

Friends of Burma, Inc. Newsletter

Friends of Burma, Inc. Newsletter, A Special Edition from Yangon, Fall 2017



October 15, 2017

The Music that Adorns Churches

by Adam Maung

Since I came back to Myanmar last year, I have been attending the same church where I was baptized on Insein seminary hill. Amazingly enough a lot within the church building - the pews, the lightings, the banner, etc. - have remained the same for the past 25 years!



Thramu Tah Mla Paw Meh at CMD Music library

However, the one noticeable transformation is a beautiful choir music by seminary students. The beautiful voices, nicely arranged music, a polished piano all add to a wonderful worship experience. The person in charge of the choir is my childhood friend Thramu Ta Mla Paw Meh, who is the head of Church Music Department (CMD) at Karen Baptist Theological Seminary (KBTS). Some of you may recall that FOB has supported her and her department periodically in the past. One weekend afternoon I decided to visit my longtime friend Thramu Ta Mla Paw Meh and her

program.

About 20 years ago, KBTS introduced CMD, and it has since made a significant impact to church music in the Karen communities. The program is designed to train and educate students so that they could go back to serve their churches. And most of the graduates have done just that. The primary focus is in piano, voice, and voices but there are also cello and wind instruments.

There are ten used pianos for students to practice and take lessons. Thramu Ta Mla Paw is hoping to get an electronic piano (please see the Wish List).



A CMD student practicing piano

The department has remained relatively small with a low student-to-teacher ratio so that students benefit from teacher's attention. Currently there are 7 teachers with 20 fulltime students within the department. Three of the teachers, including Thramu Ta Mlah Paw, studied music abroad and came back to serve. In fact, two of them were sponsored by FOB during their studies abroad. The teachers' main responsibilities include overall music for KBTS. In addition to a one-year program that offers Certificate of Church Music, this year CMD starts a Church Music Diploma that requires two years.

The wonderful job that CMD has done obviously reflects in the beautiful Sunday services that I have been attending. Thanks to the department, Karen churches in

Myanmar these days have good pianists which I particularly appreciate because most Karen churches in the US are devoid of good pianists.

Myanmar Young Returnees

by Adam Maung

I have been quite encouraged to see a lot of young people in their mid 20s to early 30s' repatriated back to Myanmar. It is timely as the country basically needs as many of these young repats to rebuild and modernize.



Harmony Kadoe (picture above) is one of those who decided to come back to Myanmar after finishing her bachelor's at Bacone College in Muskogee, OK. Some of you may remember her as she spent two summers with Neil and Diana helping FOB as well as a Karen church in Ft. Wayne, IN.

Since coming back to Yangon in 2015, she has taught at KBTS, BARS, Dr. Chit Maung Library as well as in Nyaung Ywa. In addition, she has started a fellowship program between KBTS Liberal Arts Program (KLAP) and a migrants' school in Thoo Mweh Khee (TMK) located 45-minute drive from Mae Sot in Thailand. The purpose of the program was to connect KLAP students to Thoo Mweh Khee and explore ways to help out the school. She also did a mission trip with Thra Tawlu to Bago Yoma as a follow-up to the mission work that FOB has supported. In both trips, she leveraged her US connection to secure funding. Currently, she works for

the Ministry of Communications in Nay Pyi Daw teaching high-ranking officials English but finds time to do volunteer work.



Harmony with KLAP students in Thoo Mweh Khee

Like Harmony, most young returnees keep themselves busy with many side jobs or activities. They are genuinely excited about the opportunities in Myanmar and the potential that they can realize for the country and the difference that they can make for the people. They find ways to use the ideas and connections that they have brought back to make the pursuit of life more fulfilling than while they were abroad. For Myanmar's sake, let's keep them coming back!

A Bicycle Boy Sells Ice to Support Mom

by Adam Maung



On his trip to distribute mosquito nets in Hmawbi area, Russ, FOB only paid staff in Myanmar, came across a poor mother of 8 children. With an alcoholic husband, Naw Mu Gyi, struggled to make ends meet. Naw Mu Gyi did odd jobs to support her family but with the youngest child at age 3, life was unkind to her. Her son Saw Gay Nay Wah, however, helped out by selling ice from a factory in nearby villages. Recently, this 11-year old boy needed a new bike to continue to support his mom. So Russ took him to a Hmawbi market and got him a new bike.

Christian Education Center from Dawei, Southern Myanmar

By Naw Show Ei Ei Tun



Dawei Youth Hostel Students

Early this year, I had a chance to go to Dawei, the capital of Thanintharyi Region in Southern Burma bordering with Thailand for the first time for work. While there, I had an opportunity to visit Christian Education Center – a youth hostel – which is now home to 120 middle and high school students (5th to 10th grade) coming from nearby Karen villages including some from beautiful islands in Myeik Archipelago. The Christian Education Center was first founded about 12 years ago in 2005 by a Baptist pastor Rev. Saw Tun Oo and his wife Naw Flory, a native of Thanintharyi, when they saw many children were missing opportunities to continue their education beyond elementary school as their native villages simply did not have full high schools. To provide them with further education opportunities, the couple decided to start a small hostel under the auspices of Karen Baptist Convention (KBC)'s Dawei Myeik Baptist Association. During the weekdays, the students go to public middle and high schools in Dawei. They provide room and board, tutoring sessions after school hours and spiritual guidance for the students. The school is financed by fees from parents or guardians, individual donors and some contribution by the Dawei Myeik Baptist Association. They collect only 150,000 Myanmar Kyats (est. US\$110) per academic year for one student from the parents as almost all the parents are poor villagers who have lost land or livelihood due to intense armed conflicts or land grab in their areas. Some are orphans. Lately, children whose parents have left for Thailand as migrant workers have been coming to the hostel. It is sad to learn that some parents have stopped contacting and supporting their children because of divorce or other challenges faced as migrant workers in Thailand. Rev. Saw Tun Oo said his students' high school graduation rate is low (10%) due to their weak Burmese language skill, he still strongly feels fulfilled and the need to continue this ministry as it is making a difference in students' lives who would have only received elementary education. (The national high school graduation rate is only 31-24%). He is pleased that they were able to send some high school graduates to universities. In light of changing political landscape and a more open economy, Rev. Saw Tun Oo is now exploring opportunities to network with vocational training programs for his students so that they can find ways to get jobs and stand on their own feet.

