

MYanmar HOPE
Christian Mission, Inc.

"You can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving."
— Amy Carmichael

January 2013
Volume 7, Issue 1

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Happy New Year!

It is hard to believe, but another year is fully upon us. As we begin this edition of the newsletter, we are amazed to realize that this is the beginning of the seventh annual series of MyHope newsletters! The first newsletter was sent out in July of 2007. Here it is January of 2013. Wow! It does not seem like that much time has gone by, but here we are.

It is such a blessing to be a small part of what God has been doing in Myanmar since Myanmar Hope Christian Mission was founded!

YOUR PARTNERSHIP and GOD's faithful provision has made it all possible. We believe that MyHope is just a conduit to help all of YOU to fulfill God's Great Commission to "go into all the world, making disciples, teaching them, and baptizing them."

YOUR prayers, YOUR encouragement, and YOUR monthly financial gifts have made, and will continue to make, an incredibly positive difference in the lives of thousands of the spiritually and physically poor in Myanmar. KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK!

And now, on to the rest of the story...

December / January Trip Report

In the last newsletter we introduced you to three wonderfully talented individuals who would be joining Chuck and MaryAnn as we traveled to Myanmar for our annual year-end visit with Palal, Kikim, and the rest of the MyHope crew.

In this newsletter, they will share with you, in their own words, their reflections on the trip, how it impacted their lives, and most importantly, how their visit impacted the lives of our kids at Hope Boarding School in Yangon.

Mr. Robin Pickett

I don't know how any first-time participant could embark on the journey our team just experienced and not come away with a deeper appreciation for God, life, good health, church, family, working conditions, availability of food, comforts in our

In This Issue:

Greetings	1
December Trip Report	
Mr. Robin Pickett	1
Ms. Melissa Farley.....	3
Mrs. Laura Crater	4
Hope Boarding School Update	5
Hope Preschool Update.....	6
Kuki Christian Convention	7
From the Director	8

life, transportation, etc. That certainly applies to me.

Everywhere I turned, I was reminded how much better things are at home. Considering how big our world is, I was also reminded that God put his finger on the world map and said, "Robin, you will live in America, you will be surrounded by loving Christian people and opportunities which surpass any other place in the world." I could elaborate further, but you get my point. Our conditions and circumstances are much better than we deserve. While we enjoy each day as we know it, others are struggling for their survival.



The kids who have been rescued through MyHope were the highlight of my trip. Based on their smiles and healthy status now, you wouldn't know the conditions they came from or what they looked like when they arrived. I'm not exaggerating when I say that some of these kids are alive today because of the ministry of MyHope. This is an effective ministry from my perspective. Palal and Kikim are good stewards of the resources we send them and our gifts are saving lives (literally).

I was impressed with this ministry before my trip and even

more so after witnessing it firsthand. Palal, Kikim, Chuck and MaryAnn: If God ever led two families together, enabling them to partner well in ministry, surely this is an example of that.



Because of our team’s presence and collective efforts, I think the kids had the time of their lives during our stay. I don’t say that in a prideful type of way, I just think we were a blessing to them (and of course vice-versa). In their culture, adults don’t spend much time playing with children, and perhaps that made our time with the kids even more special.

I’m glad I could piggy back off Missy and Laura’s lead as it relates to their organizational efforts and “know how” with the kids. We spent a lot of time with them while Chuck and MaryAnn were at the northwest convention. I told someone recently that Missy and Laura made the trip great for the kids and I just followed their lead, trying to contribute where I could. God used the two of them, along with Chuck and MaryAnn’s previous groundwork, in a very special way. I’m convinced these kids will remember our time together for the rest of their lives. I’m thankful I could be a part of this effort.

I was disappointed that our flight to the northwest didn’t work out so the three of us (Laura, Missy, and I) could attend the convention. I later thanked God for the extra time to spend with the kids. There was significant bonding which took place that wouldn’t have otherwise. The kids were the highlight of the trip for me.

