, it took several years for those men to return. We have already pointed out that in the first decades of the Nan Station the station had a wealth of northern Thai leadership, but it chose to invest that leadership in educational, medical, and evangelistic work rather than creating strong local and pastoral leadership. Now, when northern Thai leadership sought change, that wealth of leadership had dwindled. The station-centered system itself created conditions that made the change to a church-centered system extremely difficult.

Secondly, Taylor's vision for the evangelization of Luang Prabang appropriated a part of the leadership available for evangelism in French territory. We have seen that from 1922 on Taylor spent weeks every year in Luang Prabang. He always took these trips some time between November and February, the best time for itineration, which meant that besides hurried visits to Christians along the way, he did not have time to emphasize Nan rural Christian groups. He and his evangelistic team were in Luang Prabang. Furthermore, from 1926 onwards Taylor sent some of Nan's best leaders to work in Luang Prabang, men like Rev. Nan Tomawong who had strong pastoral skills and long experience. When the young men, such as Rev. Inseng and Rev. Muang, started to return from the seminary after 1930, Taylor used them for city work and for evangelizing Luang Prabang. Thus, while Taylor claimed to support a more church-centered system, his vision lay elsewhere and his policies and actions made such a system all but impossible. We should also realize that much of the northern Thai leadership itself shared his evangelistic vision so that while they might want more pastoral leadership for rural groups they also wanted to evangelize Luang Prabang. The hard fact was that the station did not have enough leadership to do both well, and it actually did better work in Luang Prabang than in rural Nan. Taylor's reports indicate that the northern Thai "missionaries" sent to Luang Prabang did a good job of exciting interest in Christianity there, esp. among the Kamu.

Thus, the station-centered organization of the Nan Christian movement survived this attempt to reform it. After 1930, we hear nothing about a dispersal of station resources and leadership into the rural groups. During these years, none the less, an important change did take place. Having failed to change the system, northern Thai church leadership now took it over as its own system. While the vision for evangelism and the station-centered structure remained, the whole system became a Thai system. A new generation of leadership took up the old missionary roles and continued them - in the schools, at the hospital, and in evangelistic work.

We have seen that northern Thai leadership took over in the schools. Northern Thai leadership also played an increasingly important role in the City Church as well. With Taylor gone frequently, the congregation's elders took on more responsibility for leading the church, as did Rev. Panya, who filled in frequently for Taylor before going to Wiang Sa in 1926. In 1930, Rev. Tommawong, who had returned from Luang Prabang in 1929, became the church's first fully appointed northern Thai pastor, and in 1931 Rev. Panya took over from him. Taylor states that from about 1930 onwards he made a conscious effort to turn responsibility for the church over to local leadership because he feared that Nan would soon be left without a missionary. The Taylors were due for retirement in 1932.

One more change took place in church work in the early 1930s. Even as Taylor gave responsibility for the City Church over to local leadership, the station and the North Siam Presbytery established three rural groups as churches. In 1932 the Ban Some and the Wiang Sa groups became churches, joined in 1933 by the Christian community at Ban Joko, which was known as the Ban Saan Church. Local Elders led all three churches, with Taylor designated as the official moderator of each rural church. This meant that nothing changed in terms of the oversight and care of these three congregations. They remained under the direction of the station center. Even so, at least the Wiang Sa and Ban Some churches were relatively strong congregations. Elder Ta at Ban Some gave that church strong leadership, and by the 1930s the Ban Some church was already providing other leadership for the station. For years to come this church would be the strongest of the rural congregations. Wiang Sa also had strong leadership and a fair degree of wealth, which made it an important source of income for station work. In addition to the three rural churches, the City Church and the Kamu church at Muang Sai in French territory fell under the care of the Nan Station.

Yet another development which took place during these years had to do with Christian education. As we have already seen, the two schools were not able to fulfill the central role in children's Christian education which the missionaries had intended they fill. The station made efforts to develop new means for improving its Christian education program. Besides the two rural schools at Wiang Sa and Ban Some, the station also initiated a program by which it distributed Bible study leaflets to the rural groups. These leaflets had questions to be answered and places for the answers. The members were asked to study the leaflets, answer the questions, and return them to the city where their answers would be checked. The station reported in January 1933 that this program was a success, stating, "From all directions these leaves come back to us written up and most generally correctly, revealing a real study of the Bible." The station's program of "theological education by extension" points again to the central problem of the station-centered system at Nan, which was how to reach distant members with effective program.

At the end of January 1934 Dr. Taylor, Mrs. Julia Hatch Taylor, left for Luang Prabang to visit the Christians there and do further evangelism. Julia Taylor took sick on the trip, and she died 18 February 1934. After her death Taylor returned to Nan, visiting rural Christian groups along the way, bringing them the news and saying farewell as he planned to retire to the United States. The news of Mrs. Taylor's death shocked the Christians of Nan, and Dr. Taylor's leaving saddened them. He had worked in Nan for 25 years, baptizing hundreds of Christians, marrying them and burying them. The people felt close to old Dr. Taylor. He spoke their language well. He brought them movies. He helped solve their problems. Many of them accepted as their own his vision of a growing, spreading church. Dr. Hugh Taylor was a major influence in their lives, and in the history of Christianity in Nan. He was not a perfect man. Lucy Starling described him as a jolly, emotional man who was stubborn and argumentative. Only Mrs. Taylor could get him to change his mind. Yet he accomplished a great deal in Nan. He was a driving force in bringing the station from near death in 1909 to being a strong station with two good schools, a hospital, and a growing body of Christians by 1920. He led the station's work together for fourteen years after that. He built numerous buildings, travelled thousands of kilometers, and initiated the work in Luang Prabang.

