

Newsletter: Friends of Burma

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Partners in Action

I recently had the privilege of visiting Burma and Thailand for six weeks. My heart was overwhelmed with joy as I got to see in action ministries supported by Friends of Burma (FOB). Thanks be to God and our ministry partners! FOB's belief is firmly rooted in the investment in people and the value of partnership. Ministries shine the brightest when they are carried out by those at the frontline with the purpose to help people help themselves and others. FOB, thus, equips and empowers our fellow workers, who labor in God's ministries and who in turn bless us with the pleasure and privilege of enjoying the harvests produced by the power of our partnership in Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:9 says, *"We are God's fellow workers. You are God's field. You are God's building."* (ESV)

FOB rejoices and takes pride in our partnership with our fellow workers all over Burma. This newsletter features God's fields that are fruitful and God's buildings that stand tall as a result of our collaboration. Please know that your partnership with us in prayer and support makes it all possible.

Tansy Kadoe
FOB Executive Board
Member

Kawthoolei Karen Baptist Bible School and College (KKBBSC): New Relationship in Action

Spring symbolizes new beginning and growth, and appropriately so. God has blessed FOB with a new partnership in this season --- Kawthoolei Karen Baptist Bible School and College. KKBBSC is a seminary that has trained countless numbers of ministers in its 35 years of history. The school has a Bachelor of Theology (BTh) as well as two recent additions, Master of Religious Education (MRE) and Master of Divinity (MDiv). Yet, this is not your typical seminary.

KKBBSC is situated in Mae La Refugee Camp in Thailand, which has housed refugees from Burma for the past 30 years, the result of civil war that erupted in 1949 and never seemed to end. Compounding the challenges of living and providing its services in a refugee camp, a devastating fire broke out in April 2012. The fire destroyed much of the school, but God made it possible for KKBBSC to rebuild.

Under auspices of the U.N., the more than 45,000 refugees at Mae La have recently experienced dwindling food supplies, along with difficult living conditions, limiting freedom in speech, movement, association, visitation, etc. Amidst these stifling restrictions, KKBBSC is engaged in the Kingdom work, spreading and living out the good news and values of God's Kingdom. For the 2017-2018 academic year, the enrollment numbered 475 students, served by 47 faculty members. The KKBBSC also administers two care centers that take care of 101 students from grade K-12. These students are either orphans or children from remote areas seeking education.

It all started with my trip to KKBBSC in Mae La Refugee Camp to teach counseling for two weeks with friends. We attended the morning chapel upon our arrival at KKBBSC, and the beautiful sounds of the seminary choir greeted our travel-weary bodies. The dissonance between songs of praise rising from a refugee camp nestled amongst majestic mountains, and the dreariness of living in such grim conditions was disconcerting. Yet, it set the tone for the course of our work there.



We were assigned to teach the final-year students of the Karen Theological Study program. We spent about six hours each day with the students and were on sacred ground with them. We appreciated their willingness to embrace vulnerability to participate in the healing ministry. Laughing and crying together brought us closer; we could not help but fall in love with them. Many KKBBS students come from non-believing families, who face harsh treatment from their loved ones for choosing the Christian faith. Many expressed the desire to be missionaries in their home and surrounding villages. This holds true for some of the teachers as well.

The teachers are the backbone of this school. With the chapel divided by cotton curtains to create classrooms for lessons, since the school does not have enough rooms for the 475 students, the teachers battle with intense heat, cramped classrooms with some classes having 70 to 80 students, limited resources to prepare and deliver lessons, and their own challenges with unbelieving families that are unable to comprehend their choice to volunteer as teachers when their education could earn them a handsome amount of income elsewhere. Yet, it's hard to know their struggles looking at their smiles and the passion for their students that run deeper and stronger than the mighty Salween River. The students, the teachers, and the school are a testament to the hardiness of the Karens and the wonderful grace of God.

