

Newsletter Spring 2004

Dear Friends, We feel greatly blessed by God for the people who support various projects in Burma. Because of you, God is able to help many, and it is a joy to share with you what God has accomplished.

The interest on the Sowards Endowment supports the Erville and Genevieve Sowards Scholarship, which is administered by Myanmar Baptist Convention. We just received a report that 331 children of ministers received scholarships to one of twelve seminaries or Bible Schools. An additional 288 students from poor families received aid. Thanks to many of you, students at other schools received much needed support by those who give \$150 per year to help them.



Myanmar Institute of Theology Students

Some of our other projects do not involve a lot of money, yet have a significant impact on individuals. One pastor received \$25 for a hearing aid and wrote, "I am now in my 90s and losing my hearing power. The hearing aid helps me greatly in my conversation with people and listening to the word of God."

We had two go on the Burma Christian Fellowship tour last January but one found it so meaningful that she sent \$500 and told us to publicize it more! Each person carried in a Project C.U.R.E. medical kit that cost us \$150 and contained \$2,500 of medical supplies.



An Orphan Being X-rayed at KBC

Convention and the Loikaw Baptist Church. We are heartened by the report that Naw Bu Meh, a third grade orphan, won first prize in the state singing contest. She went on to represent her state at the national competition. The KBC clinic regularly visits the area orphanages. Cost of sponsorship is \$144 per year.

Clinic Report: (by Tansy Maung)

The KBC Clinic fills a vital role in the life of Seminary

FOB made a grant to buy 200 books, "Where There Is No Doctor" at \$2 each to give village health workers to help them treat some medical problems and to recognize serious cases.

A church in Maine is sponsoring ten evangelists to the Myo people/tribe which takes care of one fourth of that program. Each evangelist receives \$5 per month--an unbelievable bargain.

Orphan Report: (by Dr. David Horton)

Forty nine individuals and four Sunday School classes support 94 orphans in five orphanages under the guidance/direction of the Karen Baptist



Hill and far beyond. Dedicated physicians come from all over Rangoon to minister to the poor who come to the clinic. It is far more than what we in the states imagine a "clinic" to be. It is a full-fledged hospital laboring under a lack of good facilities and equipment. Some of you donors have been wonderful in meeting overwhelming needs. Today the clinic operates with 49 staff and 16 specialists. There are OVER 400 BABIES delivered each year and the new equipment has made each of these deliveries safer. There were 3569 dental patients last year. Our donations enable this medical ministry to continue, as the patients pay nothing or a very small amount for their care. Please consider giving a donation for training and building needs so the clinic can continue to offer their outstanding services.

In 2004, the clinic is delighted to have acquired the following much-needed items, which was made possible by the generous contribution of friends in the U.S.A: Electrocardiogram machine, Fetal heart sound monitor, Computer, Printer, Modem, Baby weighing scale (nursery scale), Bathroom weighing scale, Pressure cuffs (adult and pediatric), Stethoscopes (adult and pediatric), and Oropharyngeal tubes.

By the grace of God, your gifts have made it possible for us to do some much needed repair work. We repaired and repainted some major parts of the clinic, patient's beds, and tables, the ceiling of the maternity ward, and the outpatient department.



Sue Dolbow Delivering a Contribution

There is a video on the clinic available. It will be mailed to you upon your request. After viewing you will have to return it to Friends of Burma.

Library Report: (by Sue Dolbow and Show Ei Ei Tun)

We just received a report from KBTS library that a donated computer has been most helpful in cataloging and keeping inventory with the book collection. They are very grateful. Even in the villages it is possible to create a small library in one room for children to sit in and read or hear stories read to them. A few books read over and over again is better than

none. We have heard of the practice of setting aside a library room for reading with some schools now. The three most successful community libraries have been established in Insein, Pathein, and Taunggyi. These are circulating libraries designed for patrons to borrow and return books. As the community interest and demand grows, this will require more staffing and more books. How exciting!

