

## SAVE THE DATES!

In the next couple of months OMF (U.S.) is hosting events designed to inform, inspire and equip for ministry to and in East Asia.

Visit [www.omf.org/us](http://www.omf.org/us) for more information.

- **Houston:** Reaching East Asia's Peoples since 1865. Saturday, March 29 at Houston Chinese Church. Contact [info@omf.org](mailto:info@omf.org).
- **No Limits:** "Beijing and Beyond" April 19, 2008, Grace Brethren Church, Long Beach, CA; featuring OMF International's general director, Dr. Patrick Fung. Contact [swregion@omf.org](mailto:swregion@omf.org).
- **Partnership for Asia:** "Glorifying God in Beijing and Beyond" April 25-26, Peninsula Covenant Church, Redwood City, CA; featuring OMF International's general director, Dr. Patrick Fung. Contact [omfconference@yahoo.com](mailto:omfconference@yahoo.com).

## OPPORTUNITIES IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

OMF International is seeking to implement an International Personnel System (IPS). We are looking to see more people declaring God's glory in East Asia, and are therefore praying for 900 new workers to join us by 2011. But we also need to ensure that we are building the structures we need to keep people serving well. We are urgently seeking qualified people to fill the following positions:

1. International Systems Programmer
2. Software Development Technical Lead (2 positions)
3. IT Quality Manager
4. Infrastructure and Network Security Specialist
5. Systems Analyst

Learn more at [www.omf.org/singapore](http://www.omf.org/singapore).

## GIVING STRATEGICALLY

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Visit [www.omf.org/us/give](http://www.omf.org/us/give) or contact us at: [stewardship@omf.org](mailto:stewardship@omf.org) or 800.422.5330.

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# EAST ASIA INSIGHT

OMF INTERNATIONAL

## BUDDHISM

Walking out my door on my way to Bible study one evening, my neighbor's visiting daughter greeted me with "Hi! Where are you going?" "Hi there! To my Bible study." "Oh, you are one of those who think I'm a 'heathen.' I follow Buddhism." A friendly greeting dove quickly into a comparison of belief. While many who are wooed into adding Buddhist ways into their lives remain unaware that they are following Buddhism, this friend at least had made a conscious choice.

cultural learning aspects, I may unknowingly participate in a mandala ceremony that invites evil to dwell in my community. While hailed as a spiritual way of peace, Buddhism in its varying forms is infiltrating our lives in alarming ways.

Buddhist thought has shaped the Western mind for more than 200 years, influencing Transcendentalist writers such as Emerson and Thoreau. Their vast legacy is revealed in the mind sciences, in new age spirituality and in other teachings that proclaim the

power of the mind and positive thinking. Transcendental thought promoted the Zen Buddhism of the "beat" generation and the transcendental meditation of the hippie era.

The popularity of Buddhism has grown dramatically in the West since the 1960s. Fueled by the influence of the Dalai Lama, the Beatles and other celebrities, the teaching of western academics, and the immigration of Buddhists to the West, Buddhism has become the "in" religion. Increasingly, Westerners are embracing Buddhism or a new age worldview based in Buddhism—this is happening even among Christians.

Buddhism and its heralded leader, the Dalai Lama, promote peace. If peace is the agenda, how can it be a threat?

"It is a rare privilege to share this stage and this day with His Holiness, the 14th Dalai Lama. He is a one-man warrior for peace. He is a one-man warrior for spirituality," Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid said at the medal ceremony.\*

In addition to giving focus in other directions, the church has historically found Buddhists to be resistant to the gospel. Instead of giving herself to more devoted prayer, the church has looked

Buddhism is intentionally on the rise around the world ... and in our comfortable North American neighborhoods. It is one thing to visit Buddhist sites like Red Feather Lakes in northern Colorado and see the giant stupa or to visit the fringes of California campuses and find the schools for Buddhist thought. Somehow it is something that stays "out there" if we choose not to go. But it is closer than we think.

*"Buddhism is intentionally on the rise around the world ... and in our comfortable North American neighborhoods."*

Before she became a follower of Jesus, one OMF (U.S.) staff member focusing on the Buddhist world, slipped easily into Buddhist ways. "When I was in college I used a chant that I learned from a classmate who practiced a Japanese form of Buddhism. I denied the existence of God, but had a desire to control my world, so I chanted."

