

FRIENDS OF BURMA, INC.

2011 Spring Newsletter

Neil Sowards, President

548 Home Avenue – Fort Wayne, Indiana 46807-1606

A COMMITTEE OF AMERICAN CHRISTIANS FOR AIDING THE PEOPLE OF BURMA

Founded 1985

<http://www.friendsofburma.org>

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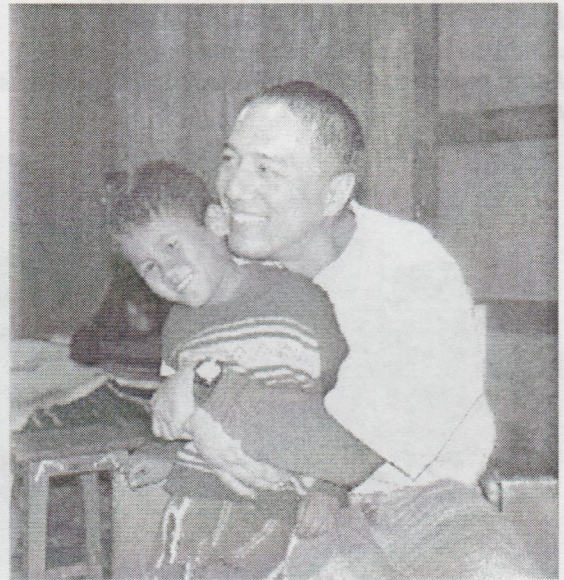
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PHIL SCHOCK CONTACTS CHRISTIAN LEADERS AND MINISTRIES IN BURMA (MYANMAR)

In January of 2011 I had a chance to spend three weeks in Burma. I am an American, but was born in Burma to American Baptist missionary parents. Even though we left there long ago when I was young, I have never forgotten the place and its people, and much of my heart remains there still. During my time there, I visited the projects that Friends of Burma, Inc. (FOB) supports, met with local leaders and listened to their needs and concerns. There are many faithful Burmese Christians there who love the Lord and serve Him tirelessly and with great humility. And there are many programs that FOB supports there: Bible schools, libraries, student scholarships, hospitals and clinics, and churches. But during my visit I felt most touched by the children in the Child Care Centers who had lost parents and siblings to storms and disease. A few children I met had been abandoned by their parents or had been given up due to crushing poverty.



Phil Schock hugs an orphan child in Taunggyi, Shan State

While life for orphaned children there is difficult, their love of the Lord was made evident to me in their beautiful faces and in their joyful singing. Below are a few journal entries from my time there.

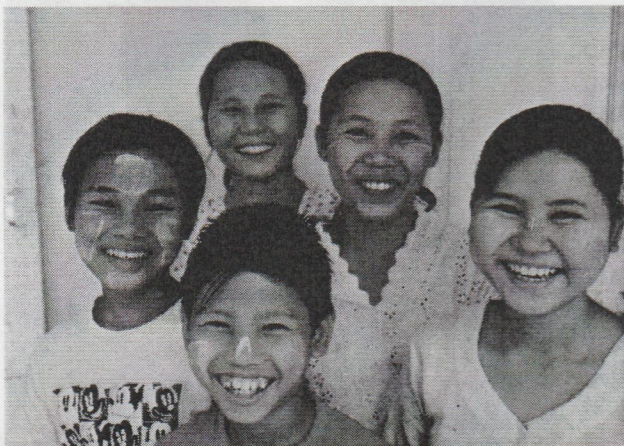
Friends of Burma depends upon prayer and donor support to continue during this time of financial recovery in the U.S. The needs in Burma have always been great and have been further deepened due to dramatic drop in the value of the US dollar compared to the Burmese kyat. FOB in the U.S. spends no money on staff support. Designated gifts are sent in their entirety to the ministries in need. Tax deductible gifts should be directed to Friends of Burma and sent to 548 Home Avenue, Fort Wayne, Indiana 46807-1606 or emailed directly on the FOB website.

Taungyi, Shan State, Burma: No Tears in Heaven.

Some children made parentless by war, storms and disease, sang for me. They sang so beautifully and with such sweetness that it is hard to put into words. Despite their difficult circumstances, their faces were so radiant, their voices so ardent and pure, that for a few brief minutes as they were singing, any sadness I had felt was overcome by an almost limitless joy. It is easy to see why Jesus said that we must become like little children, innocent and guileless.

