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Greetings

Welcome to the first issue of 2009! It is hard to believe that we are already approaching our third year of ministry with Myanmar Hope Christian Mission. When we began in May 2007, little did we know what an impact this ministry would have on so many people—on those of us who stepped out in faith to begin this adventure, on those of you who have so faithfully partnered with us, and especially on those in Myanmar who have been on the receiving end of the many blessings of God.

We are continually amazed at how God works among and through his people to accomplish his purposes, and we know that you share our joy at the privilege of being part of these wonderful and amazing times in which we live. As you read and reflect on this latest issue of our newsletter, our prayer is that you will desire to become even more involved in this great work of the Kingdom of God among the people of Myanmar!

Ministry Update

Cyclone Update

In our last newsletter (Nov/Dec 2008) we let you know about the great harvest which was about to begin for our two adopted villages in the Irawaddy Delta. We told you about how well their rice was growing, and that these villages now needed rice mills in order to process their harvested crop.

We are glad to report that funds for the rice mills were generously supplied by I.D.E.S. and other donors. With these funds, and other loans which the village leaders were able to obtain on their own, the rice harvest was a great success.

It is wonderful to look back at what has taken place since last May and see God's hand at work bringing triumph out of tragedy. On May 4th, a devastating cyclone swept through the delta region, killing an estimated 130,000 people overnight, and leaving millions more homeless and destitute.

There isn't enough space to recount all of the wonderful examples of divine providence which have occurred between then and now, but we are so thankful for all of the support we have been able to pass along to those most affected by the storm, especially our two villages—Nakhongyi and Nakhonglay.

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Thanks to your prayers and financial help, over two hundred families were saved from starvation, disease, and the inevitable cycle of poverty. This surely would have been their lot, had you not enabled us to step in and help them. Now, these two farming villages are well on their way to becoming self-sufficient again. However, and even more importantly, they were able to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the first time, and have received many hours of teaching and training in the



One of the rice mills being loaded onto a boat

Scriptures. We hope to soon have a new church established there, as well as a full-time, on-site, missionary.

Rat Plague Update

We made you aware in our last newsletter of the rat plague which has been affecting the villagers in northwest Myanmar, especially northern Chin State. Since our last publication, we have made significant attempts to help those who have been left destitute by this plague.

In addition to Phoilen Village, which we reported on last time, our volunteer workers were able to bring life-saving rice, as well as Kuki language Bibles, to people in ten additional villages: Khumnoi, Madam, Sulpi, Jonglon, Aisi, Mongjang, Hangken, Siboh, Haihit, and Tuikhingjang.



Distributing rice in Khumnoi

After investigating the extent of the damage caused by the rats in these areas, it was discovered that over 1,000 acres of rice, cultivated by about 330 families, was completely wiped out. We concentrated our distribution efforts among these families.

The recipients of the food aid were extremely grateful. Many of them had lost all hope. No one had come from their government to help them, and all of their neighboring villages were just as poor as they were. When they heard about the help from America, they were filled with joy and excitement.

For example, after our volunteers conferred with leaders from Asi and Suangpeh, the elders gathered the people together to announce to them that they were going to be receiving rice from believers in America. When the people heard the news, they all stood up and began loudly clapping their hands.

The chiefs from the villages told our volunteers, "Thank you very much for providing food for our physical needs and Bibles

The effects of the rat plague will continue to be felt by thousands of families in northwest Myanmar. You can help relieve the hunger by sending a gift of any size today. Thank you!

for our spiritual growth; we will never forget the tragedy of the rat plague and the miracle of provision from America."

Special Report: Christmas for Mr. Pao Kho Hang

Mr. Pao Kho Hang, a young man in his early twenties, was disabled by polio in his early childhood. The dreaded disease left him unable to use his legs. He learned how to use his arms and hands instead of legs and feet to get around—using sandals on his hands the way we use shoes on our feet.

Soon after he was stricken with polio (still a common disease in rural parts of Myanmar), his parents died, leaving him an orphan. He went to live with his aunt's family, but they were already living in poverty, and were unable to completely care for his needs. As a result, Pao Kho Hang was reduced to begging food and clothing from other families in his village.