From the perspective of hindsight, however, it may be seen that Taylor, as well as most of his colleagues at Nan, made fundamental errors. His stubborn adherence to old missionary ideas caused him to overlook the abilities of northern Thai church leadership. He held on to authority and power among the Christian in Nan far longer than was necessary. His vision for Laos caused him to neglect careful pastoral oversight of the Christians in Nan, with the result that the rural groups did not grow spiritually as much as they might have. His commitment to institutions and building up a large physical plant in Nan encouraged the station-centered system which was so detrimental to the rural Christian groups. It is true that during the period from 1920 to 1934 significant changes took place in Nan, especially the rise of northern Thai leadership in place of missionary leadership. But the missionary-oriented, station-centered model initiated by Dr. Peoples and cemented in place by Taylor did not change. By 1934 most people seem to have accepted it as a natural way of organizing the churches of Nan, and we find little evidence of any movement to return to the church-centered model.

Chapter Four: Renewal and War (1934-1945)

Even before Taylor began his last round of visits of the Christians of Nan, the mission appointed the Rev. Herbert W. and Margaret Stewart to take the Taylors' place in Nan. The Stewarts had spent many years working at Pitsanuloke prior to moving to Nan. They arrived in Nan in April 1934, thus making 1934 a year of change.

The year 1934 was a year of change for another reason as well. A meeting of Thai church leaders and missionaries from all over Siam met in Bangkok to establish the Church of Christ in Siam. This first general assembly adopted a Presbyterian form of church government which divided the nation into 7 districts, with the churches of Phrae and Nan making up District 3. This change brought an important change to the structure of the work in Nan, because it brought to an end the concept of a unified station as the heart of Christian life and work. From 1934 onwards, the churches, particularly the City Church which had its own pastor paid by the church, were officially under the Church of Christ in Siam. The missionary station, meanwhile, still controlled educational, evangelistic, and medical work. Thus, the station conducted a major part of Christian ministry officially apart from the work of the churches.

This change had particular impact on the relationship of the two city schools to church work. By the 1930s the role of the schools was already changing. Because of the Depression and the lack of itineration in later years, the number of rural students attending the two schools dropped off even further. In May 1934, for example, there were only 12 girls in the Rangsi Kasem dorm. Although both schools had continued to train some rural members and church leaders, by the 1930s they were becoming less involved in such work. At the same time, the schools could provide less solid Christian education for their students because of the intervention of the government curriculum, which the schools had to teach. That curriculum left little time for distinctly Christian education. The schools did continue to play an important role in church life, but in a more restricted way. Most of their students were now from the City Church, and the staffs of both schools played an important part in the City Church's life, to the point that the schools were becoming more like City Church parochial schools. Thus, the station-centered system was already breaking apart by the mid-1930s, and the schools no longer functioned as active, effective agents for the Christian education of rural Christian groups, vocational training for rural Christians, and the production of leadership for the rural groups.

The founding of the CCS introduced a further important change. Prior to 1934, the station functioned as a single unit of ministry under the head of the missionaries. The founding of the Third District separated church life and work from the other agencies of the station. During the late 1930s and even into the 1950s this division was still not clear, and the missionaries worked closely with the churches as well as the institutions, coordinating the work of both with each other. But after the 1950s these two structures, churches and institutions drifted apart, and the schools functioned independently under the Department of Education of the CCT. Involving the schools in district work required coordination and negotiation, depended upon the interest of the school administrators, and also depended upon personal relationships between school administrators and district leaders. The unity of purpose, direction, and administration of the station-centered system was gradually lost, and the loss of the schools as effective agents of Christian education created a problem which has yet to be solved. Neither the station nor the district after it found a way to make up for this loss, while the rural congregations continued to show little interest in Christian education. They did not see it as their responsibility, and they did not have qualified Christian educators in any event.

During the 1930s it also became clear that the hospital could not maintain its important role as an agent of station evangelism and social service. The mission had sent a series of doctors to Nan, but none stayed very

long, and medical work did not grow. In 1935 Dr. and Mrs. Charles Crooks, veteran missionaries from Lampang, moved to Nan to build up the station's medical work, which had fallen off sharply. They had some success and did build up the hospital somewhat, but it was already becoming clear that neither the mission nor the CCT would be able to maintain a strong medical program in Nan. Although Dr. Harding Kneedler and Thai Christian doctors tried to restore the hospital after the War, it eventually had to be closed. This led to a further break down in the station-centered system and the loss of another agent of ministry.

The Stewarts took their first extended tours of the rural churches and groups in 1935. In her report on those tours, Margaret Stewart noted a number of problems. In Ban Some several families had left the church over the years. The people of the Pua Church (Ban Joko) were very poor and resisted the idea that they should share in the station's evangelistic expenses. The Muang Puea group required lecturing on the fact that quarreling and improper behavior among the Christians dishonored Christ and was known among their Buddhist neighbors. She also noted that the key problem facing all of these groups was one of adequate leadership, and she saw no solution in sight for this problem.

On the whole, the state of the rural churches and out groups was not very good in 1934-1935, primarily because they had lacked close pastoral oversight for many years. The lack of strong local leadership represented a particular concern. Comments by Stewart in 1937 suggest what had happened in the Peoples-Taylor era. Stewart pointed to the importance of having the missionaries and city evangelists regularly visit the rural groups and churches. He stated that such visits strengthened and inspired them and drew them closer to God. Stewart particularly emphasized the important role of the missionary on these visits. Without the missionary the pervasive, deep spiritual power on these trips would have been lacking. They would have lacked the power of prayer and deep spiritual living. He concluded, "Yes, the missionary is still the inspiring one in out-village work and will be for some time to come." After 42 years, if we accept Stewart's assessment, the missionaries had still failed to find a way to locate strong, spiritual leadership in rural Christian groups, and thus those groups faced problems of divisions, defections, and a desire to remain dependent on the missionaries themselves. At the same time, the City Church was experiencing problems as well. The station's 1934 annual report states that during the rainy season the church's pastor and elders visited the homes of every member to urge them to attend worship more faithfully. A large number of members were showing little interest in the church's life.

