

## Friends of Burma, Inc. (FOB) Fall, 2006

Dear Friends,

After hearing of the death of Rev. M. Zau Yaw, our very first and influential Burmese mentor, FOB made a grant of \$5,000 in his memory. His Kachin Church decided to buy a plot of land 40 miles from Rangoon in order to use as a center for youth activities. Many of you give so generously of undesignated donations and have made this memorial possible. With M. Zau Yaw we could always expect the truth in answer to our questions, even though it might not have been what we expected or wanted to hear. He will be much missed.



### *M. Zau Yaw Memorial Youth Building*

The situation in Burma with the IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons) has become desperate. In the Refugee International report of June 2006, "Burma is experiencing one of the most neglected humanitarian and human rights crises in the world." The Burma army has burned dozens of villages after looting them for rice, cattle, pigs, and chickens. Usually they kill two or three villagers and the rest flee to the jungle. This has produced 16 to 17,000 refugees in the last three months. Those villagers caught are put into concentration camps, called relocation camps, where they are forced to buy rice and other food from the army at inflated prices. Merchants and humanitarian organizations are forbidden to bring in food and supplies. There are now an estimated 1.5 million IDPs in Burma. Our friends report dozens of churches have been burned with their villages. FOB has ways of getting aid to them.

On the home front we are glad to report that Friends of Burma is now incorporated as a not-for-profit organization under the state of Indiana. We are now in the process seeking 501(C)3 status with the Federal government that will make donations tax deductible. Donations have been tax deductible in the past because we were and continue to be part of South Wayne Baptist Church until we gain that status in our own right. We appreciate very much that South Wayne Baptist Church has helped us for years in doing mission work among the people of Burma. Having grown extensively we have been advised to have our own status as our current budget exceeds that of the church.

We continue to get good reports from the Friends of Myanmar Governing Board, a committee that we set up in Rangoon in an effort to teach the Burmese Christians how to administer funds that we give them--\$10,000 per year. Many of you give to some of their special projects such as eyeglasses for students and faculty, aid to Retired Christian workers, and hearing aids to ministers. We get many heart touching letters such as Rev. Thra Ler Htoo's, pastor of Byay Chaung Baptist Church, who wrote, "I have got stroke due to diabetes since September 2002. I can't walk and work but with God's grace I can speak and have sound mind." He thanked us very gratefully for the 10,000 kyats (\$10). That such a small sum can make a difference to him and remind him that he is not forgotten is very, very touching. We are also grateful to you who support these programs.

John Peterson writes, "Good News: Erville Porwy, Executive Secretary for the Sgaw Karen Baptist Association centered in Pathein, writes that the universities and schools are open. This academic year sixteen students live in the Pathein University Christian Fellowship (UCF) Centre to which FOB has contributed. The Challenging News: this UCF building needs major renovations or to be demolished for a new one.

Our long time friend, Naw Paw Wah Doh, has been training persons to start childhood training centers and preschools in the Shwegyin area so children can be nurtured both spiritually and physically and intellectually. Paw Wah Doh was a student when we first became involved in Burma and it has been wonderful to see her maturity and initiative in the project. The picture shows the results of a toy making workshop. She is fourth from left.



The Myanmar Baptist Convention's Women Leadership Promotion Department has a training session for Community Health Workers twice a year. The Naga Baptist Convention decided to send 5 trainees all the way to Rangoon. The Nagas live in the far northwestern part of Burma in a very inaccessible place. FOB helped with their training and transportation cost of six months. Their training focused on physiology, infectious diseases, HIV/AIDS, mother and child care, etc. They took practical training at the KBC Clinic in Insein. They were each given a stethoscope, blood pressure cuff, and a thermometer at the completion of their training. One woman had to walk 4 days from Khamti in order to get back to her home village.

A supporter of FOB gave money to copy religious books from Myanmar Institute of Theology's (MIT) library to replace the books lost when the library of the Naga Bible School burned at Khamti.



We learned there is now another Sowards Library in addition to the one in Falam, Chin State. This new one is at Hpu Saw Bu Bible School at Yedwinyegan, in the west delta area. My father was greatly interested in books and libraries. We have stopped sending books because of the heavy loss rate and found it better to copy books from the MIT library because that way they get to choose the books most useful to them. It costs one cent per page and forty cents for binding, so \$100 will produce almost 10,000 pages. We gave sixty nine books to each of sixteen different libraries last year and will do it again if money is forth coming.