In spite of his severe disability, Pao Kho Hang remained strong in his faith in Christ, and in his hope for a better future. The first time we shared his story with believers here in the U.S., a very wonderful and generous person adopted him as her own. Mrs. Elva Compton fell in love with Pao Kho Hang, even though she has never met him personally. Now, ever since she became his sponsor, Pao Kho Hang has lived a changed life.



Pao Kho Hang with his new clothing

Not only are his daily food needs being met, but Elva has sent extra gifts to care for him in other ways. For instance, she sent funds to purchase a mattress and blankets, among other items.

Late this fall, Elva approached us and asked if Pao Kho Hang needed a coat, or warmer clothes, to get through the winter. He did, so in early December she sent along extra funds for that purpose.

Pao Kho Hang was overjoyed when he received her gift! Pastor

Jonah carried him on his motorcycle to the nearest big town, and they spent the day shopping. This was the first time in Pao Kho Hang's life that he had ever been shopping for new clothes! All that he ever owned were given to him second-hand. Pastor Jonah said that he was very happy as he picked out his own clothes, as well as some other extra items from the left-over funds.

When they returned home, the whole village came out to see Pao Kho Hang's new, warm, clothes. They were all so happy to see his smiling face, and they are so amazed at how Elva loves him and takes care of his needs.



Palal, Elva, Solomon, and Kikim

Elva, we know that you are probably embarrassed by having this story told, but you are such a special lady, and your gifts have made a marvelous difference in the life of a young man, on the other side of the world, whom you have never even met. Your godliness and generosity are an encouragement to all of us, and we know that it encourages others, as well. God bless you, Elva!

Radios for Pastors

Thanks to your generous donations, we have been able to supply six village pastors with shortwave radios! The radios are good quality, and can pick up both short wave and medium wave signals. With these radios, the pastors and their congregations can listen to preaching, teaching, and Christian music broadcast from the Philippines twice per day. In the mornings they can listen to Dr. T. Lunkim's messages, which are broadcast in the Kuki language. In the evenings they can listen to Dr. Tin Maung Htoon broadcasting in the Burmese language.

They are so happy for the radios, and that they were able to receive them before Christmas. They are now able to listen to Good News Radio with their families and the rest of the villag-



Pr. Jam Pau receiving a new radio

ers. They felt an extra blessing while listening to the special Christmas sermons and songs on Christmas Day. The pastors who received the radios are:

- Pastor Jam Pau of Valpabung Christian Church,
- Pastor Thang Sei of Namihan Christian Church,
- Pastor Lhun Ja Ngam of Canaan Christian Church,
- Pastor Thang Kho Pau of Tingkaya Christian Church,
- Pastor Sho Jang of New Canaan Christian Church, and
- Pastor Jam Let of Joljam Christian Church.

Thank you to all who donated money to purchase these radios! They are a great blessing, and we trust that many lives will be enriched and strengthened in their faith through their use.

Support Programs

CHANGE LIVES—BECOME A SPONSOR

There are still a great many Christian families and individuals in Myanmar that are in need of help. These people are not lazy—they work very hard, but the reward for their labor is just pennies a day. Is it right for Christians in one part of this world to live in wealth and abundance, while Christians in other parts of the world are suffering from malnutrition, disease, and poverty?

If you are ready to be a part of changing this situation for the better, give us a call at (217) 415-9187, or email at info@myanmarhope.org. Your help can vastly improve the lives of our brothers and sisters in Christ! Just \$30.00 per month is all it takes to provide a family with life-saving rice, medicines, clothing, and other necessities. \$60.00 per month will provide a pastor's family with food and necessities, and

will also allow him to spend time doing the work of ministry.

OTHER WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

There are many things that you can do to help our brothers and sisters in Myanmar. Here are some ways:

- Purchase a bicycle for a pastor (\$80.00)
- Purchase a short wave radio for a village (\$35.00)
- Purchase one or more Kuki language Bibles (\$5.00 each)
- Purchase a pig (\$150.00) or a piglet (\$40.00)
- Purchase a mithun cow (\$500.00)
- Fund the building of a well (\$400.00)



Pr. Thang Sei with a new bike

Updates from Our Churches

The level of dangerous paramilitary activity has increased around many of our churches in northwest Myanmar, close to the border with India. A large militia group, from the Meitei tribe in Manipur, India, have been harassing the local population on both sides of the India/Myanmar border. For example, they set up armed “check-points” along roads and highways, stopping traffic and demanding fees and tolls from the passersby.