The station made various changes to try to deal with the problems posed by the station-centered structure. In 1935 Ach. Muang, the senior evangelist, decided that he could work more effectively if he lived in the northern field, and he moved to Wanghan. In 1938 he moved to Nong Ha, and Rev. Inseng took his place at Wanghan. Late in 1935 another evangelist also moved out into one of the southern villages. These men emphasized evangelistic work, however, and did little pastoral work, particularly since they went on evangelistic tours quite frequently. Even so these few years prior to World War II brought these rural groups improved leadership. One member from Muad Porntara (originally Nong Ha) remembers Achs. Muang and Inseng as the best leaders that congregation ever had. During this same period the station hired two Bible women to work with city and rural women, visiting them and teaching them. Stewart introduced another change. He did not share Taylor's belief that the Nan Station was responsible for doing evangelistic work in French Laos, and under him the Nan Station stopped sending teams there. Stewart gave his attention to the work in Nan Province, he took more of a pastoral attitude towards the churches, and he emphasized Christian education and strengthening the churches more than did Taylor or Peoples. He, nevertheless, continued to emphasize evangelism as well, going out frequently with station evangelistic teams to do both pastoral and evangelistic work. Much of the emphasis on those trips remained on evangelism.

Whether or not Stewart's emphasis led to a strengthening of the rural congregations is not clear, but what is clear is that in the period 1934 to 1941 the station leadership in Nan, missionary and northern Thai, once again started a movement towards dispersing some leadership into rural areas and towards giving more attention to the nurture and education of church groups. There seems to have been an underlying sense, especially among

northern Thai leaders, such as Rev. Panya in 1925 and Ach. Muang in 1935, that the station had to relocate its leaders closer to the rural churches.

In addition to the movement towards closer contact with the rural groups, other signs of growth and renewal appeared in the late 1930s, the first being when the City Church called the Rev. In Phun Deetanna as pastor in 1937. A recent graduate of the seminary in Chiang Mai, Rev. In Phun had unique pastoral skills. He had a deep sense of commitment and of humility, but at the same time he enthused people with innovative ideas. He also visited regularly. Under his leadership church and Sunday School attendance improved, and he involved more people in Bible study and other church activities. It is one of the sad tragedies of Nan church history that Rev. In Phun died at the end of 1939. The City Church's response to his ministry, however, demonstrates that the congregation responded enthusiastically to and badly wanted good pastoral leadership.

Another source of renewal appeared in June 1939 when Dr. John Song, a famous and controversial Chinese Baptist evangelist visited, Nan for a week. Song held service three times a day, translated by Rev. Boonmark Gittisarn, with a large proportion of the city Christians and over 130 rural members attending. Dr. Song used an extremely emotional approach in his preaching, and he challenged the Christians in Nan to become humble and forgiving. In his preaching he emphasized forgiveness, prayer, and living a spirit-filled life. Nan Christians, in response, accepted his challenge to deeper Christian living, and some went to others to seek forgiveness and reconciliation for old arguments and animosities. Some 77 people pledged to do personal work for Christ throughout their lives, and Nan Christians formed a total of 32 "witness bands" which went out in teams of five or more to visit Buddhist homes and carry out evangelism. Dr. Song's revival service challenged the Christian of Nan in a way they had never been challenged before, and the membership responded enthusiastically. His revival led to a greater concern for evangelism, increased church attendance, greater seriousness in living the Christian life, and reconciliations among Christians. Older Christians remember the period after Dr. Song as being a time when the Nan Church was more alive than at any other time in their memory.

Unfortunately, the hope born in the June 1939 revival was short lived. Not long afterwards Rev. Inphun died, thus depriving the Nan Church of its highly capable young pastor. Then, in December 1941, the Japanese invaded Thailand, forcing the Stewarts and his newly wedded second wife, Winnie Burr Stewart to flee to Burma. The Nan Christian movement now entered its darkest, hardest period.

World War II had a devastating impact on the Christian movement in Nan. A number of congregations experienced harsh repression, including the City Church, the groups in Amphur La, at Ban Some, and other places. In these places government officials closed Christian churches, forbid worship, and put pressure on Christians to convert to Buddhism. Throughout the province, the government forced Christian civil servants to renounce their faith or give up their jobs, and government officials called in Christians to persuade them to quit Christianity. A few Christians were jailed for brief periods of time. The repression of Christians, however, varied from place to place. In Wiang Sa, for example, worshipped continued with only a brief interruption, and there was little overt pressure put on Christians. In distant Wanghan, life went on much as usual after some initial threats against Christians and an order to cease worship. Some local officials did not see the Christians as a danger to public peace and security and sympathized with them enough to leave them alone. In other areas government officials zealously persecuted Christians, seizing church and station property and even destroying the church at Nong Ha. In still other places, such as at SriPhrom, the entire Christian community gave up their faith.

All mission and district work came to a halt, although there was some visiting of churches by former station employees such as Rev. Inseng. Local congregational life all but died as well. In most places only informal, brief Christian worship services survived. Some families conducted their own house worship, and in other cases small groups of people congregated for informal worship services. In rural groups, brief services, often on Sunday evenings, were held. But the whole station-centered system died, station property was seized, and many Christians left the faith, either because of official pressure or fear of the possibility of pressure. The

War actually showed both the strengths and the weaknesses of the Nan Christian movement. Not a few Christians remained strong in their faith and continued to live a Christian life, even affirming to officials the truth of their faith. Many other Christians remained quietly faithful. Those who stayed with Christianity helped each other and supported each other and showed a spirit of unity. Yet, still other Christians renounced their faith, buried their Bibles and hymnals, stated publicly they were Buddhists, and in a few instances even joined in persecuting those who did not renounce Christianity.

In spite of the bravery of faithfulness of individual Christians, the Nan Christian movement failed to meet the test made of it by the War. The local groups depended too much on station leadership and resources to be able to survive on their own. Many Christians simply did not have a deep enough faith to risk official displeasure and repression by retaining it. The station-centered system had not provided any of the congregations with the resources they needed to survive harsh repression, and even where the repression was slight Christians deserted their faith out of fear.

