

Friends of Burma Newsletter

September 2007

548 Home Avenue, Fort Wayne, Indiana 46807

MINISTRY CHANGING AND GROWING

You will notice in this newsletter that there are many new facets to our ministry as the world around us is changing so significantly. High inflation in Burma is putting great stress on families, churches and the organizations that we share with in ministry. These economic realities affect what we are able to do with your generous financial support. We covet your prayers. Gasoline costs have doubled in Burma affecting the farmers, electric generators and the cost of public transportation.

Somewhere between 12,000 and 18,000 Karen Burmese refugees from the Thai-Burma border are coming this year to eighteen cities in the U. S. Their sponsoring organization is providing housing, clothes, furniture and employment but there is a need for volunteers to get them to their many appointments and American families to mentor them--to help in their adjustment to our western culture. Most of the Burmese here do not speak Karen and the Karens do not speak Burmese. Translators are needed who can be called to translate by phone.



Diana works with many refugees in Fort Wayne.

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP TOUR

For the past several years Friends of Burma has sponsored a two week tour to Burma visiting with schools, families and churches with the guidance of native tour director Robertson Bwa. Phil Schock, son of former missionaries to Burma, is coordinating the two week tour in January 2008. We urge you to consider going to experience the hospitality and observe first hand what God is doing in this distant land. You will need to get your visa and passport very soon, send your deposit of \$500 to Phil by October 1 and get your airline ticket. Contact any of the executive board members about their life-changing experiences in Burma. Enclosed itinerary gives you all the details and costs. This appears to be the last time we can offer this tour because Robertson Bwa feels called to serve God in another way.



MYO MISSION FIELD. Great progress continues to be made in this field. Due to rising costs the evangelists are now being paid \$10 per month. The picture shows Myos with their musical instruments.

MINISTERS' KIDS

Many ministers' kids do not follow in their parents' footsteps because of the lack of resources (average pastor earns \$12.50 per month) and the struggle they observe. We were happy to learn that recently at the beginning of the academic year 52 ministers' kids entered training at the Myanmar Institute of Theology. We received letters of gratitude for the assistance they will receive from the Sowards Memorial Scholarship. The annual cost has risen drastically to \$200 per year for tuition, room, board and books. Your kind assistance and concern is so helpful.

PWO KAREN BIBLE SCHOOL, PATHEIN

Faculty members of the school in Pathein are pictured at graduation ceremonies. Instructor Lulu Watson wrote in a note of appreciation: "Time is short, life is tough, but God is so good. The blessings and providence of God is abundant. We cannot measure it or understand it." Such beautiful letters to Friends of Burma are so numerous that we can't print them all. Often they come with signed receipts for funds provided for special projects, scholarships and other programs. Undesignated gifts from several donors made these ministries possible.



Sally, Violet Kyaw, Nan Nan, ???

KEYBOARDS FOR CHRISTMAS

Many of us have more "things" than we need. As Christmas approaches you may want to tell your friends and family to give a gift to a school or orphanage in your honor. Last year Lew Murdock suggested that his children and grandchildren donate musical instruments (electronic keyboards [\$250-450] or guitars [\$40 with case] to one of the schools (28) under the Myanmar Baptist Convention. This is a wonderful idea to glorify the Christ child with music. One person provided new school uniforms [\$5.00 each] for the children of a child enrichment center (orphanage). Thanks Lew for sharing your love and ideas through Friends of Burma!

GO FORWARD PRESS

A number of students educated in the US were helped by Friends of Burma. These students are paying back their loans as well as supporting the printing and distribution of Christian literature through the Go Forward Press. This small shop does a terrific job with very limited equipment. Printing Christian materials requires special government licenses so we praise the Lord for this facility that is doing such a great work! The Purpose Driven Life costs just \$2.00 per copy in the Burmese language.

FLOODING PROBLEMS

Recently two churches from Dawei Myeik Association (Karen Baptist Convention) have been suffering from flooding and landslides. Damages to homes put an extra burden on the church members to replace their uninsured churches. More than 20,000 coconut trees were destroyed as well as many houses and churches. Two people died and many persons were injured. They desperately need our prayers and help. FOB granted \$1,000 to Karen Baptist Convention for relief work.