Whenever the Indian Army decides to do something about these groups, they flee across the border into Myanmar, where they have bribed local officials to let them hide out. Recently, the Indian army has been shelling villages on the Myanmar side of the border, where they suspect the Meitei are hiding or are given shelter.

The villagers do not like the Meitei, and do not support them, but they are helpless to stand against them. If they even try to complain to their local government officials, they risk being arrested, or worse. As a result, they are at the mercy of the Meitei, the Indian army, and their own local government.

Several families in these villages have suffered losses as a result of this activity. In the past month, a home in Bokkan Village was destroyed by mortar fire, killing one person and injuring several others. Many others have been hit in the past.

In addition to the danger from mortars and small arms fire, the villagers face the constant threat of land mines, which have been placed by both the Meitei and the Indian army. Many people have been killed or injured by stepping on these land mines while foraging for food or bamboo in the forest.

Please pray for the safety of our brothers and sisters in Christ living in this dangerous area.

Land Project Update

We are still raising funds to purchase land upon which to build a combination school / church / ministry headquarters in Yangon. So far we have raised \$28,500.00, but much more will eventually be needed. If you would like to help with this project, please contact us.

Family Update

At Christmas we were able to video chat with some of Palal and Kikim’s extended family. They have recently taken in two more boys, and have been receiving many visitors from the villages in the delta, which MyHope has been helping. Because of this, and because the church still meets in their home, they have had many additional expenses. The ministry was able to send extra funds at Christmas to purchase two additional mattresses, as well as some new clothes for the family.



Video chatting with Kikim’s mother and the children from the Yangon household

Palal recently finished his last class for his doctorate degree at Lincoln Christian Seminary. His GPA for all classes attended was 3.4! This is very good, considering the culture and language barriers which he has had to overcome. We are all very proud of his accomplishments. He is now hard at work on his final project, or dissertation. Much research and writing will go into this final project, which is almost like writing an entire book. Most of the research must be done “long distance,” over the Internet, as he communicates with the church leaders in Myanmar. Please pray for him that he will be able to contextualize all that he has learned, and will be able to translate his thoughts and ideas into English.

Kikim and Solomon are doing very well. They are both still at-

tending school, Kikim at Lincoln Land Community College, and Solomon at Christian Day Care of Springfield. They both love it, and Solomon's English has improved dramatically. He now communicates equally well in English and Kuki.

They are both much healthier now than when they first arrived. Solomon is growing fast, and Kikim's improvement is very apparent:



Kikim on the day she arrived, and now, nine months later

We have also changed the schedule for when Palal and Kikim will return to Myanmar. Originally, the date for return was going to be in June of this year, after Palal's graduation. However, for a number of reasons, we have pushed back the date for leaving until January of next year.

First, it became apparent that Palal would not be able to finish his final project in time to graduate in May. The amount of writing and research required was just too much to finish by then, so he is now scheduled to graduate in December.

Next, we received two invitations while attending the National Missionary Convention last fall that helped us decide to keep them here a while longer. These are the High Plains School of Missions and the Northwest School of Missions. Both of these invitations involve speaking in front of dozens of different churches, and we could not pass up such an opportunity.

Finally, Palal and Kikim were invited by Lake Springfield Christian Assembly to be their camp missionaries this summer. Again, this is a great opportunity to gain more exposure for our ministry and the people of Myanmar, and we couldn't pass it up.

The great news for us is that we get to keep them here for at least six months longer than we had originally planned! Speaking of them being with us in America, this month (March) will mark the nine-month anniversary of Kikim and Solomon being here, and the two-year anniversary of Palal!

Palal continues to get treatment from Hughes Chiropractic, which Dr. Todd Hughes has generously donated almost weekly since Palal arrived in the U.S. When he first arrived, Palal suffered from constant headaches, but since he has been receiving treatment from Dr. Todd, his headaches are a thing of the past.

We want to issue a very special "Thank You!" to Dr. Todd Hughes and his wife, Peggy for their loving support and care of Palal these past months. If you live in the Springfield area, and are in need of chiropractic care, please give Dr. Todd a call!