The food turned out to be a bigger deal for me than I anticipated. I struggled in this area (weight loss, flu-like symptoms, etc.) It took its toll, but it reminded me that my physical challenge was only for a few days; I would return home and recover. However, people in Myanmar face physical struggles all their lives with little or no hope that things will ever change. This represents another lesson learned for me, but I was cer-

tainly out of my comfort zone for several days.

I have many things I will take away from my trip to Myanmar, but two pictures represent what comes to my mind often. The girls and boys from the boarding school live in two separate homes which are separated by a 10 minute walk. Every day, we walked by the home in the first picture [see below]. On most days, we made several trips back and forth so I passed this “house” regularly. Two families live in this “tarp” shelter. In Myanmar’s hot season, I’m told the temperatures exceed 110 degrees. In the wet season, well, it gets really wet and muddy. During their cold season, the temperatures could drop into the 60’s.

That went through my mind each day as I walked past and waved to the occupants. Both families were always friendly, but the adult male (father/husband) was especially eager to wave and smile. If they were sitting or lying down, they would stand up out of respect when they greeted me. Almost all the people there viewed us as “special.” Some of those same people treated us like celebrities. That was always uncomfortable for me.

About four days into our trip, I decided to approach the adult male that was so friendly and introduce myself. Standing in their doorway makes the attached picture look much better than it really is. It was as bad as you can imagine, with an odor that was unmistakably obnoxious. Our conversation was brief. The father knew three phrases in English, “America,” “Good Morning,” and “Merry Christmas.”

If he knew more than that, he never shared because that pretty much represented our conversation each time we communicated. On one occasion he pointed at the boarding school to confirm my association with that ministry while nodding his head affirmatively. People in this area are familiar with and respect the work that Palal and Kikim are doing.

“I’m convinced these kids will remember our time together for the rest of their lives. I’m thankful I could be a part of this effort.”



I reached into my backpack for a protein bar and offered it to him. I knew he had nothing, but I was still surprised by how appreciative he was. He smiled from ear to ear, shook my hand (didn't let go), and dipped his head repeatedly (respect) saying what I think was, "Thank you" in Burmese.

As I walked away, I looked back to see him showing the protein bar to his wife and children. It was as if they were opening a Christmas gift as a child. They were excited! I knew from that day forward I would take a walk on my own, make a daily stop and share the food in my backpack. Each day I approached, they were waiting for me, but now the entire family was anxious to greet me, not just the father. The last day I was there I left everything I had in my bag, plus extra goodies I had bought at a store near our motel. This family was the highlight of my walk, and from their perspective, it seemed the feeling was mutual.



Beyond the severe poverty this family lives in, the thing that sticks with me the most is their baby. Other than sitting on the "floor," there really isn't any place for the baby to be when not being held. One morning I walked by and the baby was hanging from a make-shift cloth similar to what you see mothers use when carrying their baby. This "hammock" was somehow attached to the scrap wood which held the tarp in place. The baby was hanging there and crying while mom and dad went about their day. It was sad to witness that scene and not be able to do anything about it. It's not just this family countless numbers of families live like this near the boarding school.

You will note the buckets just outside the closest entrance in the picture. That is where they stand and bathe. After walking a considerable distance to get their water, they shower with a towel wrapped around their body. We saw that often as we walked through the neighborhood. Privacy isn't an option in this instance.

I witnessed the wife carrying the plastic bucket $\frac{3}{4}$ full of water on her head on three separate occasions. Ouch! I don't think I could do that. I also wonder how they stay dry during windy rain storms. What keeps the tarp attached? My

guess is that it's a constant struggle, as is their life in general.

For the last three years, the boys and girls from the boarding school offer/serve a free meal to the neighborhood on Christmas Day. Anyone who wants to stop by is provided a freshly-cooked meal with generous servings. It is a big hit.

Guess who showed up this year? The second picture is the dad and daughter who live in the tarp dwelling. It was fun to see them approach the house, walk toward me and shake my hand. In spite of our language barrier and limited communication, a connection was made.