The song they sang was in Kayah, a language from a remote mountainous region. The moving words are as follows:

*Dear mother, dear father, I am searching for you,
Why have you gone away?
I am so sad to live my life without you.
Dear mother, dear father, I long for you,
But now by the grace of God the church
And all its people have become my family.
I sing praise to God for His love and goodness to me.*



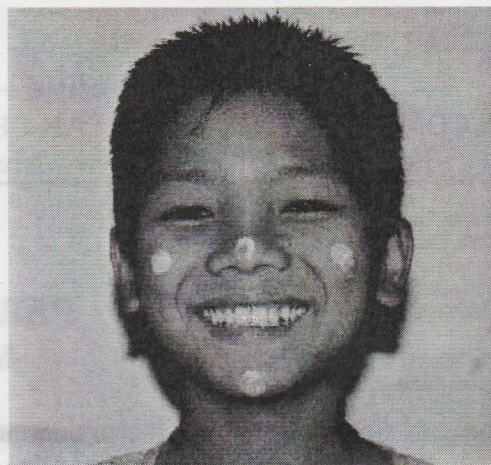
Five orphans at Kwe Lwe Child Care Center, Pathein.

"Revelations 21: 1-4 tells us that in the new heaven and the new earth, there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain...all that will have passed away. "He will wipe every tear from their eyes." No tears in heaven - what a wonderful promise to look forward to." Jan 22, 2011

Pathein, Irrawaddy River Delta, Burma: Give Thanks.

Tonight I attended a youth worship service in Pathein, a town in the west delta region, near the Indian Ocean. Many of the 350 Karen children in attendance were made homeless or orphaned in 2008 by Cyclone Nargis, a storm

that devastated this area and claimed the lives of over 130,000 people.



An orphan boy, survivor of Cyclone Nargis, Pwo Karen Hostel, Pathein. Children and adults often daub on thanaka, a ground tree bark, as a cosmetic or skin conditioner.

Toward the end of the service, all 350 children sang in English that beautiful hymn of gratefulness:

*Give thanks with a grateful heart, Give thanks to the Holy One
Give thanks because He's given Jesus Christ, His Son
And now let the weak say I am strong, let the poor say I am rich
Because of what the Lord has done, for us, give thanks.*

These words of thankfulness were being sung from the hearts and throats of children whom one might think would have nothing to be grateful for. Yet they sang this song to the Lord as if they were the richest, most powerful people on earth. We are told that in God's new kingdom, the existing world order as we have known it will be turned upside down: "the last will be first" (Matt. 19:30). Surely then these children, "the least of these" as Jesus says, will be lifted up and embraced by God, among the very first and most honored guests at His banquet table. As I felt the chorus and the beautiful Karen voices wash over me, I wanted the song to never end. In Christ we are all made rich and strong, and have everything to be thankful for. January 30, 2011

I met a young boy, Saw Htoon from a small village in the Irrawaddy River delta, who survived the devastating winds and floods of Cyclone Nargis in 2008. During the storm he and his family took refuge in the local church, but during the night the church collapsed killing his parents and 4 siblings. He escaped

from the building and drifted alone through the night, kept afloat by a tree branch until the morning when the storm had passed. He was rescued and is now at Kwe Lwe Child Care Center, doing well in his studies. A younger brother also survived the storm, the only family left to him. Saw Htoon wants to finish his education and become a leader in the local church association.

As I held a few of the children with their smiles and laughter, I felt saddened knowing how many of them had similar stories and had lost parents or families or homes. Yet I felt gladdened that they were now being well fed and clothed and were receiving an education. How resilient these beautiful young children are! Most are responding well to the love of Child Care Center parents and church volunteers who work with them.



Pu Mooler Child Care Center near Rangoon

After Cyclone Nargis, there was a flood of donations, which has since dried up. The children affected by this storm, as well as parentless children in other areas of Burma, still need support until they are 18 years old and able to go out on their own. FOB supports six Child Care Centers in Burma and they are all full. Twenty US dollars a month or \$240/year will provide all that one of these children need. James 1:27 reads: "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress..." I saw this scripture many times in Child Care Centers in Burma. But children are not the only ones in need in there. Due to the government recently issuing building permits, many Christian groups are now constructing new buildings due to expanding needs. Clinics are in need of medicines and new operating rooms, new

hostels are needed to house more children, equipment is needed in maternity centers, and sponsorships are needed for students who cannot afford seminary.



Student at Karen Baptist Theological Seminary

An FOB Board member, who has a post-doctoral position with a limited income, volunteered to buy an \$820 ECG machine for one of our clinics. The sister of a Board member donated the entire cost of building a youth hostel for gifted orphaned children in the Pathein area. Our Christian brothers and sisters in Burma work for the Lord in such difficult circumstances yet with great joy and faithfulness. They are always so appreciative of help from America and the kindness of people here. If you feel led to make a difference in the life of a child or in one of these other areas, your gift will go a long way and bless many people. You can send a tax-deductible contribution to Friends of Burma, 548 Home Ave, Ft. Wayne, IN. 46807. Thank you. *Phil Schock, March 23, 2011.*



Nurse at the Matthew 25 Love Clinic in Pathein

WE AT FRIENDS OF BURMA, INC. THANK PHIL SCHOCK FOR THIS SUPERB REPORT ON HIS BURMA VISIT ON OUR BEHALF.