Palal receives chiropractic care from Dr. Todd Hughes of Springfield, IL

Recent and Upcoming Speaking Engagements

Here are some recent and upcoming engagements on our calendar as of this writing:

- Kikim shared with the West Side 3/4th grade Sunday school class on February 22nd.
- Palal will present a message on leadership to Businessmen Men In Christ (BMIC) of Springfield at their monthly breakfast on March 14th.
- MyHope will host a booth in the exhibitor area at the "Iron Sharpens Iron" conference, held at First United Methodist Church in Springfield on March 21st.
- Palal and Kikim will present the message of MyHope to Berlin Christian Church, Berlin, Illinois, on March 29th.
- Palal and Kikim will be camp missionaries at Lake Springfield Christian Assembly from June through August.
- Palal and Kikim will present the vision of MyHope to multiple churches throughout the Northwest and High Plains Schools of Missions, in September and October.

A Countryside Christmas

Some members of Countryside Church of Christ, in Hesperia, Michigan, came up with a novel way of remembering the people of Myanmar this past Christmas.

Brenda Hren led the effort to create a delightful set of "MyHope Christmas ornaments," each of which consisted of a bulb, a pretty ribbon, and a photograph of one of the families

supported by Myanmar Hope Christian Mission.

The photograph was mounted on heavy cardboard, and had a magnet affixed to the back, allowing it to be placed on a refrigerator as a reminder to pray even after the holiday decorations are taken down.



A close-up of one of the special MyHope Christmas ornaments made by the members of Countryside Church of Christ

What a wonderfully creative way to remember our family in Christ! Many Christian families in Myanmar cannot even dream of celebrating Christmas in the way that we do, but your prayers and financial support are beginning to make an impact in their lives, and the lives of many others. Thank you, Countryside Church of Christ, for remembering Myanmar Hope in this way! We know that God will bless you for it.



A MyHope Christmas ornament hanging on the tree at Countryside

Healthcare in Myanmar

As many of you already know, healthcare in Myanmar is quite different than it is here in America.

In Myanmar, quality healthcare is limited to those individuals and families with a lot of money (which is about one or two

percent of the population). For the average Myanmar citizen, the high quality of healthcare which we experience in the US is something most of them cannot even imagine, let alone hope for.

According to the World Health Organization, Myanmar ranks almost dead last among all of the nations of this world in the quality of health care that it provides its citizens.

Diseases, which are rare or unheard of in America, are quite common in the rural areas—malaria, leprosy, polio, TB, dysentery, and a host of other sicknesses plague the villagers. HIV/ Aids is a real problem in Myanmar due to unsanitary conditions, re-using needles for immunizations, etc.



Village medicine in Karen State

Expectant and new mothers are especially at risk. Many young mothers suffer from anemia, malnutrition, and malaria. Most children are delivered at home, and only about 5% of births are attended by a qualified midwife. In general, their children also suffer from malnutrition, water-borne diseases, diarrhea, lack of calcium, vitamins and minerals, and they do not receive proper immunizations.

The deadly combination of ignorance, poverty, lack of doctors, and adequate healthcare facilities, combines to cause most people to put off seeking medical attention until it is too late.

When someone becomes so ill that medical attention is absolutely required, poor families have to borrow money to pay for transportation and care at the nearest facility, which is often miles away from their village.

It is not uncommon for people to die on the way to a hospital or clinic because the family has waited until a sickness or disease has become fatal. Palal personally knows of numerous families where this very thing has happened.

Even when a seriously ill family member makes it to a clinic or hospital, the rest of the family has no idea whether what they are being told about the patient is the truth. We know of situations where sick individuals were given bad advice, the wrong diagnosis, or even the wrong kind of medicine. Some families are bankrupted by bad medical advice, continually being told

to bring the patient back for more treatments, even when the treatments are making the patient worse.



A "high-quality" hospital room in Chin State

In some rural areas, people pose as doctors or nurses as a way of extorting money from people who are ignorant of real medical practices. Even in "real" medical clinics, there is such a shortage of medicines, as well as medical knowledge, that a doctor might choose a medicine that he or she thinks might work for the patient, but it may not necessarily be the right medicine that they need. Needless to say, this often causes further complications.

Please pray for Christians in Myanmar, who suffer in ways that we would consider unbearable. Also pray for organizations like ours, which are trying to make a difference in their lives. We hope to one day build and staff a series of high-quality, free or nearly-free medical clinics in northwest Myanmar to minister to the poverty-stricken people in that part of the country. Your prayers and continued financial donations can help make that dream a reality.