My profound gratitude goes to KKBBS, the faculty, and the students. As the Psalmist said, "My cup runneth over." The brevity of our encounter with these people is decidedly disproportionate to the depth and breadth of their profound influence on me. The effects of oppression and scarcity I saw were on a much larger scale than I expected. Through it all, they continue persevering with the assurance of God's unequivocal love for them. I was overwhelmed by their faith, dedication, and sacrifices. Despite food shortages, lack of adequate health care and daily amenities, these humble people exhibit a resilience that is awe-inspiring. Of course, problems exist, but they will carry out the Kingdom work, according to God's purposes, and are encouraged by Genesis 50:20-21: *You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.*

~ Tansy Kadoe, FOB Executive Board Member ~

KBTS Student Council's Gospel Trip: Evangelism in Action (12/17 – 29, 2017)

The Student Council of the Karen Baptist Theological Seminary (KBTS), consisting of 15 students and a faculty member, visited eleven villages in the Geh Keh Geh Bah Mission Field. There has been opposition to the Gospel work in that area. At first, we were prohibited from sharing the gospel in a village, but God opened up the way for us. The villagers are mostly Karen and Myanmar (Burmans). They are farmers living in mountainous area and using the slash and burn method in growing paddy. With challenges, including crop-eating rats and scarce water, life is very hard for them. The majority are adherents of Buddhism. Our activities included:

- dividing into group, visiting homes and sharing the Gospel.
- teaching songs to children; worshipping nightly; holding concerts that included Christmas pageant, songs, dances, drama.
- distributing medicine and giving gifts to villagers.

We thank God for protecting us from danger, especially while we were travelling on motorbikes. We thank FOB donors, who partnered with us through financial and prayer support. It is our earnest prayer that those whom we ministered to will come to the knowledge of God and accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

~ Sheila Kyaw, KBTS Faculty Member ~

KBC Hospital: Healing in Action

~ **KBC Hospital is FOB's partner for almost 30 years.** ~

We live in a remote village in the Ler Doh area. My friend, Eh Nay Paw, suffered from severe stomach pain and was told by Dr. Sha Kler Law, who used to work for Karen Baptist Convention (KBC) Hospital, that she would need a surgery. He took us to KBC Hospital. A number of concerns ran through my mind: the very far distance, the money, the place to stay, etc. We decided to just seek medical help by faith, not knowing what would happen. When we got to the hospital, we were placed in a patient hostel (helped built by FOB). That was such a blessing! We met the hostel administrator, Thrah Don, who is also an Operation Theater Technician at the hospital. He took care of us and paid for our food. The hospital employees treated us kindly. While waiting for my friend having a Total Abdominal Hysterectomy, the staff chatted with us and made us feel at ease. We also qualified for free of charge service. We walked away from KBC Hospital with our burden lightened and our hearts filled with gratitude for the goodness of God that came through KBC Hospital.

~ Naw Eh Salgay, Patient's friend ~

**Thrah Don
treating
patient's
relatives
with
Ice Cream**



KBTS Library Archive: Preservation in Action

"Of all our national assets, Archives are the most precious; they are the gift of one generation to another and the extent of our care of them marks the extent of our civilization." *Arthur G. Doughty, Dominion Archivist, 1904-1935*



The design of the new KBTS
Library Archive building

Our faith specifically engages us with the whole long history of God's interaction with humankind. Appreciation of this grounding of our faith in the history of God's people can open our eyes to the need to preserve the records of the previous and current generations that chronicle our Christian journey. Archives are important because in the stories that they preserve, we find our identity, purpose, and direction. Unfortunately, libraries and archives, despite their central importance to a democratic society, have lived for years on the margin of poverty. In Burma, a lack of preserving our Christian heritage leaves us with fragmented or even erroneous historical information. If no action is taken, the voice of the Christian history in Burma will be lost. There is an urgency to make the wisdom of the history audible. To meet this need, I have been working on establishing an archive at the Karen Baptist Theological Seminary (KBTS). God has blessed us with the ability to build an archive by 2020, which we will dedicate in the celebration of KBTS 175th birthday. What is still essential is equipping our librarian with the archivist training. Especially in this day and age, digital archiving is a compulsory technical skill. We would be most grateful if you can support us with this need.