Have we drifted into complacency instead of active discernment? It would have been easy to hike in a local state park and ignore the small stone markers, Buddhist expressions, erected on various higher points along the way. What do we think when we see Buddhist prayer flags in yards or neighborhoods we pass? In a desperate search for health and healing, it is enticing to consider the methods of alternative medicine providers and dabble in meditation and yoga without realizing I am welcoming in the subtle ways of Buddhism. Visiting a museum for the

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# Buddhism Next Door?

“MOVING PEOPLE THROUGH PRAYER ALONE.” J.H.TAYLOR

## PRAY FOR BUDDHISTS

“The impact from the spread of Buddhism [in Asia] may be illustrated by a product from a kitchen blender. Blend bananas—representing animism or Shintoism, apples—depicting indigenous religions like Taoism [Daoism] and Confucianism, and throw in pears—indicative of tribal belief structures. The composite mixture in the blender still remains a light, creamy color. Then add strawberries—symbolizing Buddhism, and the whole mixture is changed suddenly, saturated with a pink hue. That is precisely the effect of Buddhism. It eclectically absorbed but did not alienate indigenous religions or animism.”\*

Buddhist thought continues to infiltrate belief systems around the world even as it did in Asia.

### PRAYER POINTS:

- Pray for those under the influence of Buddhism—that they will hunger for the living God.
- Pray for Buddhists who are questioning their beliefs or feeling disillusioned.
- Pray for Buddhists to come into contact with Christians who can answer their questions and doubts with good news.
- Pray for Christians in Buddhist regions—that Christ will be revealed through them and that they will communicate the gospel in ways Buddhists can understand.
- Pray for Christian witness in countries with limited religious freedom—China, Laos, Vietnam and Myanmar.

\*Buddhism through Christian Eyes by Alex Smith



### A PROFILE OF BUDDHISM

Buddhism takes many shapes and forms. While there is a body of teaching handed down from the Buddha, in practice, Buddhism is often a mix of worldviews and religious practices. Buddhism’s ability to adapt to indigenous traditions and religions is a key reason for its dominant influence in Asia. The Buddha proclaimed that he had gained the self knowledge necessary to break free from his *karma* and the endless cycles of rebirth. He said that he cannot save others, but can point the way for followers to save themselves. He explained man’s condition with the Four Noble Truths and gave the Eight-Fold Path as a way of release from that condition into a state of *nirvana* (emptiness/the void). (To learn more about these teachings, visit [www.omf.org/buddhism](http://www.omf.org/buddhism).)



#### Eight-Fold Path:

- Right knowledge or understanding.
- Right attitude, purpose and thought.
- Right speech.
- Right conduct.
- Right way of living, occupation.
- Right effort.
- Right awareness.
- Right composure/meditation.

#### Other points about Buddhism:

- Buddhists generally believe that there are many paths to salvation or *nirvana*.
- Belief in a personal God is an alien idea for Buddhists.
- Buddhism teaches that personality is extinguished as *nirvana* is attained.
- Buddhists in East Asia largely follow a mixture of one or more Buddhist traditions along with animism and ancestor worship.
- Jesus is understood to be a spiritual master similar to Buddha.
- Most Buddhists have either not heard the gospel or have not understood it.

#### In comparison to Christianity, Buddhists believe that:

- God does not exist; the ultimate reality is emptiness, an impersonal void.
- Christ is not divine.
- Humans are not spiritual beings; there is no eternal life, hope lies in the void.
- There is no mercy, just *karma* (the cosmic law of cause and effect).
- Merit, not grace, overcomes *karma*.
- The void is reached by eliminating all desire.
- Hope lies in death, not life, because it ends the cycle of suffering and rebirth (reincarnation).

#### A Story of Hope

When I was 20, I moved into a Buddhist monastery to become a lay monk. Although I was initially happy, by the sixth year I could not reconcile the life I was leading to the things I was being taught. It was a life without mercy, without joy and without grace. I was continually doing “good deeds” to make up for “bad deeds” that I knew I must have committed since I had so many problems. Frustratingly, I did not even know what the “bad deeds” had been. It was a frustrating, painful life. During the winter of my sixth year, I visited my head monk and confessed my doubts. He was surprised, but then gave me a list of the names of local religious leaders that I could “interview” in order to discover the truth.