Burma Christian Fellowship Tour: Burma Christian Fellowship Tour: The Burma Christian Fellowship Tour will be Monday, January 10, to Sunday, January 23, 2005. The cost is still \$1,500 plus air fare. Feedback from previous participants has been most encouraging, and the Burmese appreciate Americans coming to see their work, share fellowship, and help in various ways. If a church has twelve who want to go, they can have their own tour at another time. For further information, contact Dr. Paul D. Aita at Japanese Baptist Church, 160 Broadway, Seattle, WA 98122. Phone 206/622-7351. E-mail: paul.aita@juno.com He will have the complete itinerary when it becomes available, and will be able to communicate with you through June and then again in September.

Paul and Gail Aita will be teaching at the Myanmar Institute of Theology during July and August of this year, their third summer there as Adjunct Faculty. Paul has taught Greek, Hebrew, and Pastoral Theology to M.Div. students, and Worship and Preaching to B.R.E. students. Gail has taught English in both the seminary and in the BARS program. Arrangements for the Aitas were initially made through the volunteer office of ABC International Ministries. Paul currently serves as Senior Minister of the Japanese Baptist Church, which permits him the time for this kind of mission work as part of his ministry to the church. In 2002, three members of JBC spent two weeks with the Aitas in Burma--most at MIT, some traveling to Bagan and Inle Lake. The Aitas' experiences in Myanmar were described in articles they wrote for the Winter 2001 and Winter 2003 issues of American Baptists in Mission, which

are available on the website of ABC/USA. Paul D. Aita, Senior Minister,
Website: www.jbcseattle.org Japanese Baptist Church. Voice 206/622-7351, 160 Broadway, Seattle WA 98122-5434, Fax 206/622-3462.

Ruth and John Peterson's Report: We spent four weeks in Burma in January and February teaching and helping in a number of ways. Teaching gender issues (The Writings of Paul on Women) and practical theology courses (Pastoral as Spiritual Guide, Counseling, Worship and Liturgy, and Preaching Seminar) at MIT offered a great chance to listen to the hearts of the students. Though the details may be a little different, the issues that the young pastors face are just like the issues faced in churches in the United States. The Burmese appreciate Americans coming to teach.

We also visited in Pathein, particularly spending time at the Matthew 25 Clinic. The building is old and small. It is the dream of the doctor and his associates to build in order to better serve those in need. The quality of the staff and their commitment is impressive. As is true all over Burma, the staff is partly volunteer and underpaid. They recently obtained a small generator so they can continue operations with lights rather than flashlight when the power goes out. It is a small one that is not too satisfactory, but hopefully can be replaced with something less noisy and polluting soon.

Another memorable experience in Pathein was worshipping with a group of university students. The hostel and University Christian Fellowship is a vibrant place that is trying to meet the changing needs of their clientele. Western Christian contemporary music abounds, but there is also a desire to use ethnic music and/or words to spread the gospel.

The work of the women to train women in leadership development and assist tribal girls in finding jobs that are not exploitive is awe-inspiring. We were able to visit with three women's center directors whose work ranged from teaching tatting to English classes to brokering jobs for their clients with the staffs of embassies. Ruth spent a fair amount of time doing English conversation classes either one on one or in larger groups through these centers. Every experience was memorable.



Ruth Doing English Tutoring

accepted. Two of his students have put on demonstration programs for youth on the more efficient GS Clay stove that saves 60% on fuel.

FOB paid for the copying and distributing of 3 Burmese language books to twenty seminaries and Bible Schools. We also sponsored the copying of five books in Karen language distributed to twelve Karen



John Peterson sharing at MIT

Sometimes, since we think "outside of the box", we can bring a new perspective. Neil suggested a modification of MIT's (Myanmar Institute of Theology) projected building that would increase its cost by 30% but also the usable space by 80% which was unanimously



Three Religious Books FOB Underwrote

schools.

We now have a good looking Friends of Burma brochure. If you want some, please e-mail us. We have a lot. They were printed in Burma to save money. Everything we do, we focus on the good of the Burmese people.

Dr. Kathy Welch, at the Baptist River Kwai Hospital on the Burma Thai border, had to take emergency personal leave. FOB contributed \$2,500 to help Dr. Steve James go and fill in for her for six weeks. That hospital treats many Burmese traumatized by the conflict on the border.