The City Church suffered a second blow during the War years, one which left it considerably weaker by 1946. Beginning about 1942, Ach. Duangkao Chityonpant, the former principal of Lincoln Academy, began studying the beliefs of the Jehovah's Witnesses. Kru Chomchai Intaphun from Chiang Mai was his teacher, and after a time Ach. Duangkao began to accept the doctrines of this sect. He formed a Bible study group, which became the nucleus of a Jehovah's Witness group in Nan. By the War's end a number of the most important former mission employees, including Rev. Inseng, Rev. Boonta, and others had come to accept those doctrines, and after the War they left the church and initiated an aggressive campaign of visitation to convince other members to leave. Christian unity, already crippled by the War, was further damaged by the appearance of this sect in Nan, especially because some of those who had remained very faithful to Christianity during the War now left the church. They did not leave peacefully, but launched an aggressive, devisive campaign to win other members away as well.

In some regards the Jehovah's Witnesses movement may be seen as an expression of the history of the Nan Christian movement itself, and a reaction against changes taking place in that movement. The Jehovah's Witnesses displayed some characteristics of the earlier mission age in northern Siam. They emphasized intense evangelism. They demanded that converts make a complete break with the larger society around them. They attacked Buddhism as evil. They were biblical literalists and emphasized the importance of believing the right things, of having correct knowledge in order to attain salvation. They were a reactionary movement which harked back to the old days and ways of the old missionary era of the Laos Mission, an era dying away by the 1940s. After their initial impact on the City Church, which further weakened it at the end of the War, the Jehovah's Witnesses have had little influence on the Christian movement in Nan. In fact, for all of their drive for evangelism, this sect has experienced very little growth in Nan Province, perhaps precisely because they are a throw back to an earlier era, one no longer relevant to the people of Nan Province.

World War II came to an end in the Pacific in August 1945, but the situation in the churches and rural groups did not change substantially for some time after that. A lack of funds prevented the old station employees from doing much visiting, and in some places, such as at Ban Samai, the Christians were unwilling to begin regular worship again until someone from the city visited them and encouraged them to do so. The problem was that most of the station's pre-War evangelists had joined the Jehovah's Witness, and so there were few people to send out. In the City Church, meanwhile, a serious division took place between a small group of lay leaders, who on their own initiative took over the church and reopened it for worship, and the pre-War leadership of the church, particularly Rev. Muang, who had left the city to live in the country side during the War. Each side sought ultimate authority in the church, and each accused the other of improper actions, and by June 1946 the dissident group had forced Ach. Muang out of the City Church pastorate and put an elder in his place. In short, the Christian situation in Nan in later 1945 and 1946 was one of division, confusion, and poverty. Christians had suffered a great deal during the War, and there was a weariness among them.

Chapter Five: End of the Mission (1946-1959)

The Stewarts arrived back in Nan in June 1946 only to discover the disorganized, weakened, and divided condition of the Christian movement in Nan. They plunged in to work, making arrangements to repair and rebuild the station's physical damage, to reopen the schools, to quiet the City Church, and to counter the influence of the Jehovah's Witnesses. Later in the year a CCT deputation led by Ach. Puang Akkabin visited Nan as part of the CCT's own campaign to restore the church throughout the nation. The station also distributed medical supplies, medicines, and clothing to needy people. In July 1947 Mrs. Marie Park, a veteran missionary who had spent many years in Chieng Rung, joined the Stewarts and took over some school work, women's work, and also did some evangelism. By the end of 1947, the Stewarts and Mem Park had succeeded in restoring much of the work, and the situation at the City Church had settled down. The Jehovah's Witnesses were no longer able to draw Christians away from the church and had begun to concentrate their evangelistic efforts elsewhere.

In the course of restoring the Nan Station, Stewart consciously sought to restore the pre-War system and structure of work based on the station-centered model of the past. The missionaries working in Nan did not seem to feel that the War had changed anything substantially and that the work in Nan should and would continue as before. Thus, they started up the two schools as before. Dr. Harding Kneedler also came in 1947 to try to reestablish the hospital. And the missionaries began to itinerate again, visiting the rural Christian groups and carrying out evangelism. In all of this, the Nan Station pursued the old missionary vision of a strong center leading and training the rural churches and groups until they could stand on their own. Thus, for example Winnie Stewart wrote in 1952 that when the Board of Foreign Missions had granted scholarship for Christian children in Nan to get further education it had done a worthy thing and that nothing else will have more lasting results. She wrote, "The lack of leadership is one of our greatest needs." In other words, she still viewed the two schools as the primary agents of church and station leadership training, even though they had failed to fulfill that role for decades.

If anything the old system was even more difficult to use and less effective than it had been before the War. The Muang Yom (Silaphet) and Na Thow (Puntasunya) groups provide an important example. Established in the late 1940s from a leper group connected to the McKean Leprosarium, these two groups required a great deal of nurture in order to grow and become strong congregations. The people were poor, especially in the leper group at Na Thow, and poorly educated. They had only a limited understanding of Christianity and could not lead themselves in worship, Bible study, or other activities. The city missionary and church leadership realized that both groups required intensive nurturing, and the station tried to provide that nurturing. It sent out evangelism teams to visit. Station workers spent a fair amount of time with these groups, and Mem Park actually spent some time at the Muang Yom group by herself. Stewart proposed an evangelistic-agricultural project for them. He wanted to place a worker there permanently to do evangelism and also conduct development projects. In a letter to the mission Executive Committee, the Stewarts noted that the station had neither the staff nor the money to give these groups the continuous supervision they needed. As it turned out, the station (and later the district) never did provide the pastoral nurturing needed by these groups, except for brief periods when a district worker would take up residence in one or the other of these two places). Although both groups did grow numerically, they remain weak to this day, a fact they themselves acknowledge. One member of the Silaphet Church observed that during the church's early years "the pahk" would send teams to conduct revival or training sessions, sometimes for two or three days, and the group would grow a little stronger during their presence. But then things returned to their former condition soon after the district team left.

