

MYANMAR: PETER - BETHEL MISSIONS (RMBC)

To Mt Pleasant Church of Christ: This brief report covers what Bethel Missions did in His kingdom ventures in the Yangon Region, Rakhine State and Shan State in 2015. It is a great joy to serve the Lord together with you in advancing His kingdom ministries. We really appreciate your contribution for His missions. Thanks again for standing with us.

Yangon Region: We expanded ministries in the Yangon region to the four Buddhist communities through community development and evangelistic outreaches. In this stage, instead of preaching the gospel directly to the people, we tried to build trust with them through working together for the benefit of community. On the other hand, our local missionaries are trained to share the gospel with the communities while doing the community development. We also extended our mission works through the music ministry. During Christmas we reached out with the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the clear theme: **One Meal, One Gift and One Message**. Whoever came to our Christmas celebration were provided with one meal, one Christmas gift and the Christmas message. In this way we introduced the message of Jesus Christ to about 1000 people in the Yangon region.

Rakhine State: We have been reaching the Rakhine Buddhists with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and planting the indigenous churches with the Buddhist converts since 2003. Now we have mission fields in 8 townships – there are 17 townships in Rakhine State. One of our goals is to plant at least one church in each township. We also engaged in relief and development works. Due to torrential rains and floods in July, there was widespread devastation affecting 12 of Myanmar's states and regions. Of these, the worst affected area was northern Rakhine. To the extent of our capacity, Bethel Missions has assisted in relief work in the 27 affected villages in Kyauktaw and Myauk U Townships from 5 August - 12 September. The livelihoods of over one thousand households have been hit by the flood. Now we are helping some villages for the livelihood of some families. Our One Meal, One Gift and One Message Christmas outreach went well in 10 villages in the north and two villages in the south where our mission works are being engaged.

We are also helping 18 children for their education. In 2015 six students wrote Matriculation exams and three passed. Out of these three two are joining University and they are also helping other children through teaching and guidance. We hope that they will become upcoming leaders for the works of the gospel in Rakhine and beyond. We also purchased two houses for missionaries in southern Rakhine while upgrading our training center and hostels in the north.

As Bethel Missions focuses on church planting, we equip the potential and committed people to reach other Buddhists with the gospel and plant indigenous churches. As a result, some have become volunteers and contribute to the ministry through financially supporting our missionaries.

Shan State – Ministry with Akhi people: The Akhi communities who live on the border of China are mostly spirit worshippers. In 2010 we started reaching these people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ led by Rev. Naw Mai. Praise the Lord for those Akhi spirit worshippers have come to know and serve Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior since then. As His kingdom ministries keep advancing, there are now over 400 Akhi people following Christ and indigenous churches are being planted. Throughout 2014 and 2015 we had regular training courses and equipped potential leaders for outreach and planting indigenous churches. This coming year we will be supporting five local missionaries who will be reaching out among their own people.

Training Programs: Bethel Missions has training programs for both lay and full time ministers. Our focus is holistic ministry combining both spiritual and practical community development and we have developed a student-oriented curriculum. All teaching materials are in Burmese. In the eastern part of Shan State, Bethel Missions is working with Covenant Life Church, and has been teaching the Word of God with Audio to the people who are in gross-level, lay people and full time ministers (pastors and evangelists) by TEE program. In March about 20 people from different denominational backgrounds will graduate with a Master of Ministry (M.Min) and some with a Bachelor of Ministry (B. Min).

Social Development Project: From June, Covenant Life Church in Kyaington will take care of some girls who are at risk from human trafficking for their livelihood. It will protect them and they will have a chance to be trained for more suitable livelihoods. For this project, Ms. Jay Sein, one of the MEGST graduates will be leading under the management of Bethel Missions and Covenant Life Church.

Challenges in the Ministries of Bethel Missions: Due to the Nationality and Religious Protection Law led by the Buddhist monks and tension between Muslims and the Rakhine people, we have a lot of challenges in advancing the ministries in Rakhine State. In some places our missionaries were threatened by the monks and local authorities. For example, one of our local missionaries has been warned not to do any mission work in his village or he will be kicked out by the village. Sometimes it is very risky for our local missionaries and church planters.

Looking Ahead in 2016: As our hope is to plant at least one church in each township by the end of 2020, we keep stepping forward under the guidance of the Lord. I (Peter) will be stepping down from the seminary (MEGST) by the end of this academic year (FEB 2016) and will be giving more time to the mission works of Bethel Missions. In Rakhine State Bethel Missions will continue following up with flood affected villages and will be doing evangelistic outreach with the villagers and indigenous church planting. The regular advanced training will continue. In Shan State Bethel Missions will also extend to the Akhi spirit worshippers and Shan Buddhist communities while running evangelistic outreaches and community development and providing training for the mission works in the Yangon region.

Our Prayer Requests

1. Bethel Missions will be able to focus more on holistic missions.
2. Church planting opportunities will be expanded among the Buddhist communities and spirit worshipers' communities.
3. To have financial sustainability.
4. To set up a mission center in Kyaukphyu township. At the moment our missionary has to rent a house but local authorities do not like this and are forcing the owner not to rent it to Mr. Hla Win anymore. At present we have a piece of land and we need to urgently build a small house.
5. To run income generating projects in Rakhine and Shan States in order to support the mission works.
6. Peter and his family will have financial sustainability as Peter will be stepping down from seminary at the end of February and he will be giving more times to the mission works.

To equip the potential people for advancing mission works.