ENGLISH-KAREN PARALLEL NEW TESTAMENT PUBLISHED

Two months ago the New Testament publication in English and Karen became available. We thank board member Tansy Kadoe and Duane Binkley who worked with others on this project with the Scottsdale Bible Church. Fund raising continues so that the complete Bible—New and Old Testament—can be printed soon.

To secure a copy go to the American Baptist website--www.karenkonnection.org--for \$12 plus postage.

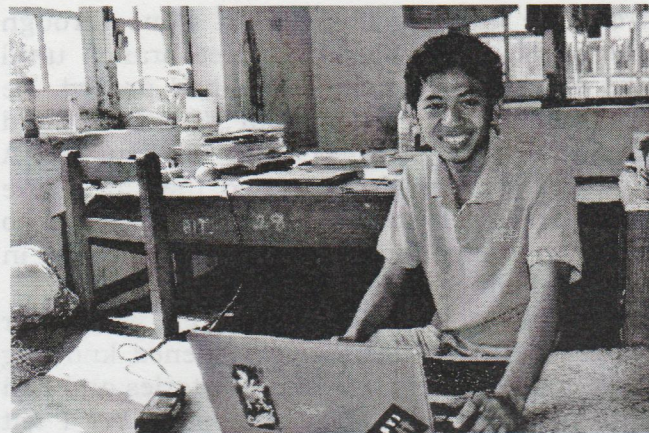
LAHU CHURCH COLLAPSES 25 KILLED FROM MARCH 23 SHAN STATE EARTHQUAKE

Missionary Scott Coats serving in Thailand about 90 kilometers from the epicenter reports that 25 persons may have been killed in a Lahu church. Registering 7 on the Richter scale, this quake is very near where the Laos, Thailand and Burma borders converge.

Scott reports the Mekong Minority Foundation hopes to send assistance along with the Myanmar Baptist Convention. Donors may send designated gifts through FOB to the MBC. The MBC also is sending help into Rakhine state hit by the October cyclone—Giri.

FRIENDS OF BURMA CONVENES ANNUAL MEETING IN MONTE VISTA BAPTIST CHURCH, PHOENIX ARIZONA

All board members serve at their own expense including traveling to this annual meeting held in a tri-lingual church with services in English, Karen, and Spanish. Twelve of the sixteen members attended the 2011 Friday-Saturday, February 18-19 sessions. Minutes of the business meeting are available on request.



Student at the Myanmar Institute of Theology which serves not only all the Baptist ethnic groups but also serves other denominations which have no graduate schools.

ORPHAN SUPPORT RAISED TO \$240 PER YEAR AMERICAN DOLLAR PURCHASES FEWER KYATS

Donors supporting children at the *Child Enrichment Centers* (Orphanage is a name not approved in Burma) until recently contributed \$15 monthly or \$180 per year. The exchange rate for the US dollar now stands at 850 kyats, down 20 per cent from recent rates and even dropping more from an earlier 1250 kyats per dollar. Friends of Burma forwards contributions in their entire amount with no deductions of any kind. FOB assures donors unable to raise their pledge that giving at the \$180 level is still very welcome and needed!

Each FOB board member is seeking five more donors to meet the pressing need.

ALL BIBLE SCHOOLS, HOSPITALS, AND MINISTRIES SUPPORTED BY FRIENDS OF BURMA NEED INCREASED SUPPORT DUE TO DROP IN THE VALUE OF THE AMERICAN DOLLAR COMPARED TO THE KYAT. Phil Schock on his recent visit to Burma was constantly approached by institutions about the need for expanded facilities.

Donors seeking to establish a memorial can contact FOB about donor possibilities.



**Jubilee Annex
Building at
the Myanmar
Institute of
Theology**

**To begin this
construction,
Friends of
Burma loaned
MIT \$50,000
from
endowment
funds**

**MIT needs
additional
funds now.**

**NEIL SOWARDS SHARES TESTIMONIES
FROM FOB AID RECIPIENTS**

One time, when I was in Pathein, in a meeting with Karen leaders that was drawing to a close, I asked if anyone had anything they wanted to say. A man in his thirties stood up and said,

"I felt called by God to become a minister. But I had a wife and three children. There seemed to be no way I could fulfill my dream. But then I heard Friends of Burma gave out scholarships. I applied for a scholarship and won it and so I was able to go to seminary and get my degree and now I am on the staff of the Pathein Myaungmya Sgaw Karen Baptist Association. Thanks to that scholarship I was able to fulfill my dream."

Helping another person, to me, is one of life's greatest experiences. So many support FOB but never get to see all the good their money and prayers do. I hope in heaven there will be a DVD that will show them all the people and children they helped.