After we spoke ("Good morning" and "Merry Christmas" ☺), the kids took over from there, escorted him to the seating area, and he enjoyed a great meal. I don't know where he got his clothes, but as you can tell in the picture, he cleaned up to the best of his ability. In this cleaned-up version, I didn't recognize him at first, but once I saw the baby's face, I put the two together. Note: I've been referring to the child as a baby. She is probably older than I thought, but as you can see by the picture, undernourished seems to apply. This is also the same child that was crying/hanging from the makeshift hammock.

- Robin Pickett

Ms. Melissa Farley

Although I've been back in the States for several weeks, I'm just now starting to feel acclimated to what was once familiar. Words can't adequately describe my deep appreciation for the prayers and encouragement of friends and family during my preparation, travel, and time spent at Hope Boarding School in Myanmar. Nor can words describe the insurmountable poverty, sadness, and brokenness of the country, or the beauty, innocence, and joy of the kids that I quickly fell in love with on this journey around the world.

Prior to this trip, I had seen photos and read several books on Myanmar; however, I don't know that anything could have prepared me for the overall brokenness of this oppressed Buddhist nation.



My life has been forever changed by the twenty-six children attending Hope Boarding School. I treasure each and every moment that I was able to spend with 'my' kids as our hearts were woven together by creating memories that only our God could orchestrate. As a result my 'family' has expanded greatly.

I'm truly still processing so many aspects from our trip, but one thing that really sticks with me was during the VBX that we held for the kids from HBS, Dalah, Hlaingtaiya, and the neighborhood surrounding HBS. Seeing the pure joy in the faces of those kids (and adults) was absolutely priceless!



Another story that comes to mind is when we were gathered in the living room of the rental house for the 'farewell' prior to Palal, Chuck, and MaryAnns' departure for the convention in Kalaymyo. I was deeply moved when Kikim's mother, Nukha [pron. "new kah"], who is visiting in Yangon now, thanked us for playing and spending time with the kids. Why wouldn't we?

But this is so unusual in their culture that it made a big impact on even the adults.

I am beyond grateful for Palal, Kikim, and the various sponsors that are affording these beautiful children an opportunity to get a good education, three meals a day, and for providing them with a loving home where they are cared for by people who desperately want them to know how much Jesus loves them.

Thank you, thank you, thank you for your gifts of prayer, time, energy and monetary contributions. You are truly making a difference Beyond Our Borders.

While I'm still processing the lessons learned from this trip there is certainly one thing that jumps to the forefront: "Love does not have a language barrier."

- Missy Farley

Mrs. Laura Crater

I have done a lot of thinking and praying since returning from our trip to Myanmar to try and figure out how to best convey the trip to others. There is something that is almost sacred about my experience and that sacredness tends to draw me inward. I'm tempted to not talk about it to anyone, but am certain that our enemy is behind that thought process. Having said that, please excuse my fumbling words as I try to share how wonderful the journey was...

As we embarked on the trip, I tried my hardest not to have

expectations and for the most part that proved very healthy. Life in Myanmar is so very different and I am convinced that culture shock is, in fact, a very real thing. I would say it took me nearly two weeks to begin seeing past the brokenness of my surroundings and to truly see the beauty of the people...God's children.

I desperately missed my own family at the beginning of the trip, but around the halfway mark I began to realize I was in BIG trouble because now my family included the Khongsai family and 26 students at Hope Boarding School. How in the world was I going to leave them?

I began to actually pray for time to slow down. We spent the entire 17 days at Hope Boarding School, and getting to spend my days with the students and their joyful countenance left a very lasting impact. From VBS, to the students' field trip, to piano and music lessons with the children, all the way to making popcorn and pancakes in a wok, my heart was and is completely smitten. I learned so much about God through their lives. They let me in fully, and shared their hearts with me... what a privilege! We had the honor of baptizing 9 students... students we prayed for specifically to accept Christ. That God let us be a part of their journey is beyond wonderful for me.



Now that I'm back home and re-acclimated, questions continually nag at me. Now what? Where do I go from here? For starters, my family is searching our budget to find out how we can give more and more to the people there. How can we not? Myanmar Hope Christian Mission literally provides them with the next meal they eat...they are completely dependent on the Body of Christ as they boldly challenge themselves to grow in Christ and in their education. But beyond that, I'm still not sure. God led me to take this journey, I followed Him, and now I want to steward the experience as He would have me. I am committed to growing the relationships that were started. I honestly feel as though I birthed those children myself!