We try many things in Burma. Some have succeeded and some failed. Success also brings problems. We have backed a number of economic development programs of Naw Paw Gaw of Rangoon Women's Karen Developmental Association. She has developed a way of organizing women into groups who must save money before they get a loan. She has had good results and word has spread throughout Burma and now women in many areas want to do micro credit programs. Here are two of her success stories. "Naw Laura from Klar Woe Dav Village is 45 years old with 3 children. Her husband is a farmer and she is a primary teacher. She is a member of



Dorcas micro credit group since Feb. 2003. She took a loan from her group for one basket buy and sell business. Every Saturday she goes downtown and buys salt, candles, snacks, oil and other things which she takes to her village and sells. This once a week helps her pay her children's school fees and she has not failed to make her repayments in the last two years. Another story: Naw Charry from Papon took a loan for pig raising. She bought a pig for 20,000 kyats (\$20) and within one year she gets 7 piglets and she sells some and raises some.

She is good at taking care of pigs and all of her pigs are healthy. She plans to extend her pig raising project and now she can participate actively in church women's activities."

In 2005 Naw Paw Gaw conducted a three month key board training. FOB supplied two key boards. One of the trainees was Naw Thaw Thi from Shwebon Hsu Baptist Church. She now plays for the church, church choir, and music activities.





FOB gave 270,000 kyats on January 2005 to the Kawmuthra Karen Baptist Women's Association Micro Credit group which has 45 members divided into 6 groups. They have collected all service charges which are divided with 10% to their association, 50% to members and 40% to micro credit revolving fund. From 2003 to 2006 she has organized 20 Micro Credit groups. She was invited to Dwei and Myiet by women's groups to give training and supervision. We have made a grant to Dwei and now Myiet women want a grant of 300,000 kyats (\$250) plus \$83 travel money for Naw Paw Gaw to go there to further train them.

Another group has saved 100,000 kyats to build weaving machines and want to borrow 500,000 kyats \$400. You can see how word has spread.

The Asho Chin Women Association also has submitted a proposal for 300,000 kyats (\$250) in December 2005 and I asked Naw Paw Gaw if she felt they were ready. She does, so we need to raise \$500 for the two groups. She is also running a computer training class for poor and qualified young people. She has four computers and 21 trainees and would like to have two more computers at \$600 each. She closed her letter with, "Sometimes I feel very tired for doing for people, but you are my hero and I know that God bless me through you to do for people. I pray for you and please pray for me."



Another successful program that has gotten out of hand is the eyeglass program. We have given \$10 grants to Bible students and faculty and word has spread, so many more schools want to participate in this program. They had estimated the cost at \$10 for examination

and eyeglasses but really the cost is running \$12. It takes most students 3 months to earn that much and school fees come first. The photograph shows 46 students of the 119 at Myanmar Institute of Theology that needed eyeglasses out of about 500.

Philip Htoon, a member of FOB Executive Committee, was able to purchase 1,000 pitch pipes from China delivered in Burma for \$1.50 each which is much better than the \$4.75 we had been paying. We recently received a letter from a pastor who had been a student of Neil's father. He is still using the pitch pipe that Erville had given him, probably in the early 60's although he said it was not quite perfect anymore!



Judy Lundy: A sad announcement has been received from the orphanage in Taunggyi that one of the three sisters involved in the running of the facility has passed away. This represents a huge loss in terms of the over-all running capability of the facility, but also we have lost a very kind, thoughtful and loving friend. On a continuing note of support for the children, \$1,600 has been raised that will be utilized for the construction of two water tanks. Funds have also been set aside for the purchase of food and gifts for each child for the Christmas holiday ahead.

New sponsors are needed for the ever growing orphanages. Some sponsors lose interest or die so many times we need "Replacements". The annual reminder letter will be coming out in November so that sponsors can send in their yearly support check of \$144.

The KBC Clinic continues to serve the poor and needy people in and around Seminary Hill. Newly acquired equipment donated by churches and individuals has impacted the quality of care they are able to provide. Permits for the container of medical supplies have not been secured so that project is on a "Frustrating Hold". Pray that God will open the way for this shipment desperately needed equipment. Plans are underway for a new addition to the clinic.

Phillip Htoon carried a suitcase with about \$3,000 worth of medical supplies to the KBC Clinic when he visited Burma in August.



We can't send Christmas shoe boxes to Burma because of customs and high shipping but we can arrange to make up boxes there for the orphans. The total cost is \$5 each including internal transportation.

Our grants of \$10 to Retired Christian Workers have produced a lot of positive feedback. We think it best if we increase it to \$12 but we will keep accepting \$10 donations or any other amount. Typical recipient is Rev. Jakashin Naw Awn (to the left) of Nawngnang Baptist Church, Kachin State who served 47 years and is now 72.