HEARING AIDS ARE A GREAT HELP

Several years ago we started a hearing aid program for pastors and Christian workers. The response from the recipients of the hearing aids (\$30) has been very uplifting. Some of the letters are written in Karen and often include a picture of the recipient. This excerpt is from the letter of the director of the city mission in Pathein. "I am getting older and my hearing power is declining. It troubles me a lot! When I received the gift from Friends of Burma for a hearing aid I rushed out to the market and bought one. It has

. **Rev. Barnabas** helped me a lot in my relationships with people and in listening at church. Because of my hearing problem I could not participate very well and now by the grace of God and FOB's gift I can hear more clearly and communicate more effectively. May God bless you and keep you always." Rev. Barnabas, Pathein.

ORPHAN SUPPORT IS GROWING

Seventy two (72) individuals or groups are currently supporting 147 boys and girls at five (5) Baptist sponsored orphanages around Burma. These children are able to go to school, receive Christian instruction and are fed and cared for by caring persons. I visited three of these "child enrichment centers" this past January and saw first hand how your love and financial support is being shared. Each October the sponsors are reminded that it is time to send in their annual support check. This year we



have increased the cost to \$156.00 (\$13 a month). Special recreation program and music lessons are provided when extra funds are provided. Some individuals sponsor several orphans. If you are interested in sponsoring a child please contact Diana Sowards in Fort Wayne.

HEALING MINISTRY.

Thanks to a church in Michigan and an organization in Georgia the Karen Baptist Clinic received \$14,000 worth of equipment for their operating room.

UNDESIGNATED GIFTS

We often received gifts from kind supporters that allow us to respond to important/significant requests that come to the FOB Executive Committee. Gifts of appreciated stock are a great way to go as you avoid capital gains taxes and receive a deduction for a charitable contribution. Recently such gifts have been used for: 1. Faculty support, 2. Educational Opportunities outside of Burma, 3. Emergency health care, 4. Building projects, 5. books for twenty libraries at Bible Schools and Seminaries.



ANSWERED PRAYER

A prayer was answered in the form of a special one year \$4,000 gift to a student nurse in the Philippines. Without this gift the student would have had to go back to Burma without an extra year of training.

SUPPORT FOR RETIRED MINISTERS

There is no retirement program for ministers and Christian workers in Burma. Some retired ministers in the US started sending money to us to meet special needs. Rev. Isaac Zen Thawng, General Secretary of the Tedim Baptist Convention sent us notes of gratitude from recipients of special grants. One hand written note expresses the gratitude of an 82 year old pastor. "I am Saw Maung Latt (82) years old. I have served the Lord for over 52 years. My wife died in 1984. Now I am alone. We have no children. Four years ago one of my legs was broken and I could not move and had to stay at home. I felt so lonely and depressed. But God is with me and His church is looking after me. By His grace, I received the sum of 15,000 kyats (\$12.50) from FOB, through Thra Honor Nyo of the Karen Baptist Convention. This aid helps me a lot for my health and survival. May God continue to bless your ministry."

501©3- STATUS OF FRIENDS OF BURMA

We are now incorporated in the state of Indiana. Until our application is approved as a separate 501(c)3 organization, we still have exempt status under the auspices of South Wayne Baptist Church which has been so kind to us all these years in helping support our efforts in Burma.

FRIENDS OF MYANMAR GOVERNING BOARD

We continue to receive good reports from the board in Burma, a committee that was set up in Rangoon in an effort to teach the Burmese Christians to administer the funds (initially \$10,000) that we give them. Many of you have caused this to increase because of your interest in aid to retired Christian workers and the eye glasses programs. Typical of the responses we have gotten from this very meaningful program is the letter from Rev. Thra Ler Htoo, the pastor of Tha Byay Chaung Baptist Church. He writes:

"I had a stroke due to diabetes in September 2002. I can't walk and work but with God's grace I can speak and have a sound mind."