Although the station restored the itineration system for visiting rural congregations and carrying out evangelism, that system was weaker than ever. Just as the Stewarts had written, the station did not have enough money and personnel to sustain active itineration. This was a particular problem in the post-War years when what evangelism the station did do generated much more than interest than in the past. Thus, in 1951, for example the station gained 74 adult converts and baptized 67 children, rates much higher than in the years just before the War. The station felt it could have achieved much higher numbers if it had had the resources to carry out active evangelism.

Nothing indicates the post-War situation more clearly than a letter Stewart wrote in 1951 in which he regretted the mission's decision to turn one of the missionary residences into a dorm for the Lincoln Academy, because this decision meant there was housing in Nan for only one missionary family. Nan, he wrote, was still isolated, still lacked leadership and staff, still difficult to travel around, and was troubled by the Jehovah's Witnesses. One family could not do all of the work needed and still undertake evangelism and start innovative programs. Fifty-six years after the founding of the Nan Christian movement, Stewart judged that it still required missionary leadership at levels equal to the years between 1911 and 1919 when six or more adult missionaries resided in Nan. Stewart's letter, in fact, suggests that the Nan Station had made little real progress since 1920, a period of more than thirty years. His hope for a renewed, well-staffed Nan Station, in fact, were not to be realized. Dr. Kneedler left in 1950. Mem Park left in 1951. While Miss Lucy Niblock did come to work at the schools in 1953, she stayed only until 1956. And in October 1953, the Stewarts themselves retired from the mission field. The era of the Nan Station was coming to a close. Before 1960 it would end.

The Nan Station did not come to an end all at once. Rather, it disappeared over a period of years. The process actually began with the Great Depression which reduced missionary and station staff, was furthered by the War, and ended with the last missionary couple appointed by the mission to Nan, the Rev. Larry and Ginny Judd. The Judds arrived in January 1955, at a time of transition in the CCT. Since 1948 the American Presbyterian Mission had pursued a policy of integrating its work with that of the CCT at every level, looking to the eventual integration of the mission into the CCT, which finally came about in 1957. The CCT's role grew. And so did that of the districts, including the post-War District Four, Phrae-Nan, which was divided in 1955 into two districts including the Fifth District, Nan. The Judds were the first missionaries sent to Nan to work with the district rather than over the station and its institutions. They themselves fit the mold of the "fraternal worker," who was expected to be a colleague and friend rather than boss and patron. They brought fresh ideas and a new attitude to their work and the enthusiasm of a younger couple full of fire to make a difference in the world.

Judd brought to Nan a vision for a new way of working with rural Christian groups. He wanted to establish a "Nan Rural Project" which would emphasize conducting rural development projects that would strengthen rural Christian groups in Nan; make them more fully self-supporting, self-propagating, and self-governing; give them a bigger role in the life of the whole church; and encourage them to serve God and their neighbors. During 1955 and 1956 Judd started four modest projects at Ban Wangan, Ban Joko, Ban Yom (Silaphet), & Ban Had Pa Singh. One of his favorite projects was digging fish ponds. In January 1957 he held a very successful Christian Agricultural Fair. In the longer run, however, the Nan Rural Project encountered a number of problems. First of all, some of the projects did not work out very well. At Wangan, for example, the fish ponds dried up, the fish died, and the cash crop he introduced had no market in the Pua area. Secondly, Judd himself could not get out to the rural groups as much as necessary because of the press of many other duties. Thirdly, his efforts to hire a permanent assistant failed so that he had no one to oversee development projects directly. Finally, although Judd tried to make the project fully a part of the district's life, the district leadership and the district itself showed little enthusiasm for it and stalled important decisions. Even so, the Nan Rural Project introduced a major change in the direction of the district's ministry, one that became more obvious in the years after 1960. Where evangelism had long dominated the Nan Christian movement's consciousness, now rural development emerged as the dominate ministry activity in the district. And Larry Judd, as the guiding spirit behind the Rural Life Department of the CCT, which was founded in 1961, would continue to have an important influence in the Fourth District long after he left the district in 1959.

Judd did not emphasize only rural development, however. He saw the need to improve the life of the rural groups in a number of fields, and he actively promoted many training events and meetings as a means for achieving such improvement. He even drew up schedules of events, which were held both in rural congregations and in the city. While the old Nan Station had been doing training of various sorts for many years, Judd was the first to make these training events a central activity of the district. He intended them to compliment the rural development work so that the rural groups achieved a better economic and spiritual life. Judd's vision, in some ways, harkened back to that of Irwin in the 1890s and of northern Thai leadership in the 1920s, namely, dispersing central resources into the hands of the rural groups. Judd wanted to give them more information and deepen their understanding as well.

He faced a difficult task, which he realized from the beginning. In fact, the old station-centered structure and the weaknesses that structure caused in the rural groups largely frustrated his efforts. The situation the Judds found in Nan in the middle and late 1950s differed little from that faced by the Stewarts in the late 1940s and early 1950s. In addition to the many problems already mentioned, the Judds noted that the City Church was filled with deep antagonisms and divisions. People were easily offended, refused to be forgiving, and usually left the church entirely when angered. Something of a class-system had emerged in the church as well. Richer, better educated members held down all of the leadership positions, but it was the poorer members who attended most regularly. The Judds particularly noted the need for stronger leadership and felt that the leaders they had lacked a vision of the abundant Christian life. They found worship in the City Church ill-planned, the Sunday School poorly run, and a lack of zest and fire in the church's leadership. They saw only one immediate solution, namely, the sending of a larger missionary force to Nan. They felt that the work in Nan would not grow without additional missionary families, in evangelism as well as education.

The Judds, then, brought changes to Nan. But ultimately those changes were not as significant as they might have appeared to be in the 1950s. While they attempted to disperse resources and program out into the rural groups, the Judds continued to work under the city-based, station-centered model of the past. They structured their vision for rural work according to that model, partly at least because they did not have the staff or funds to do otherwise. The Judds themselves sometimes still acted like the "old-time" missionaries. The Nan Rural Project, thus, was clearly Judd's project, depended upon his vision, his interests and skills, and his ability to draw in money. Rural people still related to him as the "paw kru" who gave things to them, intervened with government officials for them, and found them the money and resources to do things like build church buildings. Judd himself was a strong personality who pushed hard for the things he wanted, so that it appeared to others at times that he was not giving proper respect to Thai leadership. Even the old system of going out on itineration to do evangelism and church work remained, with Judd rather than Stewart or Taylor the team leader.

