

REPORT OF THE JARAI WORK
IN PLEI KU PROVINCE

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I praise the Lord for His marvelous working among the Jarai in just the four years I have been a part of the work in Plei Ku. When I arrived there in the fall of 1970, in all of Plei Ku and Phu Bon Provinces there were only 6 churches. However, since that time the Lord has called out a great number of Jarai for His name. Today there are 16 churches and several villages with large groups of Christians planning to build churches in 1975.

This marvelous growth is the result of the burden of nearly every Jarai church to take the Gospel to their own people. Each church has witnessing bands which reach a large number of villages each week. Also many individuals are faithful witnesses. For example, many employees and patients at the Plei Ku Province Hospital have found Christ through the faithful witness of the Christians on the staff there. Several villages have been introduced to the Gospel first by a Christian school teacher sent there. Most of the churches also have an early morning prayer meeting each day. Some prayer meetings are well attended, others not, but even the weakest churches have a small nucleus who faithfully seek the Lord together.

The Lord has mightily used the Christians from the village of Plei Monu to evangelize their district. In 1967 the first few men there came to Christ and by 1972 the entire village had responded to the Gospel. Today there are only four or five men who are still resisting and have not believed.

The Lord has used these people to raise up strong churches in five other villages in that area. In late 1970 the first response came at Plei Thung Dor. In spite of strong opposition from the Catholics, that work has grown steadily. Now they have a lovely cement church where about 150 meet to worship the Lord.

In 1971 the Lord used these Plei Monu Christians to bring a large number to Christ at Plei Chuet. Soon there were over 100 believers and they built their first small church. Later after the number of Christians increased their church was much too small. In 1973 they built a larger and much nicer cement church. During 1974 the church divided (Christians from Plei Nha Prong had been meeting there) and Plei Nha Prong built their own small church. Now nearly all of Plei Nha Prong has turned to Christ and recently a number of new families have come to the Lord at Plei Chuet. There has been much opposition from the Catholics here too.

For four years the Plei Monu Christians had faithfully witnessed at two other nearby villages — Plei Song Bao and Plei Song Phun. The people were hard and unresponsive and often just laughed and jeered at the preaching of the gospel. Through the years only two or three had come to Christ in each of these villages. However, praise the Lord, in 1974 He began moving in a mighty way. During this past year all but three households have come to Christ in the village of Plei Song Bao. At Plei Song Phun (a very large village) over half have received Christ.

Because of the overwhelming need for pastors and for teaching (the entire district of Plei Monu with these six large churches has only one student pastor) the Lord led us to plan three three-day Bible schools in the villages in January 1975. One was held at Plei Chuet-Plei Nha Prong, one at Plei Song Phun and one at Plei Song Bao. We had a wonderful time teaching these hungry new Christians. Total attendance of the three schools was nearly 400.

The work at Plei Breng has shown some growth and the Lord has used these people to raise up small groups of believers in the surrounding villages. These people have lacked in consistent teaching as their pastor has been a Bible school student, spending only vacation time and one year of practical service there. Their pastor, Rcom Boi was to have graduated from the Bannethuot Bible School this month.

One of the most thrilling ministries which came from the 1972 Spring Offensive was the work at the resettlement village of Thanh Binh. These people were housed in a former Army camp for nearly a year and while there nearly 200 of them found Christ. They were resettled at Thanh Binh where we continued to minister to them and teach them. They were also faithful witnesses and many many more turned to Christ after they moved to Thanh Binh. The Mission was slow in offering help and the people had no resources for buying materials but they wanted a church. So the roofing was given by the Christians from what they had been allotted as refugees, and they went to the woods to cut trees and bamboo for the rest of the building. They even built their own benches, but before the church was dedicated money given by the Mission was used to have better benches made. One of our Bible school students, Rnah Mloi, was assigned to Thanh Binh for his two years of practical service. He was there from May 1974 until the end of that year. The people had a difficult time supporting him and his wife was not agreeable to the assignment so as of January 1975 Mloi was moved to Phu Tuc in Phu Bon province. We assigned one of our men from our lay leadership program to pastor this group and he did so faithfully until Thanh Binh fell to the VC on March 5, 1975. The Thanh Binh people were able to escape as the VC moved in, after weeks and weeks of harassment and danger, and they were praising the Lord for His protection and care. When we left Plei Ku they were refugees again, housed at a former POW camp.