Rev. Htoo thanked us very gratefully for the 10,000kyats (\$9.00). This small sum has made such a great difference to him and reminds him that he is not forgotten. We are so grateful to you who support this program.



SHWEGYIN CHILDHOOD TRAINING CENTER

Our long time friend, Naw Paw Wah Doh, started a new training center for early childhood development. Children are nurtured spiritually, physically and intellectually. Paw Wah Doh was a student when Friends of Burma first became involved and it has been wonderful to see her maturity and initiative in this project. The picture shows a toy making workshop.

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP PROMOTION DEPARTMENT

The Myanmar Baptist Convention has a training session for Community Health Promoters twice a year. The Naga Baptist Convention decided to send 5 trainees all the way to Rangoon. Nagas live in the far northwestern part of Burma in a very remote place. Friends of Burma helped with their training and transportation costs for 6 months.

The training focused on physiology, infectious diseases, HIV/AIDS, mother and child care, etc. The women took their practical training at the KBC clinic in Insein. Each student was given a stethoscope, blood pressure cuff and a thermometer at the completion of their training. One woman walked 4 days from Khamti to get back to her home.

NEW LIBRARY AT HPU SAW BU BIBLE SCHOOL

Principal Laurel Moh recently sent us pictures of the new library located in Yedwinye-gan in the Delta area. We are no longer shipping books to Burma because there is no longer surface mail so postage costs have tripled. We have made funds available for some of these small Bible schools to pick out certain books at the Myanmar Institute of Theology to have copies made of the books they most need. We are pleased with the cooperation and support from the librarian.

ELECTRICITY PROBLEM

Many sections of Yangon (Rangoon) receive electricity only four hours a day and that is often 1 am to 5 am. It makes it difficult for students to study and to run a school. Fuel prices make running a generator expensive. One school spends more for diesel fuel than for faculty salaries.



Please pray that our application for a large grant to improve clinics and supply village health workers with books and equipment be granted.

See our website: friendsofburma.org A complete list of our ministries is posted there and our Executive Committee Membership.



Matthew 25 Love Clinic in Pathein.

All donations are tax deductible.
Friends of Burma, 548 Home Ave, Fort Wayne, IN 46807, 260 745-3658

BURMA CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP TOUR

January 7 to January 21, 2008

Burma (Myanmar-52,000,000) is the country where the famous missionaries Ann & Adoniram Judson and their family labored for many years. Judson is looked upon as the person who started the American Protestant missionary movement. The work they started in 1812 was very difficult but prospered and grew. Today the church is vital, alive, dynamic and creative with dedicated leadership. These Christians are a source of great inspiration. Most of the Christian leaders speak English. Previous tour participants respond in the box below.

"It was our hope for years to trace the steps of the Judson's. Our Trip proved to be a life changing experience." Dr. James Didier, Illinois.
"Seeing the results of the missionary efforts begun by the Judson's and continued by Friends of Burma is thrilling." Rev. Jim Tomkins, Missouri.
"After traveling all over the world, I found the Burmese people most hospitable!" Judy Lundy, Arizona.

The visit of Christians from the United States to Burma encourages believers who live with many restrictions and feel cut off from the rest of the world. Your faith will be enriched as you worship, visit schools, clinics, orphanages and homes. Due to Robertson Bwa feeling called to serve God in a different way, this will be the last time Friends of Burma will offer this tour.

Day 1. Monday, 01.07.08. Arrive in Yangon (5,000,000) and be met at the airport by tour leader Robertson Bwa. Transfer to Royal White Elephant Hotel (Tel. 95-1-500822-www.rwehotel.com). Lunch will be served at the hotel and guests are encouraged to unpack and rest for a couple of hours. Sightsee in Yangon as time permits. Overnight in Yangon.