Times had changed, however, and nowhere could this be seen more clearly than in the attitude of the leadership of the Fifth District towards the Judds. They were the first missionaries whose appointment to Nan had to be approved by the CCT and the District, and they were the first to have to work within the structures of the District. The relationship between the Judds and the district was very different from that between the Stewarts and the district. The Judds, furthermore, were much younger and did not have the "natural" authority of old-time senior missionaries such as the Stewarts, Dr. Kneedler, or Mem Park. And Judds blunt, strong-minded method of dealing with people, particularly when he felt they had done something improper, caused offense among some people, which in turn affected their attitude toward the Judds. Things came out in the open in 1958 and 1959 when it was time for the Judds to prepare for furlough and plan for their next assignment in Thailand and whether the CCT would reappoint them to Nan or not. One faction of District leadership made it very clear they did not want the Judds to return, and when the district voted on the matter the vote was 19 for returning and eight for not returning. The Judds decided not to return and worked in Lampang their next term.

The station era came to a close with the Judds. By 1959, the two schools were fully under the CCT's Department of Education and administratively separate from the District. Most of the staff in the schools had little interest in either district or local church work and life. The hospital had closed. Rural visitation and

evangelism continued but at a much reduced level. But the city-based, station-centered structure for ministry did not come to an end. The rural churches continued to lack strong spiritual leadership. They did not take final responsibility for themselves. City-leaders continued to act as moderators of the rural churches and to designate leadership for some local groups.

In the meantime, the station and then district faced yet another potential problem, that of a second Protestant missionary presence in the province. In 1949 the Churches of Christ, a small American denomination, placed a missionary in Chiang Kham. And in 1951 the Garland Bare family took residence in Pua, Nan Province, to begin work among tribal groups there. In 1954 the Don Meyers family located at Nam Mong, where there was a small Christian group. These missionaries stated repeatedly that they did not wish to "steal" members from CCT churches or to compete with the CCT. In fact, where they could they wished to help strengthen CCT work even while they emphasized tribal evangelism. On the other hand, the Churches of Christ missionaries held that the Presbyterian style of infant baptism by sprinkling "did not stick" and anyone who wanted to be saved had to be baptized by immersion. They openly preached this doctrine among the CCT's churches and *muad* in the Pua region.

These missionaries soon became quite close to CCT church members, particularly in the Wanghan and Joko churches as well as Muad Nongha and Muad Nam Mong. They hired CCT members as carriers, cooks, and to do other work. They encouraged CCT members to conduct evangelism under their auspices, and they taught the Bible and Christian beliefs to those members. They also provided medicines and medical care for CCT members. Older members of the Pua area churches now state that most CCT members did not understand that these missionaries came from a different denomination and were not connected to the CCT. They had never met or heard of missionaries other than Presbyterian and assumed that all missionaries taught the same thing. Eventually, quite a few members were rebaptized by immersion, but even so they did not believe that they had "left" the CCT or the district. In at least one case even a district employee received rebaptism and worked closely with the Churches of Christ missionaries.

Generally, those missionaries did not engage in "sheep stealing" and CCT officials visiting in the Pua area even stayed at Garland Bare's home. Indeed Bare is remembered with a great deal of affection by older CCT members even today. In one case, however, the Churches of Christ mission did interfere in the life of a CCT church, one experiencing divisions and tensions, and brought the majority of members from that church into their own "free church," later known as the Thai Ban San Lao Church. Over the years, that congregation has dwindled as its members have quietly returned to the Pornsawan Church, and today it has only a handful of members left.

The Churches of Christ work in the 1950s, however, points out yet again how weak the CCT's churches in the Pua area actually were. Many members had little understanding of what their baptism as Christian meant. Even their leaders had little theological understanding. And even as the city leaders were taking a new, less exalted view of the missionary role of the Judds, these rural Christians demonstrated that they still wanted a missionary "paw kru" who would provide them social and financial benefits.

Chapter Six: Era of the District (1960-1992)

The founding of the district in 1955 and the integration of the American Presbyterian Mission into the CCT in 1957 marked a fundamental change by which the District and the CCT replaced the station and the mission as the primary agents of mission in Nan Province. Although over the years the CCT appointed other missionary couples to work in Nan, they came under the authority of the church and worked on the staff of the district. None stayed very long. Thus, where Thai church leadership had always played a crucial role in the life of the Nan Station, now it became the dominant factor in the life of the district.

Yet, the newly dominant Thai leadership did not change things very much. In the years between 1960 and 1965 local Nan leadership took responsibility for the district. But the district was weak. The churches and *muad* still looked to it for leadership and assistance, but it had few resources of its own to carry out ministry. It more or less continued the directions set down for it in the last years of the station, which was to emphasize development and training programs, with the Rural Life Department of the CCT providing the leadership for these programs. District leadership now accepted Judd's premise that the hope for rural church growth lay in providing them with a better material and social life, better health, and related training in various aspects of church life. The emphasis on rural development brought about a shift in old missionary vision of a strong, city-based center supporting and building up the rural congregations. Development remained city-based and city-directed, but it aimed to free the rural congregations from their dependence upon the city and district for their whole lives. Judd and the Rural Life Department envisioned and believed in strong, active local churches able to stand upon their own feet. Admittedly, this was still a missionary vision, promoted by Judd and other like-minded missionaries, but it was unlike the old missionary vision in that it consciously sought to shift leadership responsibility and resources to the rural congregations. It believed in partnership with the Thai church and it sought to work within the structures of the church.

