

## KAREN CHRISTIAN LEADERS' NEWSLETTER

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**Notes from Duane Binkley:** First, let me offer congratulations to Rev. Lin Coin (Lincoln) formerly of the Tham Hin camp, now living in Lynn, Massachusetts, and to Rev. Dr. Maung Maung Htwe. On January 3<sup>rd</sup>, the American Baptist Churches of Massachusetts organized a special worship service to award certificates recognizing the ordination of both of these men. This service was part of a whole afternoon called the "Friends from Burma Reunion" and involved people from all over the area. It is good that we can gather together and celebrate in this way. It is also good that Karen and others from Burma get ordained in America. As we wrote in more detail in the first newsletter, it is possible to get ordained with the American Baptist Churches through your local church and region.

February 20 – 22, International Ministries of the American Baptist Churches will be holding a Missions Conference at the Palm West Community Church and the Bellevue Heights Community Church in Sun City, Arizona. Sun City is located on the northwest side of Phoenix. The Missions Conference will feature a number of missionaries from around the world and will also feature the Karen from Phoenix. Plans are still being made, but it looks like the Karen from Phoenix, will be doing some singing and Done dancing as well. We would be very happy if you can come to this conference. For more information look at:

[http://www.internationalministries.org/read/world\\_mission\\_conferences](http://www.internationalministries.org/read/world_mission_conferences).

Later in the year, in June, the American Baptists will hold their Biennial meeting in Pasadena, California. This meeting is for the total Baptist Family and includes International Ministries, National Ministries and the Office of the General Secretary.

There are many good videos about what is happening to the Karen on the internet. We recently were sent a couple links that we would like to share with you. First, if you go to:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3BecKOhACHk>, you will see a video made by the Free Burma Rangers that shows some of the hardships that happen to the Karen inside Burma. A second new video is also found on Youtube at: [www.youtube.com/inongimke](http://www.youtube.com/inongimke). This video was made by a communications major and features a family in the Chapel Hill, North Carolina area as they adjust to life in America.

**Karen Ministry related to First Baptist Church of Moline, Illinois.** At the present time there are about 120 Karens and a few Chins living in Rock Island and Moline, Illinois. About seventy attend worship at the First Baptist Church of Moline at 8:30 for worship in the Karen language

and then again at 10:30 a.m. for the English language service. At 8:45 a.m. Karen children and American children meet together for a time of singing under the direction of the church musician, Jill Barnhart, and Pam Crowe, lead singer for the Praise Team. The Karen children have invigorated this time and are quick to learn the songs. At 9 p.m. Karen speaking children meet for Sunday School led by Cherry San, wife of the lead pastor. As the children develop facility in English, they will attend other classes. The Karens elected their own leadership team which is considered the Karen Ministry committee or team of the church. Plaw Hso Thaw was elected chair and is the lead pastor. Htoo Brown serves as the secretary and assists in leading Sunday worship. In addition a treasurer and two auditors are elected. Thirty-five baptized Karen believers have joined the FBC congregation but many others who attend are Christians including some from Anglican and Seventh Day Adventist backgrounds. About ten Karens are probably working each Sunday morning and therefore unable to attend worship. One Muslim family has attended some picnics, a Buddhist family attends worship regularly, and a couple of Karens attend a "Jesus Only" church. Some Chins attend a Pentecostal church led by an American Chin pastor. Last year the FBC provided winter clothing for nearly all the Karen families. The welcome by FBC, Moline is strong and genuine and the Karen presence has invigorated this church which has been on a slow decline for twenty years. The people are excited about being a bi-ethnic Christian fellowship and value highly the Karen participation in special events and especially through music contributions in worship. The church uses two vans--a 12 passenger and 15 passenger--to assist in transporting Karens to worship and other functions of the church attended by the Karens. In addition the Karens now own six older vehicles including one small van all of which transport Karens from about 35 different living units. Employers in the Quad City area include Honeywell Safety Products, Seaford, Stoney Creek Conference Center, a packaging firm in Milan, and Tyson Chicken in Joslin. Unemployed and underpaid Karens in other cities are now contacting Quad City Karens with the hope to move to the Quad Cities for better employment opportunities.

**Excerpt from Karens Christian Leaders' Manual: I. Family Size.**

Besides spiritual understandings, Christian Karen leaders in America need to give Karen refugees social understandings. One of the most important of these is family planning and size. In Burma having a lot of children is advantageous. Just living in Burma is a lot of work--washing, cooking, bazaaring, sewing, etc. takes a lot of time and children can help in the home, garden, and fields.

Also health care is not good in Burma and the tropics have more diseases than temperate zones with winters. Therefore in Burma families that have eight children often lose one or two to sickness or accident.