He said narcotic drug addiction has been a major challenge for youth there, as it is elsewhere in many parts of the country. Some major contributing factors are lack of sound formal or non-formal education and/or good recreational outlets where youth can grow, learn and have fun. In addition to running the hostel, Rev. Saw Tun

Oo is actively involved in advocacy for youth development together with other non-government community based organizations and international NGOs operating in the area.

In Their Own Words

We often receive wonderful feedback on the various projects that we support. Here are some in their own words so that as a supporter of FOB, you know what a blessing you have been.

Eye Glasses



"We thank all FOB members and all donors for giving eyeglasses to so many students of bible schools in Myanmar for so many years. Many of them become pastor, lecturer, evangelist, leader and serve in the community. May the Lord keep on blessing FOB."

Nant Christina - Pu Mya San Pwo Karen Bible School

Hearing Aids



*"Saw Poe The is a Deacon of Yon Daunt Karen Baptist Church at Delta. He is 80 years old but very active in church activities. When he heard about hearing aids program from FOB he was very happy and even he came from very far place as soon as he heard about it. He is very thanking FOB for support him with hearing aid and it is very powerful for his life and it's like his starting a new life." **Thramu Naw Paw Gaw***

News and Updates

- English classes at **Dr. Chit Maung Library** have been doing well and in high demand as parents recognize the importance of English. These classes prepare students to take Cambridge English Language Assessment Test. Last year, all 74 students who took the test passed and 30% of them earned some distinctions! This year the teachers have added upper intermediate level totaling six classes.
- **The annual meeting for FOB Executive Committee** was held at Ft. Wayne, IN on July 15, 2017. Hosted by Neil and Diana, it was the first time the annual meeting was held outside of Phoenix, AZ. The meeting minutes will be made available on our website.
- **The Pathein-Myaungmya Sgaw Karen Baptist Association (PMSBA)** has a program that helps outstanding students in villages that only have elementary schools to continue middle and high schools. PMSBA offers these students an opportunity to study in Pathein and stay in a hostel. The

program has been astonishingly successful with 78% of its students passing matriculation exam compared to 32% nationwide! It costs \$300 each for these students to come to Patheingyi but the village and church chips in half. We have an opportunity to sponsor the other half.

Giving is all about where your heart belongs. Please take a moment to review a variety of exciting ministries below and pick one or two that touch your heart.

- Operating room at Matthew 25 Hospital: **\$5,000**
- Support a team to teach mental health and counseling in refugee camp in Thailand: **\$1,800**
- Electronic piano for Church Music Department in KBTS: **\$1,200**
- Support a nursing student (per year): **\$500**
- Sponsor two 5th graders from Bago Yoma to study in Thayawaddy (per student): **\$300**
- Sponsor one orphan per year: **\$360**
- Sponsor students in PMSBA program (see News and Updates for more): **\$150**
- Kachin Internally Displaced Camps: **\$50+**
- Alternative Christmas gift: **\$50**
- Eye glasses per pair: **\$17**
- Where There Is No Doctors (per book): **\$5**
- Mosquito Nets: **\$7**

Your support of full amount or any portion would be a blessing. For more information, please visit us at friendsofburma.org. Please write a check payable to *Friends of Burma* or [use Paypal](#) or [Razoo](#). FOB is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, and all donations are tax-deductible.

Do you know that Friends of Burma has only one-paid staff in Burma? All the work in US is done by volunteers. The overhead cost is less than 2% of the total income! That makes FOB one of the lowest overhead costs among the non-profit organizations in the US. Your love gift goes straight to the beneficiaries!

Do you have a will?

If not, consider the following risks associated with not having a will or estate plan.

- Your loved ones will have no control over the distribution of your assets once you are gone. The local court will decide how your assets should be divided.

- In the court decision, no religious, educational, charitable or other philanthropic causes will be included. You will miss opportunities for charitable gift annuities and trusts that can benefit you during your life, as well as helping your favorite causes.
- Taxes, expenses, and fees could substantially reduce your estate.

So, if you do not already have a will, perhaps it is time to start thinking. If you already have a will, please consider Friends of Burma in your future plan to continue your favorite programs or projects. Please contact Neil or Diana at neildianasowards@juno.com for more information. For planned giving opportunities, you may also contact, American Baptist Foundation at abfadmin@abc-usa.org or visit <http://abcofgiving.org/>.

Friends of Burma, Inc. 548 Home Ave. Ft. Wayne, IN 46807

Tel. 260-745-3658, Email: president@friendsofburma.org

Website: <http://friendsofburma.org>, Blog: <http://blog.friendsofburma.org>

E-Newsletters: <http://news.friendsofburma.org>

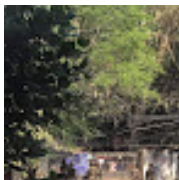


Newsletter

Popular posts from this blog

Friends of Burma, Inc. Newsletter Spring 2021

April 02, 2021



"A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed." Proverbs 11:25 We can't thank you enough for all you have supported in this time of need in Myanmar ...

[READ MORE](#)