~ Dr. Lwai Wah, KBTS Principal ~

KBC Care Centers: Compassion in Action



We had the privilege of holding a leadership training/retreat for KBC nine childcare centers. In attendance was Ko Ye, 20 years old, who once was a child at Hpu Saw Bu, and later became a staff member. Ko Ye was in fifth grade when he came to live in Hpu Saw Bu. His parents and five of his seven siblings perished in Nargis Cyclone, which was reported to have caused a death toll of up to 300,000 people. Ko Ye grew up in a family with Muslim faith. In eighth grade, Ko Ye accepted Jesus Christ as his savior. He still wrestles with some questions regarding his life experiences, but he is grateful his relationship with God is in a very strong standing. Two years ago, Ko Ye graduated from the role of a student and began serving as a teacher/caretaker/cook/sports trainer. He enjoys cooking for the children, but by his own admission, he is not the best trainer. It was out of his heart to mentor and encourage the children that he decided to become a soccer coach. He also disclosed that he sometimes finds the kids annoying, and commented, "But deep down in my heart, when I look at them, I see myself in them." It is Ko Ye's hope and dream to attend Myanmar Institute of Christian

Theology and serve in the areas from which he came. Ko Ye said, "The hardest part will come when I will have to leave the kids and begin the school." Ko Ye is grateful to God, Hpu Saw Bu Care Center, and all supporters for the privilege of growing up in a loving and nurturing environment. His motivation is to be a blessing as he has been richly blessed.

~ Htoo Khu Paw, KBC Care and
Counseling Director ~



FOB Annual Christmas Gift: Hope in Action



Naw Tha Le May Paw with
her best friend

"I was brought up by my mother. My father died when my mother was pregnant with me. She even considered to abort me. My mother died when I was a teenager. I was left with my elder siblings and my two younger step brothers. After praying for three years about becoming a fulltime servant of the Lord, I decided to come to KBTS. I encounter many obstacles during my studies at KBTS. One hardest hit came when my best friend suddenly died on Oct 15, 2017. I was not able to study and sleep, and ended up in the hospital. Lacking money was an additional problem. I was severely depressed. The Christmas gift from you was not only an answer to my prayer, but one of the reasons I recovered. By the grace of God, I have met all the academic requirements and am able to finalize my duties as Secretary of Graduating Class and of Hsaw Htit/Mudraw student's Prayer Band. Your gift is a real blessing to me. Thank you all from the bottom of my heart."

~ Naw Tha Le May Paw, KBTS M.Div. Student ~

* Each year, FOB provides Christian leaders with Christmas gifts to give out.
Dr. Lwai Wah presented Naw Tha Le May Paw with the Christmas gift.

Dr. Chit Maung Learning Center: Learning in Action

Dr. Chit Maung Library continues to serve the communities and has recently affirmed its position as an education center with the new name, "Dr. Chit Maung Learning Center (DCMLC)." We want to share with you three highlights:

- Joanna Michiko Shi Kyaw will be volunteering as the Program Director at DCMLSC, after recently graduating from Indiana University with a bachelor degree in General Study of Communication and Human Resources.
- During this summer, DCMLC renovated its facility to create more space for learning. A total of 328 children are participating in the summer learning programs that offer teaching English, exam preps, violin, and piano, at a very reasonable fee.
- The annual library day was on February 12, 2018 to engage the communities, promote library programs, and raise funds. Youth members from other churches participated in the fundraising. A total of \$750 was raised.

DCMLC greatly values our long-standing partnership of 25 years with FOB. We are greatly indebted to FOB supporters for their kind support.

~ Anna Barbara Maung, DCMLC Advisor and FOB Executive Member ~



Bago Yoma Summer Camp: Service in Action



Harmony Kadoe led a team that included a pastor, a doctor, three teachers, an evangelist, and a few volunteers on a trip to Sin Zwe village in the Bago Yoma area, occupied predominantly by non-Christians. The journey was long and hard, but the fellowship was sweet. The enormous challenges in that area were a shortage of water and an invasion of rats. The water shortage is so severe that people take a bath with water from the puddles. FOB has contributed to the building of a water reservoir that collect rain and spring water. The rats pose dangers whenever bamboos bloom. On top of that, superstitious beliefs often make lives even more difficult.