Day 2. Tuesday, 01.08.08. Visit the large seminary campus in Insein and see the Myanmar Institute of Theology, the Karen Baptist Theological Institute, the Myanmar Institute of Christian Theology and the newly renovated KBCHC clinic. Lunch with Principal Simon P.K. En, and English speaking students and faculty. Visit the Myanmar Baptist and Karen Baptist headquarters. Meet some of the leaders and visit Memorial Hall to learn more about the history of the missionary movement. Visit the fruit market at the night bazaar and then dinner at the hotel. Overnight in Yangon.

Day 3. Wednesday, 01.09.08. Transfer to airport and fly to Bagan, the ancient capital of Myanmar and one of the richest archaeological sites in Asia. Check into Hotel Aung Min Ga Lar. Visit Nyang Oo market and see local Myanmar life. Sightsee in Bagan, including the entrance gate of the old Bagan city Thrabar and the old palace site. Sunset atop one of the large temples overlooking the Bagan plain. Dinner at a restaurant on the banks of the Irrawaddy River, with cultural and puppet show. Overnight in Bagan.

Day 4. Thursday, 01.10.08. After breakfast, drive to Mount Popa, the Kingdom of the Nat Spirit. This is known as the Mt. Olympia of Myanmar. On the way we will be able to observe rural life. Drive back to Bagan, and visit the famous lacquer-ware shops. Sunset on the famous Irrawaddy River. Overnight in Bagan.

Day 5. Friday, 01.11.08. Transfer to airport and fly to TadaOo Airport. Drive to Mandalay, the ancient capital of Myanmar and the center of crafts, culture and Buddhism in Myanmar. After checking into hotel, we will spend the whole day sightseeing, including wood and stone carving, bronze casting, tapestry work, gold leaf making and marionette making. Visit Aung Pin Lei Judson Baptist Church, a former prison, where Adoniram Judson was once imprisoned. Visit another church that was built and supported by the Buddhist King Mindon, who founded Mandalay and who was the second to the last king of Myanmar. Take in the views atop Mandalay Hill. Overnight in Mandalay.

Day 6. Saturday, 01.12.08. Transfer to TadaOo airport after breakfast and fly to Heho airport. Drive to mountainous Taunggyi, capital of Shan State. We'll spend the day sightseeing, including Lay NyinThit Library, started by the Christian community, the Karen Baptist Church, the Southern Shan State Bible School and the Three Sisters Orphanage. Overnight at Musei Hotel, Taunggyi.

Day 7. Sunday, 01.13.08. Visit the local market with its various ethnic groups. Drive to Nyaung Shwe, the gateway city to Inle Lake. We'll take a boat trip on the lake, see the PhaungdawOo Pagoda, the famous traditional leg rowing, cotton and silk weaving, floating gardens, floating market, and the Jumping Cat Monastery. Overnight in Inle.

Day 8. Monday, 01.04.08. After breakfast, transfer to Heho airport and fly back to Yangon. Transfer back to Hotel Royal White Elephant. Visit glass making factory and sightsee as time permits. Overnight in Yangon.

Day 9. Tuesday, 01.15.08. Drive to Patheingyi, in the Western delta area of Myanmar. Visit the Ko Tha Pyu Bible School, meeting with staff and students. Enjoy a traditional culture show and music. Overnight at La Pyit Wun guest house in Patheingyi.

Day 10. Wednesday, 01.16.08. Sightsee in Patheingyi, capital of the Irrawaddy Division, home to a large number of the Karen Christians in Myanmar. Visit Matthew 25 Love Clinic, women's handicrafts, the Baptist Headquarters, and Pwo Karen Bible School. After lunch visit the colorful umbrella shops and try the famous rice candy. Drive back to Yangon. Overnight in Yangon.

Day 11. Thursday, 01.17.08. Drive to Paan, the Capital of Karen State, passing through Thaton, the ancient capital of Mon State. Enjoy sunset at Shwe Yin Myaw Pagoda, on the banks of the Salween River. Overnight at Tiger Hotel, Paan.