FOB supports many programs that usually are not mentioned in our newsletters. One of these is in Pathein. There the villages usually have elementary schools but no Middle or High Schools. Therefore the most outstanding student in the village is brought to Pathein where he/she stays in a hostel in order to get higher education. They also bring the most outstanding student from each of their thirty mission fields so they too can get additional education.

An FOB supporter has provided money for medical education. Admission to medical school is based on Matriculation scores. Once in a while a Christian young person scores high enough to be able to get training as a doctor. The daughter of a Christian leader earned a high enough score but the family did not have the necessary funds. Through FOB she was supported for her final year and she has just passed her final examinations. She is now an intern in a hospital in Rangoon. Supported students pledge to give three years service after they complete their mandatory government service.

We receive many letters like this one:

"With great joy and thanks I write this letter to you. I received 22,000 kyats (\$25) from you. I am now over 81 years old and my hearing has been impaired since last 3 years. With the money you gave me I can buy a good pair of hearing aids. I really appreciate your invaluable service. I have been in the Lord's work since 1945 after I finished my work at Bible School. I was ordained in 1958 and have served as pastor at Kyar-Yar-Gain church until now. I served as Secretary of the Pathein Myaungmya Association for 20 years and as president two terms. It is really a great joy and blessing to be his servant. I will be praying for you, your donors and your ministry." Rev. Shi Sbo



The Shan State Seminary enrolls students from many ethnic backgrounds like these two women.

FOB SUPPORTS MANY BIBLE SCHOOLS

Friends of Burma sends scholarship assistance as well as support to many ethnic Bible Schools. Some students from villages wiped out by Hurricane Nargis, now have lost both their families and base of home support.

Where There Is No Dentist Proves Valuable and in Demand

FOB sponsored the translation of *Where There Is No Dentist* into Burmese. It has been well received. Village health workers want a copy of this book as well as *Where There Is No Doctor*.

Using feedback, an updated and expanded version of the dentist book is desired if we can find the money needed for printing and distribution.

AMONG THE MANY NEEDS FOB SUGGESTS THE FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL OPTIONS

1. KBC Hospital: Renovation & Extension of Operating Theater (\$20,000)
2. KBC Hospital: Installation of Solar Panels (\$36,000)
3. KBTS: Computers for Liberal Arts Education Program (\$3,000)
4. Sakhan Thar Maternal and Child Development Center: patient bed, glucometer, chairs, fans (\$1400)
5. *Where There Is No Doctor* and *Where There Is No Dentist* books. The two village health workers training schools would like to give a copy of each book to their graduates. The costs are \$5 each.
6. Myanmar Bible Society: Help for additional printing of Bible in Karen and other languages: \$1000 (The government does not allow ethnic language Bibles to be imported.)
7. Revision and translating of the second edition of *Where There Is No Dentist*, \$3,000.
8. Community Training: Tha Wah (\$6400)
9. Sponsoring an outstanding student who is a Cyclone Nargis survivor in the Pathein area: \$480 per year
10. Sponsoring an orphan in one of the Child Care Centers: \$240 per year
11. Eye glasses and examination for needy students: \$12
12. Retired Christian workers: \$15 grant. (There are no pensions in Burma.)
13. Missionary workers to the Myo people in Arakan (western Burma): \$600.
14. KBC Multi-Purpose Building, Ahlone, Rangoon.

15. Pwo Karen Theological Seminary Library, Ahlone, Rangoon
16. Pwo Karen Bible School, New Building, Pathein
17. Sakhan Thar Maternal & Child Care Development Center, New Building, Insein.
18. In Sitwe a clinic that helps the poor free of charge one day a week needs \$100 per month for those who cannot afford their medicines.
19. Rev Karry Htoo Youth Hostel, Taunggyi: Need to pay off new building. (\$12,000), dig a new well and add new latrines and bathing room (\$8,000).
20. MIT waited four years for their permit to build the Jubilee annex. It is now under construction. Any donation helps or you can give a memorial room for \$5,000.

Leave a forever legacy—Remember Friends of Burma in your will.

Friends of Burma, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization so donations are tax deductible.

VISIT THE FRIENDS OF BURMA, INC. WEBSITE OFTEN

YOU MAY NOW DONATE ON LINE

Jim Tompkins, Phil Schock and Lwin Moe have enriched the website with a video using photos and recordings from Phil's latest trip to Burma. Visit our web site and enjoy the beautiful singing of these children and its meaningful message. We will be adding more videos which we think you will enjoy. See them and a complete list of our projects and ministries at www.friendsofburma.org

Please help distribute this newsletter and solicit support for orphans and other ministries. If you want to receive this twice yearly newsletter by e-mail **please send us your e-mail address**. You will receive editions in color which you can easily forward electronically. We will issue an electronic e-mail about every two months telling about the day-to-day operations of FOB.

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