The Karen Baptist Convention is building a six story building for its staff. The FOB Advisory Board approved a \$5,000 grant toward that building. They also need a van and have asked our help on that project. Raising money for a van has been very difficult in the past. This is a desperate need and we were personally asked to help by the general secretary, Honor Nyo, of the Karen Baptist Convention.



This is a student waiting for a \$10 grant so she can buy a pair of glasses. So many have been helped by your gifts in the past but there are still many in need of your help.

While we like to report our successes, we also have our disappointments. One of the five Burmese students we educated has married and will not be returning. Because of N & D's age and reduced income, we will not be able to bring more students here to train as teachers. All reports tell us Lwin Moe is doing an outstanding job teaching at BARS. We will still endeavor to help those in graduate programs.

At Lwin Moe's request, we gave a computer to the Mon Bible School at Moulmein thanks to many unspecified donations we have received. We don't get many unspecified donations and we make very good use of every unspecified donation we receive.

Saw Htaw Htoo is now taking care of FOB's website. You can see it at friendsofburma.org.

A Friends of Burma Advisory Board has been formed to help make decisions in allocating funds and to have responsibility to keep the programs going after Neil & Diana are gone.

A virus wiped out Neil's computer and its sub e-mail lists including those who could receive this newsletter by e-mail. So if you can, that would save printing and postage, e-mail your address to Neil.



The KBC Truck, which FOB made a significant contribution towards its purchase, carries medical teams into the remote countryside

Opportunities for Helping Needy People in Burma (Myanmar)

1. **Karen Baptist Convention Staff Housing.** The total cost is \$110,000. They have raised \$70,000 and need help with the rest.
2. **Van for Karen Baptist Convention.** They need a reconditioned van.
3. **Karen Baptist Convention Clinic.** Wish list: Backup generator \$3,125, one tube well \$650, and two Nitrous Oxide cylinders at \$200 each.
4. **Book.** "Where There is No Doctor" for village health workers. Cost is \$2 each.
5. **Scholarships for Life Committed Christians.** One hundred and fifty dollars will give a year's education in a Bible School or Seminary. It takes 3-4 years depending upon school.
6. **Myanmar Institute of Theology.** They need thirty beds at \$20 each, 50 chair-desks at \$12, and \$200,000 for a new classroom building for their ever expanding student body.
7. **Christian Resource Books.** The Christians need religious resource books and have permission to reprint in Burma some of what they need. They need capital to underwrite the printing. The books will be sold and the money recycled to print more books.
8. **Entrepreneur Loans.** After training and saving their match, a group is given a loan to develop their business. The money from their loan repayment 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 benefit in the first round.
9. **Eye Glasses.** If you appreciate the clear vision your glasses give you, perhaps you would want to give that blessing to another person for only \$10. Faculties get them as well as students.
10. **Sponsor an Orphan.** Cost is \$144 per year--all this money goes to support the orphan.
11. **Aid a Retired Christian worker.** Ten dollars goes a long way in Burma. It is more than two months income for many desperate retirees. If your retirement is comfortable, perhaps you will like to help a retiree on the other side of the world.
12. **Mosquito nets for evangelists.** We have an opportunity to buy high quality mosquito nets

for \$7 each that will last ten years and 21 washings. It is the best protection from malaria. A \$7 donation may save a life for ten years.

13. **Girl's Dormitory Extension.** MICT (Myanmar Institute of Christian Theology) needs to expand its girls' dormitory because currently sixteen are crowded into each room. Total cost is \$8,000. MICT has given sacrificially by donating land for the new Unified Library which will be on Seminary Hill. Should we not help them to build their new building?

14. **Hearing aids for Ministers.** Some old ministers need hearing aids. The cost in Burma is \$50 for a general amplifying hearing aid.

Please make checks payable to **Friends of Burma**, South Wayne Baptist Church, 548 Home Ave., Fort Wayne, IN 46807. Phone: (Note change in area code) (260) 745-3658.

neildianasowards@juno.com All donations are tax deductible. All work in the U.S. is done by volunteers--Neil & Diana Sowards, David Horton, John & Ruth Peterson, Tansy Kadoe, Paul Aita, Saw Htaw Htoo.