A smaller group of Christians at the resettled village of Me Kuk was also the outgrowth of the 1972 Offensive. Never a large group, but always enthusiastic they recently had decided to follow the example of the Thanh Binh people and build a simple church right in the center of the village. It was nearly finished when they also had to flee and they are now housed with the Thanh Binh people at the POW camp in Plei Ku. The pastor from Thanh Binh also helped to oversee the work at Me Kuk.

We praise the Lord for an outstanding young Bible school student presently pastoring the Plei O Church. For many years in spite of faithful witnessing there, there was only one Christian. But in 1971 one of the villagers had a dream which the Lord used to begin to open the hearts of the people. The student pastor, Siu Pek, has been in the church for just over a year and the Lord has wonderfully used him to establish and strengthen the Christians as well as to bring many families to Christ. They have a very nice church building and have been taking the Gospel to the villages around them as well.

One of the most discouraging areas among the Jarai has been around Phu Nhon and Plei Betel, two of the oldest works among the Jarai. However, as a result of the faithful ministry of the pastor, Ksor Bing, a new group of Christians has been raised up in that district at Plei Kenh San during 1974. A smaller group of believers are also now meeting at Plei Kenh Hmek and there are a few Christians in nearly every village in Phu Nhon District. One of the most thrilling works in that area though has been the result of the witness of a recently retired soldier in his own village of Plei Kly Djrik. The Lord used him to raise up churches at Phu Tuc and Phu Thien (Phu Bon province) while he was in the service and then in 1974 he returned to civilian life and his own village. In just the past year he has brought nearly 100 to Christ, they have built a simple church, and this lay leader Kpa Tan has attended two of our lay leader sessions in Plei Ku.

More recently a young Raday pastor has been assigned to the church at Plei Betel. He and his wife are anxious to be used of the Lord there and so far they have been a good help and testimony to this Christian village.

The Plei Ku Church has had many problems in the past few years and the enemy has been working. Revival began in early 1972 and the church was growing at the time of the Spring Offensive that year. However, by the end of that year, partly because of the attitude and actions of the pastor, the church began going downhill. There was a change of pastors near the end of 1974 and the Lord is using him, but there is still need for a real moving of God in their midst.

Plei Ku Roh, right on the edge of Plei Ku City, has been unresponsive for many years. There were a few Christians there but for the most part the people were not interested. Thank the Lord, 1973 was the beginning of a turning to Christ. There are two or three strong laymen and an enthusiastic group of new believers there now. They have begun a church building in the past few months.

We also praise the Lord for His working in Plei Bruk Klah. This work is about two years old and has often been discouraging. However, in the last few months the Christians have been growing and many have been added to their numbers.

We thank the Lord for the vision He gave to Dick Phillips and Mr. Ha in working among the Mnong, for starting a lay leadership program. After our Conference last year at which time Dick shared with us their experiences and told us about their program and curriculum, the Lord led us to begin such a program among the Jarai. Our first session was held in August 1974 with 23 in attendance. It was such a blessed time and we were so glad under the District to be able to actually assign some of these men as leaders of churches. The second session was held in February 1975 with 38 students. The students were an excellent representation of every district of the Jarai work. They studied for six days from morning until late in the evening with enthusiasm and real hunger for the Lord. In Plei Ku province there are eight of these men who have studied under this program who have been given responsibility for churches.

During this past year the Lord had given a real burden for more teaching. In addition to the lay leadership school and the village Bible schools, we were hoping to soon be able to plan schools for our young people's leaders and another for church deacons. During this 1974-75 school year the Lord had given me a ministry in a Bible class for high school students on a weekly basis and also for a Bible teaching ministry in several villages. Of course, with the recent arrival of the Jarai New Testament and Psalms our teaching was even more profitable and enjoyable.

The Jarai Church has two ordained pastors, three unordained pastors, three student pastors presently serving two-year internship; this year we had four young men studying in the Bannethuot Bible School (wives of two of them were students also) — two in their second year, one in the third year, and one in his final year.** In Plei Ku Province eight men are responsible for churches under the lay leadership program. There are approximately 3,500 Jarai Christians in Plei Ku Province.

** There is one Jarai student pastor presently studying at the Nhatrang Bible School; his wife is also a student there.