In the U. S. children rarely die from disease and accidents. The big killer of children is cars either by running in front of them or a car accident. The law requires young children to be in baby seats or booster seats which have cut down on a lot of injuries and deaths. Therefore all

new refugees need to have and use baby seats and car seatbelts. There is no need to have eight children hoping to end up with six or five.

In Burma there is no social security or retirement programs. So old persons are dependent on family and children for care and financial support in their old age. Having many children insures support and care in one's old age. Also birth control knowledge, medicine or equipment was sometimes not available. It was technically against the law to use birth control in Burma.

In the U. S. the situation is quite different. The work of running a household is much less due to labor saving machines, refrigerators, stoves, prepared foods, permappress clothes, etc. Therefore there is not the need for a lot of child labor. It costs \$140,000 to raise a child in America and to give him/her all the opportunities, education, and advantages. College costs \$60,000 to \$150,000 more. Most couples in America decide on two or three children as being all they can afford. By spacing them two or three years apart, they can give each child more attention and advantages.

In the U. S. most older persons have social security and retirement plans. Therefore they don't need children to support them. In fact the situation is quite the opposite. Parents end up helping their children to buy houses, get education, pay medical bills, etc. The more children, the less help can be given each one.

Once a woman have had the number of children she desires, a tubal ligation is often a good choice or a vasectomy for her husband.

Therefore Christian leaders need to help refugees understand the new situation and so plan their families accordingly. The above feelings about spacing and limiting the number of children are values generally found among American Baptists. However there are some Christian groups that feel they should "be fruitful and multiply" and not use birth control, or plan spacing and number.

**Citizenship Manual.** The manual issued by the U. S. government to help persons to become U. S. citizens has now been translated into Karen. A printed version in both English and Karen is available with a DVD for \$20 plus \$5 shipping. The DVD has spoken English and Karen.

Contact: [TansyJKadoe@cox.net](mailto:TansyJKadoe@cox.net) Mailing address: Tansy Kadoe, 18050 N. 89<sup>th</sup> Lane, Peoria, AZ 85382 This a fund raiser for her youth group.

**True Story.** A young Karen woman applied to a nursing home for a job. The personnel director took her into her office for the interview leaving the door open. As the personnel director was asking the young women questions, one of the patients wandered into the office. She came up to the young woman and hugged her and said, "I love you."

The young Karen woman instantly responded by hugging her back and saying, "I love you too!"

The personnel director hired her on the spot!

**Feedback.** If this newsletter is interesting and helpful to you, please let us know. Also send us any information to share with other Karen groups. Tell us what you would like to see in the next issues. Give us e-mails of leaders who might like to receive it--our list is very incomplete.

### Survey for a Regional Conference

It has been suggested that regional conferences for Karen Leaders would be helpful. The conference would have workshops on subjects of interest to Karen leaders. Participants would stay with Karen families and the host church would provide Karen food. The cost of participation would be for transportation and sharing the cost of bringing workshop leaders.

### Survey

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ I think a Regional Karen Leaders' Conference is a good idea.

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ I would attend a Regional Conference in the Midwest (Illinois, Indiana, Ohio)

I would like to see a Regional Conference in \_\_\_\_\_(area).

I think approximately \_\_\_\_\_ would attend from our church \_\_\_\_\_(Name of church).

Please check which workshops would be helpful.

\_\_\_ Church Budgets--why they are important and how to develop one.

\_\_\_ Systematic Giving. How to encourage increased giving.

\_\_\_ Recording of individual's giving. Why it is important and how it is done.

\_\_\_ What does 501(c)(3) mean and why it is important.

\_\_\_ Sunday School Effectively helping children face the challenges in their lives.

\_\_\_ Youth Programs. How to help them face and maintain their Christian values and Karenness.

\_\_\_ Resources for Problems of Alcoholism, Depression, Drugs, etc.

\_\_\_ Dealing with Spouse Abuse and Abuse of Children.

\_\_\_ No Job? How to create your own job.

\_\_\_ For Americans who work with Karens.

Other topics I would like to see discussed.

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When should the conference be scheduled?

Friday all day Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

Friday Evening only Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

All day Saturday Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

Sunday Morning only Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

Sunday Afternoon Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

Other suggestions \_\_\_\_\_

Should it be scheduled on a four day weekend such as Memorial Day May 22-25, Fourth of July 3-6, or Labor Day Sept 4-7? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

Other Comments \_\_\_\_\_

I think a conference for Karen leaders would be a complete waste of time and effort.

I agree \_\_\_\_\_ I disagree \_\_\_\_\_

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