I am praying for a stronger internet connection on their end so that we could regularly Skype. The possibilities are endless if that happens... English lessons (they are so hungry to learn), more music lessons, Bible curriculum, and the list goes on... I am also committed to

telling their individual stories and showing their sweet pictures to anyone who will listen!

Keep praying for Myanmar Hope Christian Mission. God is SO evident in all that Palal and Kikim are doing. The light of the students shines so brightly for our Jesus. He must be thrilled! Pray that God keeps them all healthy and strong so they can do the important work God has laid in front of them.

Our God is so faithful and I feel I've seen that in a much deeper way as I've witnessed what HE alone is accomplishing in a place that seems so dark. I'm just so thankful God let me go...and I pray He will let me go back again soon!

- Laura Crater

Hope Boarding School Update

In addition to all the wonderful things that happened at HBS during our recent visit, there are some other things that need to be shared with you.

Palal, along with input from the village pastors and elders, will be selecting several new students to come down to Yangon to attend school and live at HBS. As of this writing, two young ladies have already been selected: Miss Nen Khen Them and Miss Tin Nei Lam, both of Khumnoi Village. By the time you receive the next newsletter, all of the new students will have been selected, and some of them may already be in Yangon. They cannot travel until after the end of the Burmese school year, which ends in late February / early March.

The lot next door to the current HBS building has been cleared and filled, and hopefully soon we can break ground on the new girls' dormitory. Palal is still waiting for the final paperwork to be finished in order to obtain the necessary government approval to begin construction.

At the MyHope Five Year Anniversary Dinner last May,

donations totaling about \$18,000.00 came in toward the new building. The construction estimates for the entire building, **all three floors**, is just under \$85,000.00. We were estimating last year that it would take about \$50,000.00 just for the foundation and first floor, so this is a great estimate.

About \$5,000.00 of what was on hand has already been spent on clearing and filling the lot, soil tests, fees and taxes, architectural drawings, and the like.

MyHope still needs about \$75,000.00 to completely finish the building, fill it with furniture (beds, desks, wardrobes, curtains, etc.), and get it prepared for all of the girls and Palal's family to move in.

In addition to the funds needed for the new building, we also need to raise funds to purchase a vehicle for the ministry. Palal and Kikim have been operating MyHope very faithfully for the past three years without a vehicle. This is no small feat in a city the size of Yangon! Everywhere they go, and everything they do, requires them to rent one or more taxis—both ways! Not only is this expensive, it is very, very inconvenient and is a big time-waster. It is not always easy to find a taxi willing to go the places where needed, and a lot of the taxi drivers are unreliable or untrustworthy.

Palal, Kikim, and HBS desperately need a new or used van that can be used for transportation, hauling food and equipment, for business trips downtown, and so on. The cost of a used Toyota van is around \$25,000. A brand new Toyota van would cost roughly \$35,000.

The bottom line is that Myanmar Hope needs an additional \$100,000 dollars this year! It seems hopeless and impossible, yet we have seen God do the impossible before, and we never lose hope!

This is a HUGE undertaking, and there is no way it can be completed without a lot of help from everyone reading this. Please send a gift of any amount today to help Palal and Kikim and the children of Hope Boarding School.

Your investment in this Kingdom endeavor will not only make a difference now, it will continue to pay spiritual and physical dividends far into the future. Thank you!

We would love to share our story with your church, Sunday school class, small group, or youth group! If you want to know more, please call us at (217) 415-9187 or send us an email at info@myanmarhope.org.

Hope Preschool Update

Last September Palal sent a request to the Missions Board at Lakeside Christian Church in Springfield, Illinois. His request was for \$7,000.00 to construct a new building in Tamu that would be used for Hope Preschool as well as a permanent training facility for the churches in the northwest.