We are always looking for opportunities to share about the work of Myanmar Hope Christian Mission! If your church or group would be interested in hearing our story, please contact us. No group is too large or too small.

Call us at 217-415-9187, or send an email to our engagement manager at MaryFern@MyanmarHope.org.

A Missions Garage Sale

Last issue we alluded to several young ladies from Springfield who organized and held a garage sale, with the purpose of donating the proceeds to missions. They had a very successful day, and they split the proceeds among several missions, My-Hope being one of them. The girls donated \$244.70 to Myanmar Hope, and from those funds we were able to purchase piglets for six different widows!

The women who received these piglets will raise them, and then breed them and sell their offspring as a way of producing some much-needed income. They were overjoyed upon receiving the piglets, and we look forward to watching how their lives improve as a result of the faithfulness and generosity of the young ladies here in the U.S.

The girls who participated in the garage sale are: Katie Engle, Aly Goff, Lauren Harney, Iman Kamel, Kaylee McClanahan, Olivia Oettel, Grace O'Shea, Alyssa Southard, Susan Weller, and Kari Wilhelm.

Thank you, girls, for your generosity! You are a real blessing to so many people.



Two of the widows who received piglets from the garage sale

America is Second Heaven!

By Kikim Khongsai

I am so glad for this opportunity to express my heartfelt thanks to God and all the believers in the U.S. who are praying for and supporting my family and the ministry in my home country, Myanmar. I praise God for his wonderful guidance upon my family, that we could come to the States to study and enjoy the beautiful, blessed land of God.

It amazes me how God worked out our coming here. My husband, Palal and I have been praying for many years to come to America but we could not find a host family; we continued praying without losing hope in God. In 2006, God amazingly opened the hearts of Chuck and MaryAnn Cherry to host Palal for his studies at Lincoln Christian College and Seminary.

I have experienced so many things in my life and I strongly believe that God knows what is good for us. When my son, Solomon would see a plane flying over our house in Yangon, he would always say, "Daddy, come down!" Solomon and I often prayed to be able to come to the U.S. God knew what we



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**Bringing the eternal hope of Jesus Christ to the people of Myanmar in a holistic manner
by addressing their spiritual, physical, emotional and educational needs**

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needed and desired. After applying for a visa three times, the U.S. Embassy in Yangon granted us one.

When we arrived here, my perceptions about America were changed. The food and dressing styles are so totally different than what we were used to. The most difficult thing for me, however, is the **climate**. The climate in the U.S. is so cold and I had never seen snow in Myanmar. This climate is so strange to me!

When I was younger, people talked about America as, "**America is Second Heaven.**" Now, I can say what I heard as a teenager is true. The living standard here is so high, the houses are nice and clean, and the transportation is very smooth and secure. The roads, houses and city are so clean. There is no garbage on the road.

We have had a lot of cultural shock and felt so shy. Solomon and I could not speak English, and we had never talked with an American. Solomon was enrolled in Christian Day Care Center at West Side Christian Church. He was granted a full scholarship and attends there three days per week. I am thankful to the Board of Directors of CDCC. It is so amazing how four-year-old Solomon has learned English so fast! Sometimes, I am so jealous of his English.

I enrolled in ESL classes at Lincoln Land Community College. In the first days of my classes, I could not understand the teacher's instructions. My fellow ESL students are from different countries: Korea, Japan, Jordan, Thailand, China, Mexico, Africa, France, Albania, etc. I am so happy to be attending ESL at LLCC.

Our teacher, Mrs. Lynn teaches us English slowly, and I learn slowly. Her method of teaching is very good and clear to me. Now, I can understand my teacher's English and I can speak a little English. Besides ESL class, one of our friends, Miss Danielle, a student at Lincoln Christian College, offers her time to tutor me in English. I am proud of learning English in America, and I believe that I may be able to speak and write English very well before I return home.

I am so thankful to God and all believers who are praying and supporting my family and our country. Because of your support, my family and my people in Myanmar have been blessed so much! I pray that God will continuously bless every one of you in your family and business. We are so happy that we are able to join in God's ministry with you.

Thank you so much,

Kikim Khongsai