Over three years, I interviewed almost every religious head of the small town in which I lived. During this period, I also began volunteering at a Christian soup kitchen. I did not believe in what they professed, but I loved how beautifully their life reflected their beliefs. After three years, I had not found an answer, but I knew that Buddhism’s karmic system was deeply flawed. A year after I moved to California, it clicked. In the middle of a sermon on brokenness, grace and God’s redemptive spirit, I finally accepted God’s sovereignty and mercy into my heart. My God is faithful, and throughout a rough two years, he has been a strong ship in stormy waters.

~A., a Buddhist monk in the U.S. who found Jesus through soup kitchen volunteering

...“Buddhism Next Door” continued from first page.



for a more readily harvested field. Buddhism is permeating our neighborhoods, and Buddhists are at our doorstep. Are we ready to tune in and pay attention? Lonely, stuck in an endless cycle, without God and without hope, our Buddhist neighbors need us to love them to life. How would God have you reach out to them?

#### GET INVOLVED

Buddhism is far from being “just another way to God.” In essence, Buddhism is life and eternity without God. But as Christians, we know our eternity is caught up in worship of the one true God, not in entering a state of nothingness. So what should we do for those influenced by Buddhism?

- **Pray!** Join thousands of others around the world in interceding for people who live under the shadow of Buddha. Visit [www.onebillionwait.org](http://www.onebillionwait.org) to learn more.
- **Go!** Touch the lives of Buddhist peoples with the good news of Jesus Christ. We have summer, short-term and long-term opportunities available at [www.omf.org/us](http://www.omf.org/us).
- **Love!** Buddhists are people loved by God. Many are searching for peace and happiness, looking within for answers that can only come from God. Ask him how he would have you show his love to Buddhists.  
*Some ideas to consider:* help send missionaries to Buddhist peoples; welcome Buddhists from other countries and befriend Buddhist neighbors; encourage others to reach out to Buddhists. You might want to begin by learning more about God’s heart and purposes for the peoples of the world and what he is doing among them. Check out the resources at the OMF bookstore ([www.omfbooks.com](http://www.omfbooks.com)) and browse our Buddhism website ([www.onebillionwait.org](http://www.onebillionwait.org)). Ask for an OMF speaker to come to your church or consider taking the *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* course at ([www.perspectives.org](http://www.perspectives.org)).

\*Source: <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,302744,00.html> cited 1/14/08.



Buddhist worshipers in Myanmar.

## ONE IN A MILLION

He didn’t know when it first started—or why—but Am, a young Thai man, gradually became more and more disillusioned with Buddhism as a way of life. As he continued his search for the truth, Am began to read more and more about Christianity and, as a result, learned how open and loving Christians could be. One day Am asked Nit, a teacher at the technical college he went to in Thailand, if she was a Christian. (There was something different about her, though he couldn’t put his finger on it.) When Nit said, “Yes, I’m a believer,” Am told her that he also wanted to follow Jesus. Amazingly, he was led to the Lord on the spot.

## LEAVING DARKNESS

Mrs. Z, a former devout Buddhist mother, 40, started going to church regularly back in the summer. She came because she feared darkness and couldn’t sleep at night. After accepting Christ and using the believer’s prayer each night, she now sleeps very well. For the past three months Mrs. Z has participated in weekly discipleship times with an OMF worker. They sing, pray and listen to Bible stories (as she is illiterate). Afterwards, they often exchange chicken raising ideas and gather organic vegetables from her farm. Mrs. Z was baptized at Christmastime. To see a person leaving darkness and walking into the light reminds us of the true meaning of Christmas!



## STUDENT RECEIVES CHRIST

Pam is a member of a small group led by a China worker. She is a very eager student who asks lots of questions and always looks for opportunities to practice her English. When a study on the book of Mark was offered, she was an enthusiastic student. In the study, she showed deep spiritual insight for one who does not have a Christian background. A few months into the study Pam was asked if she was interested in trusting in Christ but, like many people in China, a few months of learning was not enough for her trust in the Lord. She needed more time to make sure this was something she wanted to do, something that she could trust her life to. Because becoming a Christian is more than a private decision, it would affect her job and her relationships. Later in the study, the group discussed Mark 10—the rich young ruler. The rich young ruler didn’t believe because he wasn’t willing to give up his wealth. When Pam was asked what was holding her back from believing, she said, “Nothing. Now I am willing.” That day she prayed to God for her salvation.