Prior to sending the request, Palal used funds we had on hand to purchase the lot, and he recruited the local churches to help clear the land and prepare the foundation. Local Christians also carried the bricks that were made during the brick training held last year to the new construction site. All of this volunteer work saved a lot of money.



In his request for help, Palal mentioned that the local churches might eventually be able to raise the necessary funds to construct the building, but it would take at least three years at a minimum. However, the churches really needed the facility now.

Praise God that the Lakeside Missions Board responded very positively to Palal's request, and quickly sent the much-needed funds! The construction began in earnest, as it needed to be completed no later than January 25th. If it went beyond that date, a new construction permit would have to be obtained, which would cost more money and mean delays in the



process—possibly even until much later this year if the permit was not obtained before rainy season started.

Palal made several trips to the construction site

to oversee the workers and ensure that the work was being done well. On a couple of occasions he had to instruct the workers on how best to accomplish multiple tasks at once—such as laying the bricks for the walls at the same time they built the window and door frames. He also made sure that cement was mixed properly, and enough was being used in the right places.

This is not normally how work is done there, but his oversight ensured that the construction would be done on time and be of good quality. Palal is a teacher and a leader, not a builder, but he spent a lot of time in Yangon doing his homework by visiting construction sites, talking with construction workers and company foremen, etc. We are so appreciative of his wisdom and dedication to making sure things are done right!

The new building was finished on time, and the dedication service was held on Sunday, January 27th. Only a few elders and the preschool parents were invited, but when word got around about the dedication, more than one hundred people showed up!

Miss Kim Boi, one of our two preschool teachers, led the children in singing songs and dancing. Everyone really enjoyed experiencing some of what the children are learning at Hope Preschool.



Miss Kim Boi Needs a Sponsor!

Miss Kim Boi is a single young woman who has been volunteering her time and energy at Hope Preschool for many months now. MyHope has been helping her with living expenses as we are able to, but since Kim Boi has no sponsor, those funds must come out of the General Fund. Most months there is barely enough in the General Fund to cover the Yangon budget, let alone any extra to send.

If you have been following MyHope for awhile, you will remember that Miss Kim Boi also volunteered a lot of her time at Hope Boarding School when she was attending Bible college

in Yangon.

She is a beautiful soul with a strong heart for God and a deep love for children. She also has one of the best singing voices we have heard over there! You can go to YouTube and hear her sing at this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5yCkmVDC1RM>



Please, will you sponsor Miss Kim Boi? \$60.00 per month is all it takes to help cover her living expenses and provide a little extra for her to set aside for emergencies. Thank you!

Kuki Christian Convention

Palal, Chuck, and MaryAnn traveled to Kalaymyo in December to oversee and participate in the 3rd Annual Kuki Christian Convention, held again on the campus of Tahan Theological College. Over three hundred people from over a dozen villages and ten different denominations came together for a wonderful time of Bible teaching, worship, and fellowship.

The theme of this year's convention was taken from the Lord's Prayer: "Your will be done among us." The teaching was based on various lines from the prayer, with sessions on "Our Father in Heaven," "Hallowed by Thy Name," "Thy Kingdom Come," and "Thy will be Done." Each hour-long session was followed by thirty to forty minutes of question and answer. In between teaching sessions were times of worship and praise.

Throughout the conference there were lots of opportunities for individuals and groups to sing special songs for the congregation. The Christians love to sing, and so there were more people who wanted to sing than there was time available.

A special choir was formed just for this convention, and they were wonderful. The Chin people have a unique way of harmonizing that is very beautiful to listen to, and each time the choir sang we all enjoyed it very much.

One event that occurred during the convention really

stands out. Mrs. Nyo Hlah traveled to the convention to share a word of thanks from her disabled husband, Mr. Myint Aung, who was unable to attend. This extremely poor couple have been greatly helped by Myanmar Hope. She wanted to publicly testify to that and to give her thanks, and then she sang a song. We were all very moved by her words.

After she finished, Pastor Lun Kho Thang, who was helping to lead the convention, got up to challenge the congregation. "We have been learning about the Kingdom of God among us. Now let us put what we have learned in action, and take up a collection for Myint Aung and Nyo Hlah."