But, as we have already seen, the emphasis on rural development also perpetuated the old station-centered, city-based structure. Development also caused many problems in the rural congregations. Many of the projects continued to fail, primarily because local Christians did not take responsibility for the projects. They did not plan well or work well together. Those sponsoring the projects did not have sufficient funds or staff to give the projects close supervision and follow-up. In some cases, it is reported that local church leaders falsified financial and other reports so that they could use development money for their personal benefit, or otherwise used development money unwisely. The projects caused disagreements in rural congregations, which in some cases led people to leave the church entirely. In short, while rural development projects provided valuable assistance to local congregations in some cases, in many others there were either no results or negative results. It should be noted, that since 1982 the reorganized Social Development and Services Department of the CCT has sought to find ways to correct these weaknesses in the CCT's rural development program and has located staff in the district in order to provide closer cooperation and better follow-up for its projects in Nan Province. The department has ceased sponsoring those types of projects most easily abused, provides only modest amounts of funding to its projects, and emphasizes training local leaders and committees to act responsibly in carrying out projects.

In any event, between 1955 and 1965 the vision of the district was quietly changing from a station-centered to a church-centered structure. The actual working structures of the district, however, did not change. They remained city-based and district-centered as may be seen from the ensuing period in post-War district history. In 1965 the CCT sent the Rev. Tongkham Puntupongse, long a national leader in the CCT, to live in the Fifth District and provide leadership assistance to the district, and the district soon elected Ach. Tongkham moderator. He believed that the best way to solve the problem of the weak, poorly led rural congregations was

to provide them strong central leadership, and in many ways he assumed the role of an old-time missionary. He set policy, hired staff, designated rural leaders, and maintained close control over the district's finances. He brought in outside funding for various projects. He itinerated around the churches, and when the rural churches experienced problems they looked to him to provide help and solutions. People came to him to do funerals, weddings, and to help them with personal problems. Under his direction, the district continued the practice begun by Taylor of having city-based staff assume the position of moderator over each church. Thus, in rural churches and *muad* official action on any matter always awaited the visit and the opinion of Ach. Tongkham or other district leaders.

Ach. Tongkham's leadership was similar to the old-time missionaries in another way. He had many duties besides working with the churches, and he traveled a great deal outside of Nan Province. Beginning in 1967, he was the director of the CCT Youth Department and traveled frequently on department business. He was also well known throughout the CCT and received numerous invitations to speak and preach. In any given month he might travel elsewhere twice or even three times, taking three or more days per trip. Just as the missionaries had many duties which drew their attention away from station work, so Ach. Tongkham had many distractions from district work.

Ach. Tongkham, nevertheless, shared the vision of a church-based structure, and he took certain steps towards that end. He located the district's three or four workers in rural churches so they could help those churches directly. He chose and trained a number of young people in the district and sent them out to live with and work with local congregations. That is, he located some district leadership resources in the rural congregations and thus tried to reduce the district's traditional dependence upon itineration. These efforts were not successful. The district workers still had many other duties and could not give full time to pastoral work. Some of them still did a lot of their own itineration. They also ran into problems in local churches. The use of younger people led to many problems and mistakes due to inexperience. Although his efforts did not succeed in strengthening local leadership, they did help promote the vision itself and to pass it on to a younger generation of church leaders, some of whom played an important leadership role in later years. On the other hand, he retained the attitude that the leaders already in the churches could not be trusted with full leadership themselves. Thus, the district continued to rely on city-based leadership and programs as the key to solving local problems and strengthening the churches. District Five, in other words, attempted to use old methods and attitudes to pursue a new vision. The attitudes and methods, in fact, frustrated the attaining of that vision.

In 1977, dissatisfaction with Ach. Tongkham's leadership resulted in a "revolution" led by two or more of the rural churches. The district voted in a new district moderator. In 1959, it will be remembered, the district for the first time voted on whether or not to keep a missionary, and a substantial minority showed its reluctance to do so. That event was an important step towards the district taking primary responsibility for itself and a symbol of the passing of missionary power. The 1977 rejection of Ach. Tongkham, apart from the immediate issues, similarly rejected strong missionary-style leadership. Significantly, the impetus and leadership came from rural churches and marked the first time that the rural congregations had taken initiative to decide what type of leadership they wanted.

In the decade after Ach. Tongkham ceased to take a leadership role, the district drifted without a clear vision and program for the future. A number of different individuals assumed the role of moderator, but the position did not carry the authority and power that it had under Ach. Tongkham. The district could not afford a paid staff and so the work of the district became volunteer work, that is busy people who had their own jobs took on district leadership as "ngan fack." This style of leadership could respond to immediate problems and crises, but it could not create a vision for the future let alone change the old structures. Thus, in the 1980s the district experienced exactly the same problem as that experienced by the Nan Station in nearly all of its history. Both the station and the district had heavy leadership responsibilities and substantial authority, but they lacked the staff and the finances necessary to carry out their responsibilities. Most particularly, the district found it difficult to maintain the committee system, which was now extremely important since the district had no staff with which to carry out its work. In most cases, however, the "committee system" did not exist at all except on

paper, as the district appointed various people to be responsible for various areas of work, such as evangelism or Christian education. In a few cases, those responsible did form committees, but by-and-large they did not, and in fact they carried out very few activities. The district itself had little money and could do little for itself.

In the meantime, the churches and *muad* took an increasingly critical attitude towards the district, which they perceived as being not themselves but the city-based leadership they elected to office. They complained that the district didn't come to visit often enough and did not pay attention to their problems. They were increasingly reluctant to send money to support the district because they did not see that they received anything in return. In the case of one church, problems over the district's handling of money designated for building a new church building led not only to hard feelings but to the church virtually withdrawing from all district activities and even threatening to leave the CCT entirely. Thus, by the 1970s and 1980s the rural churches and *muad* were taking a somewhat more independent attitude towards the district. They still wanted the district to provide them benefits and still depended upon the district for much of their program, but they were increasingly impatient with the district's inability to give strong central leadership or do for the churches what they could not do for themselves.

