

RENEWAL FOR MEN TO BE HELD IN CHIANG MAI

CbW responds to over a decade of inquiries



**Shane
Alexander**

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After years of responding to questions, calls, and emails from people wanting to know whether Come before Winter would ever consider hosting an event for men or whether we knew of “anything similar” to our program designed for men, CbW will host a pilot renewal for male ministers in Chiang Mai, Thailand, June 20-24, 2016.

According to Karen Alexander, founder and president, team members receive multiple inquiries from both men and women each year. “The requests are flattering, of course,” says Karen, “but we also recognize a need. Before making contact, the men who have called or written have taken the initiative to learn about our program; they have explored our website. One even said he was going to download and work through our online study about renewal, hoping to gain a little of what his daughter and sister had received.”

The Come before Winter Board first discussed the possibility of hosting an event for men in 2004, appointing Chairman Randy Yarbrough of Austin, Texas, and Barry Alexander, then an elder for Westover Hills Church of Christ, also in Austin, to serve as point persons for all contacts.

“Over the years, we have talked to several men who were very serious about the need, but until now no one has come forward who was willing and able to accept the responsibility for building a curriculum, recruiting a team, and directing the event,” said Yarbrough.

Shane Alexander, preaching minister for the Northcrest Church of Christ in Mexia, Texas, will direct the Thailand event, and Cliff Barbarick, Assistant Professor of New Testament at Abilene Christian University, will co-direct. Prior to committing to the assignment, the two spent months interviewing potential team members and participants in an effort to better understand expectations and needs, as well as discussing possible programs of study.

“The impetus for hosting a renewal for men comes primarily from husbands of women who have attended Come before Winter renewals in the past,” Shane told the CbW Board in January, 2014. “When these men ask for a ‘renewal’ for men, they are specifically asking to receive an experience similar to what their wives have experienced. To make substantial diversions from the existing program would be seen as bait and switch.

“The core of the Come before Winter model as well as its process, schedule, and goals are gender-neutral. While certain activities may have taken on a feminine flavor, our goal is to find dynamic equivalents to these activities so that the same purposes are met.”

Cliff, who has taken the lead on designing the core of the curriculum, says the study will explore Luke’s announcement that the “salvation God brings through Jesus involves a great reversal: the lowly will be exalted and the proud will be brought low.”

“This was great news for the ‘have nots,’ in society,” Cliff says, “but what about the ‘haves’? Luke builds a case that the gospel is good news for all—poor and proud—and begs the question: ‘If I am to experience the salvation Jesus brings, where in my life do I need to be lifted up, and where do I need to be brought low?’”

As in other renewal curricula, participants will be challenged during the renewal week to lay their own lives and ministries alongside Luke’s message and determine how an open and honest self-examination and response will change their lives and ministries and impact the world in which they live.

According to Karen, the pilot event does not mark a decision to move toward a men’s renewal program. Rather, it is an expedition into an area of spiritual formation and service to male ministers that is not well developed.

“We hope to contribute to an effort that will grow that body of knowledge in relation to serving men who minister on the field and/or in churches around the world,” Karen said. “To that end, we will facilitate a group of gifted, educated, experienced male ministers, now serving in the United States, as they go to serve their peers who minister on another continent. Regardless of what happens, we will have responded to more than a decade of requests from our participants, asking for a program that can serve the men they love.”

Though the team is not complete, other team members include Don Corbitt, an elder at the Northcrest Church of Christ in Mexia; Chris Flanders, former missionary to the Chiang Mai area, now assistant professor of missions at ACU and the director of Halbert Institute for Missions; Chad Higgins, worship minister for the Highland Oaks Church of Christ in Dallas, Texas; Andy Johnson, former missionary to Burkina Faso, now serving as missions minister for the Landmark Church of Christ in Montgomery, Alabama; Jody Lee, former missionary to Thailand; Curt Parsons, elder for The Hills Church of Christ in Fort Worth, Texas; Randy Vaughn, former missionary to Benin; Tod Vogt, executive director of Mission Alive; Phil Ware, president and founder of Heartlight.org, working with Interim Ministry Partners, and Barry Alexander, a CPA from Austin, Texas, and a CbW board member.



**Cliff
Barbarick**

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