Members of the Executive Board of FOB met with Stan Murray and IM treasurer to discuss an agreement between FOB and American Baptist Church International Ministries (IM) to clarify and solidify long term relationship so there will be adequate funding for ministry in Burma for many years ahead. As many are doing currently, you may want to include Friends of Burma (FOB) in your will.

We also met with Rev. K. D. Tu Lum, Executive Secretary of Myanmar Baptist Convention (MBC), who was at the last World Mission Conference at Green Lake. Our conversation mainly was to clarify our relationship. Friends of Burma (U. S.) has a counter part in Burma called Friends of Myanmar Governing Board (FOMGB) made up of Baptist leaders related to various programs we have there. FOMGB is now an official committee of MBC.

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If you prefer, an e-mail version of this newsletter is available with the pictures in color. All work in the U. S. is done by volunteers. Overhead is less than 1% of income. All donations are tax deductible and should be mailed to Friends of Burma, South Wayne Baptist Church, 548 Home Ave., Fort Wayne, IN 46807. E-mail: neildianasowards@juno.com Phone: (260) 745-3658.

Friends of Burma works closely with International Ministries (IM) of American Baptist Churches (ABC) which helps the Myanmar Baptist Convention. About 80% of the Protestants in Burma are Baptists.

**Burma Christian Fellowship Tour:** Four persons went on the January tour for fourteen days and all reports from the participants said it was a very meaningful experience. Dr. David Horton will be leading the next tour January 8 to 22, 2007 in Burma. He has been to Burma and been very involved in FOB. \$1,500 plus airfare. Deadline is Nov 1<sup>st</sup> with \$500 due; balance December 1<sup>st</sup>. For more information contact David at dehgvaz@hotmail.com Phone: 520 399-0675.

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## **Opportunities for Helping our Fellow Baptists in Burma (Myanmar).**

**1. Karen Baptist Convention Clinic.** Wish list: 1. Operating table: \$1680. 2. 1 Delivery table: \$810. 3. 1 Birthing table: \$370. 3. 2 Rotating chairs for surgeon: \$50 each. 4. One television: \$150. 5. Spot Light: \$1790.

**2. 200 Copies of the book, "Where There is No Doctor" for pastors.** Cost is \$2.20 per book. Requested by Tha Wah for Pathein Myaungmya pastors.

**3. Scholarships for Life Committed Christians.** \$150 will give a year's education in a Bible School or Seminary. It takes 3-4 years depending upon school. We have a request for four scholarships at Waimaw Theological School way up in the Kachin Hills.

**4. Myanmar Institute of Theology.** New class room building, \$270,000. Memorial rooms are \$5,000. Memorial equipping a room is \$500.

**5. Christian Resource Books.** Many Christians need religious resource books. We have permission to reprint some excellent books right there in Burma. They need capital to underwrite the printing. The books will be sold and the money recycled to print more books.

**6. Entrepreneur Loans.** After training and saving their match, a group of want-to-be businesspersons are given a loan to develop their business. Their repayment money is then loaned to others. But more seed money is needed as word spreads about the program and more want to participate. Cost is \$300 per project. Usually about thirty-six persons benefit in the first round.

**7. Sponsor an Orphan.** The Pathein Myaungmya Sgaw Karen Baptist Association has started an orphanage, Kwe Lwe and needs sponsors for 5 orphans. The cost to support a child is \$144 per year—all this money goes to the orphanage. Typical is Naw Beh Meh, Age 10, Grade 5, "Ambitious, wants to be a nurse."

**8. To repair tornado damage at Nyaungleben \$5,000.**

**9. Go Forward Press for Karen Baptist Convention.** Wish lists: (1) offset printing press \$12,000 (2) binding machine \$2,500 (3) cutter machine \$6,500 (4) computer \$500 (5) film machine \$600 (6) digital camera \$300 (7) graphic scanner \$250 (8) grinding machine \$350 (9) compact imaging system machine \$500.

**10. Other worthy programs: Eye Glasses** \$12.00, **Aid a Retired Christian worker** \$12.00, **Hearing aids for Ministers.** \$50.

Please make checks payable to **Friends of Burma**, South Wayne Baptist Church, 548 Home Ave., Fort Wayne, IN 46807. Phone: (260) 745-3658. neildianasowards@juno.com All donations are tax deductible. Our website is: [www.friendsofburma.org](http://www.friendsofburma.org) All work in the U.S. is done by volunteers.