Day 12. Friday, 01.18.08. Drive to Maulmein, the Capital of Mon State and the center of Christian mission work in Judson's time. Visit the graves of former missionaries and Judson's daughter. Check into Hotel Ngwe Moe. After lunch, proceed to Kyaik Ka Mi, the seaside city, and visit the grave of Judson's wife Ann. Drive back to Maulmein passing through Than Phu Za Yat, to visit the WW II Allied Forces cemetery. In Mudon we will see the world's longest reclining Buddha. Overnight at Mgwe Moe Hotel, Maulmein.

Day 13. Saturday, 01.19.08. After breakfast leave Maulmein and visit Musaree, a Karen Christian village. Continue drive back and visit the famous Koggoon cave with thousands of Buddha images, a place that Judson also visited in 1835. Lunch at Thaton, the ancient Mon capital, where the Mon King Manuha reigned and lived. After lunch continue to Kyaiktiyo, where we will see the famous Kyaiktiyo Pagoda, balancing on a golden rock on a cliff. Overnight in Kinpun Camp, Kyaik Hto.

Day 14. Sunday, 01.20.08. Drive back to Yangon. Lunch on the way, passing through Bago, the ancient capital of Mon and Myanmar. Join service at Myanmar Christian Baptist Church, in Bago if time permits. Dinner at Panda restaurant and drive back to Yangon. Overnight in Yangon.

Day 15. Monday, 01.21.08. Breakfast at the hotel and farewell to Robertson Bwa with transport to the airport for flights back to the United States.

Cost: Air travel to Myanmar is your responsibility. There are a number of carriers to choose from. Roundtrip air travel between the US and Myanmar is \$1,000 to \$1,500 depending on the airlines and your place of departure. There is an airport tax of \$10 in Yangon. The ground tour in Myanmar is \$1,600 (15D/14N) per person that includes all entrance fees, hotels, meals, bus, boat, and internal airlines fares. We will travel in an air-conditioned 10-passenger van. You will need a passport and visa for Myanmar. It is highly recommend that each tour member take at least \$500 extra to give away to worthy schools and programs. Putting a \$10 bill into the hands of a Bible school teacher who makes \$5 per month will give you incredible joy. Daily costs before or after the trip are about \$35 - \$50 per day for hotel and meals. Your tips make the difference for the drivers and the tour guide.

In Myanmar, we use the services of Robertson Bwa, (robertsonbwa@gmail.com) a very experienced Christian tour director: 790, 3rd Street, Ward No.1 Yangon (95-1-653320).

Recommended reading: **To The Golden Shore**, by Courtney Anderson. This is a fascinating account of the life of Adoniram Judson, the early American missionary movement and the initial work in Burma (Myanmar) by Judson and other early missionaries.

Phil Schock is the U.S. coordinator for this trip and will be traveling with the group. He was born in Rangoon, Burma (Yangon, Myanmar) to American missionary parents. Phil left Burma with his parents in 1966 at the age of 8, and has since returned to Burma to visit three times. He has a BA in Sociology from Lewis and Clark College and a Masters in Management from Marylhurst College. He worked in management for Intel Corporation for 19 years in Oregon. Send a \$500 refundable deposit, by October 1st (check payable to Friends of Burma) to Phil Schock at: 4214 SW Corbett Ave., Portland, OR 97239. 503-246-2304. E-mail: rangoon1@aol.com

FRIENDS OF BURMA, Inc.
A Committee of South Wayne Baptist Church
548 Home Avenue
Fort Wayne, IN 46807

Name_____

Address_____

City, State, Zip_____

I want to help the people of Burma (Myanmar). Enclosed find check for \$_____ for the ministry indicated below. The amount in { } indicates the full sponsorship, but any amount will help and be deeply appreciated.

____An Orphan {\$156 per year}

____Retired Christian Worker {\$12 each}

____Entrepreneur Group {\$300}

____Eyeglasses for students {\$12 each}

____Seminary Student {\$200 per year}

____Hearing Aid of minister {\$25 each}

____Evangelist {\$120 per year}
per year}

____ Sponsor a High School Student {\$50}

____Christian Clinic {Any amount}

____Building Fund {Any amount}

____Needed books {Average \$2.50 each}

____ As Needed {Any amount}