

Executive Director Bound for India to Serve Student Returnee

On December 12, **Robert Osburn**, the executive director for Wilberforce Academy, departs Minneapolis to minister with the Academy's first student, **S.S. Haokip (Thangboi)**. "Thangboi epitomizes our vision to develop students with God's heart to seek the welfare of their home counties," said Osburn recently.



Imphal, capital of Manipur state. Dry with daily highs around 70 F in December. Manipur state is about the size of New Hampshire, and borders the country of Burma. 34% are Christians.

He will speak in several churches in Imphal, the capital of Manipur state in extreme northeast India, as well as be guest of honor at the official launch of Thangboi's redemptive project, which is the establishment of a K-10 school to serve thousands of poor, uneducated children in his ancestral home south of Imphal. Cornerstone Academy Manipur aims to offer distinctly Christian education, in hopes of improving the lives of the students and their families, as well as opening countless doors for students to come to faith in Christ. Dr. Osburn will also meet with government officials.

A particular focus of the 10-day trip will be research. "We need a means to assess what we did right and what we did wrong in the ad hoc training we offered to Thangboi while he was at the University of Minnesota in Spring 2009," said Osburn.

While in India, on December 21 Osburn will also speak to



students at the prestigious Jawaharlal Nehru University and the Indian Institute of Technology about our Savior, the Baby Who Changed the World.

Osburn first encountered Thangboi when he entered a Christian faculty meeting in search of Christian fellowship on the University of Minnesota campus. Thangboi was sponsored by the U.S. State Department for five months of study in the International Education Leaders Program, a very selective program that brings the brightest mid-career professionals in education for short, concentrated stints at U.S. universities.

"I quickly learned," said Osburn, "that he came with a well-developed faith in Jesus Christ." Within a month,



Thangboi (pictured with his family) disclosed his dream of beginning the school in Manipur. "From that point forward I intensively mentored him in the project proposal that would highlight both his deep Christian commitments along with the kind of high

standards required for quality education," said Osburn. Members of Central Baptist Church of St. Paul, along with **Dr. Herb Klem** of Global Horizons International, became heavily involved in helping to fulfill the dream of Christian education for the poor of Manipur state.

Linda Leonard: Curriculum Coordinator with Compassion



In July 2009, InterFACE Ministries seconded Dr. Linda Leonard to work as the Academy's curriculum coordinator. Dr. Leonard's PhD in curriculum and instruction is from the University of Minnesota. Recently, we interviewed Dr. Leonard about how her faith shapes her calling to train students as redemptive change agents. An expanded interview is found at www.wilberforceacademy.org.

How did God first prod you to ministry among international students?

As an undergraduate I spent one summer alone on my own in Europe and suffered the homesickness and cultural shock familiar to every international student. In the late 70's I went to the Urbana missions conference where I attended a 30-minute walk through the Bible about "God's heart for the international". I was gripped with the message of grace to "the widow, the orphan, the poor, and the stranger among you".

How are you maximizing your gifts, skills, and experience as the Academy's curriculum coordinator?

Whatever content the Academy needs to provide will need to be "packaged" in ways that make learning more reflective, more meaningful, more accessible and applicable to people who participate in the Academy. Since my dissertation dealt with mentoring, I'm able to bring even that experience to the table because we envision Wilberforce Academy students having mentors in their vocational/academic fields as well as in their cultural home environments.

How will your concern for the urban poor impact the Academy's curriculum?

Wilberforce Academy can use the work here in housing, public safety, youth programming, and other community-based initiatives to inspire its students and fellows as they seek God's calling in their own lives.

Inaugural Conference Scheduled for October 8-9, 2010

Our conference planning committee, composed of **Glenn Bratt, Rinto Dasuki, Linda Leonard, Jeremy Newhouse, and Frank Proue**, is hard at work. Speakers will be **Eric Metaxas, Dr. Carol Hamrin, and Darrow Miller**. Watch for more information in upcoming newsletters.

I've Been Thinking...

After 24 years of long, intense conversations with international students, I can tell you that their number one frustration with their home societies is corruption.



That's why I addressed the topic "How Bribery Corrupts Our

Souls," before 80 international students and their families in late October, and why on December 4, I will speak to another group of University of Minnesota students on "How Bribery Stunts Societies." (The first talk is available online at www.cordus.ca/comment/article/1229.)

The curriculum we're developing to train students to be redemptive change agents will address this critical topic because the Bible addresses it. The central text is Deuteronomy 10:17, where a lofty view of God ("the great, the mighty and the awesome God") predicates the impossibility of bribing Him. If we can't bribe Him, then why should we bribe those who pretend to be gods (i.e., government officials)? Bribery, our students complain, is too high a price to pay.

---Bob Osburn