In this leadership vacuum, only those congregations that had their own local resources for leadership grew at all. And yet it must be said that several congregations did in fact grow, to one degree or another. Thus, for example, under capable local leadership the Dhammaporn Church emerged by the 1980s as the strongest congregation in the district. It had also benefited to a certain extent from various projects conducted by the Rural Life Department. The Pornsawan Church, under trained, part-time pastoral leadership recovered from the massive split it experienced in the 1950s and achieved a stable, relatively strong congregational life. Interestingly enough, the Dandumrongdharma Church, which is the relocated Wanghan Church, has also achieved a modest growth in its life. Although lacking trained, educated leadership, the congregation has grown and maintained a strong internal fellowship in spite of some splits and many problems. The Prasatum Church also retained a relatively strong fellowship in spite of a break in the 1970s which saw half or more of its membership leave the church to form a New Apostles congregation. The Kunanukun Church, once the strongest rural congregation, has maintained its life and remains a relatively strong congregation, but it drifted somewhat in later years. The churches at Nam Kien and Ban Samai experienced some growth by 1990 under recent pastoral leadership, but they remained weak and without their own strong local leadership. On the other hand, the Sa Church progressively dwindled in size to the point that by the late 1980s it had entered a permanent crisis phase and seemed headed for eventual extinction. The Prasitiporn Church, located at the heart of the old mission station, also grew progressively weaker over the years, and where it once provided the bulk of district church leadership, by 1990 it hardly participated in the life of the district at all. The Pantasanya and Silaphet churches remained weak, each with their own serious problems, which hamper the emergence of strong congregational life. Virtually all of the *muad* in the district faced serious leadership problems and had weak congregational lives. The district, over the years, has sent a number of part-time pastoral care givers to these *muad*, but none of them have achieved significant results. In the case of the closely related Porntara and Wang Bao *muad*, they had dwindled in size to the point where there seemed little hope they could survive for very many more years.

It should be understood, however, that even the stronger congregations show the signs of long decades of neglect, which are the consequences of the station-centered system. Planning for worship is often haphazard and last minute. Most congregations seldom experience meaningful worship. Preaching is poorly done and not based on a clear knowledge of Scripture and theology. Few churches exhibit a commitment to Christian service or witness. Christian education programs are limited to smaller children, where they exist at all. Although their economic life has improved, a number of the congregations are still poor and their members must give most of their attention to making a living. There is little time for the church. In some congregations a number of members have become seasonal migrant workers, spending several months a year in Bangkok. Several of the churches continue to experience deep splits between families. In all of the congregations, the new world of the 1990s with all of its distractions weakens the church. Youth seem less interested. Women's groups are increasingly weaker. It might be said, generally, that most local church and *muad* members have some Christian

commitment and are basically good people, but they remain ignorant Christians whose commitment is real but limited and not clearly expressed in the living of a life of service to God, the church, and society.

As the churches and *muad* of the Fifth District struggled during the 1980s to sustain their own congregational lives, an important change took place in the CCT itself. The CCT took a strong shift towards a central emphasis on local church life. It began to develop a pastoral system. Its departments and the various districts began sponsoring a wide variety of programs aimed at training local church pastors. Where in the past the old missionary institutions had dominated the CCT's life and leadership, during the 1980s the churches and districts attained a stronger voice in national leadership circles. The Fifth District felt the effects of this shift, particularly with the arrival of the Rev. Don and Marge McIlvrde, Presbyterian missionaries, who came to work with the district in 1987. An experienced pastor himself, McIlvrde quickly moved to provide new leadership to the district as well as strengthen that already in place. Largely through his efforts, the district hired a district coordinator, a seminary graduate, and then again through his efforts the district hired another woman as a part-time pastor to help with district work. This new team initiated an ambitious program of local church training sessions, visiting each church and *muad* on a regular basis to conduct those sessions. This new district leadership, along with some older district leaders, fixed their efforts on local church growth and renewal.

Yet, the program they instituted still betrayed the marks of the old missionary system in a number of ways. First, the program vision itself, depended a great deal upon missionary leadership and missionary funding to make it succeed. Second, it depended upon the itineration model of the past, whereby the district team would go out and conduct activities in the churches. Finally, it relied on city-based training programs, which were hard to follow-up on and for which the majority of congregations showed little enthusiasm. In other words, it was a city-based, district-centered program that did not come from the churches but rather was taken to them. While the introduction of a paid district coordinator did strengthen the district in some ways, McIlvrde's program itself did not last more than three years and had little impact on the local churches. Thus, on the one hand, the brief period of 1987-1990, the years McIlvrde worked with the district, further strengthened the district's commitment to a church-centered vision, the growing vision of the CCT itself. On the other hand, it did not change the structure and system of the past. Thus, once again, the district pursued a new vision but relied on the old missionary system to achieve that vision.

Conclusion

When we look back at the coming of the missionaries in the 1890s, we can see that they came with an enthusiasm for their faith and a deep desire to share that faith with the people of Nan. They brought with them a vision of how they should work and created a set of working units and methods of working filling to that vision. We have characterized the structure of their vision as a station-centered structure, which sought to remedy of the problems facing rural Christian communities by creating a strong center. The lessons of the last 97 years demonstrate that the station-centered structure frustrated missionary and northern Thai leadership attempts to create strong local churches because neither the station nor the district after it had enough resources to make it work. At the same time, a second vision has existed since the 1890s, one which saw the strength of the station or the district must be in the local Christian communities. Rev. Mr. Irwin first tried to implement the vision, but he soon had to leave Nan and his attempt failed. Later brief attempts in the 1920s and 1930s also failed. But after 1955 the emergence of a vision for church and community-centered rural development led to a gradual awakening of this new vision until by 1990 the district's leadership was firmly committed to developing the churches as the base for Christian witness and ministry in Nan Province.

As of the early 1990s, however, the vision itself remained unclear, more of a hazy dream than a sharp set of goals. And the district largely depended upon old attitudes and old methods for attaining the vision. The CCT, in the meantime, has been of little real help to the district, except in the area of rural development, so that the district has had to rely on its own very limited resources.