The congregation stood and began to sing. A couple of young ladies came forward and stretched out a Kuki cloth to use as a basket. As Mrs. Nyo Hlah stood behind them, members of the congregation began streaming forward, dropping their love gifts into the blanket.

It was amazing to watch as these Christians generously gave out of their poverty to help this poor couple. There was hardly a dry eye in the place as the people cried joyfully and gave with cheerful hearts. It brought to mind Paul's description of the Macedonian Christians in 2 Corinthians 8:

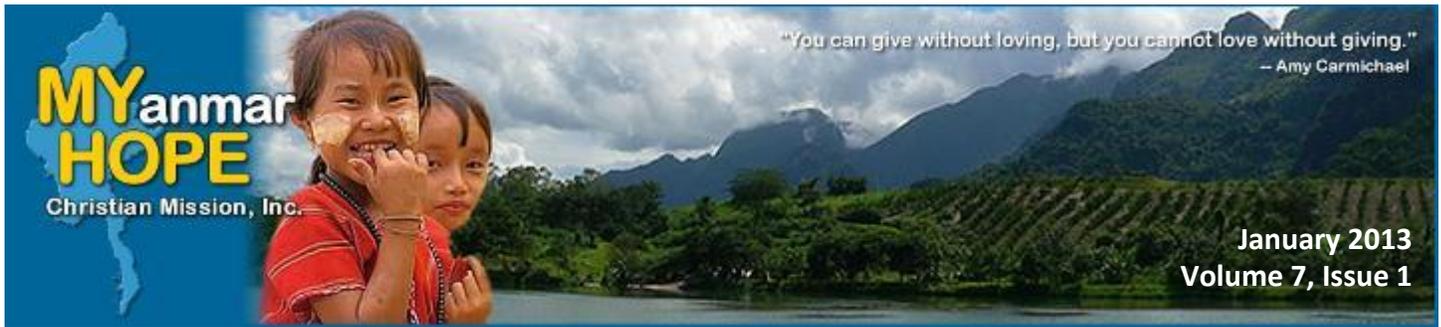
"...for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints..."

After the love offering was complete, Pastor Lun Kho Thang prayed blessings and thanks for the funds, but he could hardly get the words out through his tears. It was a very moving time, and one that none of us who experienced it will ever forget.

You can view pictures and videos from the convention, as well as from the rest of our December trip, at our public Facebook page:

https://www.facebook.com/MyanmarHope/photos_albums





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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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From the Director

Greetings in the Name of our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ!

2012 was a great year for Myanmar Hope Christian Mission. There isn't enough space to describe all of the ways that the Lord used your prayers and love gifts to improve and enhance the lives of His children in Myanmar. However, we know that God is keeping track, and those rewards you are storing up in Heaven will one day be a wonderful blessing for you.

2013 is shaping up to be an even greater year! We have some real challenges ahead (see the Hope Boarding School and Hope Preschool updates) but we know our God is faithful and that He will provide all of our needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. Thank you for being a big part of God's method and means for meeting the needs of the believers in Myanmar!

We especially want to thank the prayer warriors of the **West Side Christian Church Prayer Ministry**. Your prayers over the past six years have made a real difference. We know that so much of what Palal and Kikim have been able to accomplish is a direct result of your faithful and fervent prayers.

As I mentioned in our last newsletter, many things are changing for the better in Myanmar. There remain, however, many huge problems that cause untold amounts of suffering in the lives

of the people. The children of Myanmar, especially, still need your help in a big way.

If you have been wondering where you can best invest the Kingdom resources that God has put under your management, look no further! By partnering with Myanmar Hope your resources will make an immediate, real, and long-term impact on the lives of some of the neediest children on our planet.



Palal, Solomon, and Cherry

Palal, Kikim, and the children of Hope Boarding School and Hope Preschool need your help. If you have not yet given to this important work, please do so today! If you are already giving, ask God if He would help you to increase your commitment. Your investment will reap eternal rewards!

Chuck Cherry

Chuck Cherry, Director
Myanmar Hope Christian Mission, Inc.



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