

**AMP 8-9-15 | 9:00 - 9:30am**

**Today's Service**

- That God would draw unsaved people to our service, and into his kingdom.
- That Pastor Jon would preach in God's power as he preaches a topical series: Questioning Jesus that will cover various texts from the four Gospels and will work through the questions people ask Jesus and the questions Jesus asks people.
- That God's presence would be palpable and that all in attendance would be changed by the goodness, power, and love of God.

**RPC Outreach**

- That we the people of RPC would desire to be a word and deed church.
- That God would open up great and lasting opportunities of community service for RPC.
- That the congregational meeting on September 13<sup>th</sup> will be well attended. We will be voting to ordain Tom Harmon as an elder, voting to install a pastor, and voting to petition Presbytery to become a particular church of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.
- BBQ&A will be held at Cunningham Park on August 9 & 16 and September 13 & 20. Pray that it would be well attended and that it would be a time of good fellowship, service, and edification for all involved. Pray for Pastor Jon's preparations for the message he gives and for his answers to the questions he receives.

**Regional Church**

- Pray for the other churches of our presbytery: Westminster Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Jonathan Holst (Hamden, CT); Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Bohemia, Meindert Ploegman (Bohemia, NY); Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Franklin Square, William Shishko (Franklin Square, NY), Trinity Church, Ben Miller (Syosset, NY), Westchester Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Dan Osborne (Mt. Vernon, NY).

**Laos | Basic Country Facts:**

**Operation World Denomination Statistics**



Christians	Deno ms	Pop %	Affiliates	Ann Gr
<b>Protestant</b>	9	2.26	145,000	6.9%
<b>Independent</b>	1	0.44	28,000	5.9%
<b>Catholic</b>	1	0.67	43,000	2.0%
<b>Marginal</b>	5	0.01	1,000	11.8 %

**Ethnic Breakdown:** Lao 54.6%, Khmou 10.9%, Hmong 8%, Tai 3.8%, Phuthai 3.3%, Leu 2.2%, Katang 2.1%, Makong 2.1%, Akha 1.6%, other 10.4%, unspecified 1% (2005 est.)

**Major Languages:** Lao (official), French, English, various ethnic languages

**Religion:** Buddhist 66.8%, Christian 1.5%, other 31%, unspecified 0.7% (2005 est.)

**Population:** 6,911,544 (July 2015 est.)

**Life Expectancy:** male: 61.88 years female: 65.95 years (2015 est.)

**Government:** Communist state

**Economic Conditions:** The government of Laos, one of the few remaining one-party communist states, began decentralizing control and encouraging private enterprise in 1986. The results, starting from an extremely low base, were striking - growth averaged 6% per year from 1988-2008 except during the short-lived drop caused by the Asian financial crisis that began in 1997. Laos' growth has more recently been amongst the fastest in Asia and averaged nearly 8% per year for the last decade. Despite this high growth rate, Laos remains a country with an underdeveloped infrastructure, particularly in rural areas. It has a basic, but improving, road system, and limited external and internal land-line

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telecommunications. Electricity is available to 83% of the population. Laos' economy is heavily dependent on capital-intensive natural resource exports. The labor force, however, still relies on agriculture, dominated by rice cultivation in lowland areas, which accounts for about 25% of GDP and 73% of total employment. Economic growth has reduced official poverty rates from 46% in 1992 to 26% in 2010. Laos broadly appears to be on target to graduate from the UN Development Program's list of least-developed countries by 2020, and the country is preparing for implementation of the ASEAN Economic Community at the end of 2015 and for the rotating ASEAN chairmanship in 2016.

**GDP Per Capita:** \$5,000 (2014 est.)

**GDP - composition, by sector of origin:** agriculture: 23.7% industry: 32.2% services: 44.1% (2014 est.)

**Education:** The adult literacy rate exceeds two thirds. The male literacy rate exceeds the female literacy rate. In 2004 the net primary [enrollment] rate was at 84%. The National University of Laos is the Laos state's public university. The total literacy rate is 73% (2010 estimate).

**State of the Church:** Lao and Vietnamese communist forces were in complete control of Laos by 1975. Communist persecution of Christians was especially harsh between 1975 and 1978. Restrictions eased afterward, but churches and Christians are still watched and targeted. Buddhism has regained much of its old influence, but is heavily syncretized with animism. Persecution tends to happen in cycles and is expressed on a local or regional level as much as on a national scale. In all cases, though, it can be intense and ruthless toward the Church.

**Prayer Points:**

- Rapid church growth, despite restrictions and persecution. Almost all of the evangelism (and the churches that result) is led by indigenous Laotians. Growth is happening among several different peoples, in rural and urban areas, and throughout the country. Much of Laos remains unevangelized. The remarkable growth of the church is still dwarfed by the size of the task remaining. Most peoples remain unreached, and the gospel has not easily crossed ethnic barriers. Buddhism and tribal religions are often blended together and prevail throughout; compare 5,000 temples to the 250 church buildings. Pray for the gospel light to shine throughout Laos and to draw many to Christ. (OW 1)
- The suffering Church has recognized that persecution is one factor in its growth – persecution keeps them praying and relying on God. The situation has improved very slightly; but at the local and village levels, Christians still find themselves to be targets. Persistent social pressure and the prevention of building new church buildings are two primary opposition strategies. Persecution takes personal forms as well, with strong spiritual opposition compounding family and social pressures to continue practicing traditions. Pray for::
  - a) Perseverance and grace for those who must endure, especially those singled out by persecutors. Property has been seized, and ministers arrested and even killed.
  - b) Increased openness to evangelism, church planting and building – not illegal, yet still obstructed by the government. Much growth, by necessity, takes place “underground” in house groups, since the more formal congregations are watched and must be cautious. Pray for continued boldness to share the gospel.
  - c) Discipleship, teaching and biblical literacy for all who respond to Christ. Pray that believers will grow strong in faith and not fall away. Pray also that they become salt and light in their own society, and in a way that is truly Lao.
  - d) A cross-cultural missions vision in the church to reach the many ethnic minorities. (OW 2)
- The Lao Evangelical Church is one of two recognized Protestant bodies (along with the SDA) wherein several groups have been forced by the government to amalgamate. It is the largest and most influential Church, and where most of the Christian growth has occurred. Pray for the LEC, in particular the pastors, that they might demonstrate unity, genuine love and humility; pray for wisdom to handle the growth and to deal with the situations in both established congregations and house churches. As the primary state approved Christian body, the LEC itself struggles with issues of accountability, transparency in finances, and healthy relationships with smaller and newer denominations. Pray that God might expose any wrongdoing among church leaders and raise up faithful, humble and authentic servant leaders in the LEC. (OW 3)
- Leaders for the churches. Over 90% of all trained leaders left Laos in 1975. Most congregations do not have a trained pastor, even as church growth increases the urgency of the need. The LEC now has a Bible school training programme, complemented by a Catholic seminary and an increasing role for TEE and module-based training. Just as pressing is the need to develop reproducible training for lay leaders, in particular for the house church movements which, due to their unregistered nature, often lack the structures and resources for solid training. (OW 4)