In addition to preaching the Gospel, the team provided these services: medical treatment, arts and crafts sessions, parenting class, motorcycle-repair training, meals, and tons of fun activities.

Dr. Myo Maung Maung Hlaing, an orthopedic surgeon, thoroughly enjoyed providing medical services to the villagers. His kindness and sense of humor were appreciated by all. The team brought back a grandfather, who needed limb amputation due to severe diabetic neuropathy. He is currently getting treatment.

The team is grateful to FOB for making this trip happen.

Hinthada Karen Baptist Bible School

The first Baptist missionary to arrive in Hinthada was Dr. Judson. He preached and organized the towns and villages along the Irrawaddy River, and established Christian communities. Later in October 1954, Rev. B. C. Thomas also came to the region. In 1987, Mr. Thomas founded the Karen High School in Hinthada. Many students from diverse backgrounds came to study in this school. In 1966, the Hinthada Karen High School was taken over by the Myanmar government with the purpose to nationalize all the mission schools in the entire country. Missionaries were expelled. Christian leaders sensed an urgent need to establish a Bible school. Hinthada Karen Baptist Bible School (HKBBBS) was born on June 1, 1967. The two programs offered are Certificate of Theology and Licentiate of Theology. Hinthada area is a ripe mission field that is greatly in need of workers for harvesting. HKKBS wishes to expand and upgrade its program in order to train ministry workers, pastors, and evangelists.

~ Rev. Dr. Cyrus Sein, HKKBS Principal ~

Wish List

Partnership opportunities in education:

- Kawthoolei Karen Bible School and College (KKBBS) teacher support (\$70/month, \$840/year)
- KKBBS student scholarship (\$50/month, \$600/year)
- Sponsor KKBBS teachers for advanced theology degree [MDiv, DMin], (\$12,000/year)
- Support a nursing student (\$500/year)
- Hinthada Bible School building (\$50,000)
- Leadership training in IDP area (\$3,000)
- Archivist Training (\$5,000)

Partnership opportunities in caring for children:

- Sponsor one orphan per year (\$360)
- Sponsor gifted students in Pathein, who have been in the Gillen Hostel, to go to university (\$500/student)
- Sponsor six middle schoolers from Bago Yoma to study in Thayawaddy (\$300/student per year)
- Sponsor child psychology and hostel management training for KBC childcare centers (\$3,000)
- Seed money for start-up investment for an orphanage (\$1,500)

Partnership opportunities in healthcare:

- Operating room at Matthew 25 Hospital (\$50,000)
- Water Treatment System at KBC Hospital (\$14,925)
- Infusion pump for injection (\$5,970)

Other partnership opportunities:

- Electronic piano for KBTS music department (\$1,200)
- Kachin Internally Displaced Camps
- Alternative Christmas gift (\$50/gift)
- Eye glasses (\$20/pair); Mosquito Nets (\$7/net)

Kawthoolei Karen Baptist

Department of Theological Education

In April, our team went on a trip to Tae Boe Ta village. We almost cancelled the trip because of the news that the Burmese military was moving around and instigating fights. We are glad we went. We provided leadership training to 48 leaders from 18 churches from Hser Mu Per, an area occupied by Internally Displaced People (IDP) on the run from the Burmese military. Not all the leaders could attend because they needed to be on a heightened alert with the looming threat over their lives. It affected me deeply to see these villagers doing their best to live in the most unpalatable conditions. We witnessed the leaders' strength of mind and spirit as well as tender hearts to serve their people with faithfulness in the most difficult situations. There were also many children there; they were playing joyfully, taking care of their siblings, helping their parents. They wore clothes that had seen better days, lived in ramshackle houses, ate food that was available but not necessarily nutritious, and played with dirt and toys fashioned out of scrap materials. I invite you to stand with us in prayer, as one people of God. Please pray for the churches in IDP area, sustenance for the villagers, and peace for the Karen people.

~ Dr. Alwyn, Director ~

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* This newsletter is prepared by Tansy Kadoe. *