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## KAREN CHRISTIAN LEADER' S NEWSLETTER

Volume 1, Number 9. August 2009 Duane Binkley: [dmbink@pobox.com](mailto:dmbink@pobox.com), Aye Aye Thaw: [ayeayethaw@hotmail.com](mailto:ayeayethaw@hotmail.com), Neil Sowards: [neildianasowards@juno.com](mailto:neildianasowards@juno.com)

### **Karen Baptist Churches in America**

In association with the Biennial Meeting of the American Baptist Churches, a group of Karen church leaders met in Pasadena, CA on June 25th and 26th. About 50 leaders were present from at least 8 states. The result of the meeting was the formation of the Karen Baptist Churches in United States of America (KBCUSA). It is hoped that this new organization will provide a way for the Karen communities across the country to come together in a Baptist network to better relate to each other and to the Karen around the world.

The Executive Committee was formed as follows:

President - Thra Tha Hgay of Phoenix, AZ

Vice President - Thra Hsa Moo of St. Paul, MN

Secretary - Thra Ler Htoo of Washington, DC

Vice Secretary - Thra Mue Aye Aye Thaw of San Francisco, CA

Treasurer - Thra Josiah of St. Paul, MN

Auditors - Thra Wilfred of St. Paul, MN and thra Mue P Saw Paw of Washington, DC

Women's Representative - Thra Mue Htoo May of Omaha, NE

Youth Representative - Thra Mue K Paw of Allentown, PA

On July 21 & 22 in Ft. Wayne, IN Karen from around the US gathered to further discuss the KBCUSA. The name was formally accepted, the US was divided into seven regions and representatives for each region were selected. A committee was selected to develop Karen language Sunday School materials and a motto based on Acts 13:47 was selected.

Keep June 18 – 20, 2010 marked on you calendar because those dates were selected for a nationwide meeting of the KBCA to be held in St. Paul, MN. It is planned that the General Secretary of the Karen Baptist Convention, Dr. Greeta Din, will be attending this gathering. It is hoped that all Karen communities in America can be represented.

A complete record of the Ft. Wayne meeting is being prepared in English and Karen and we will share that as soon as it becomes available.

**Duane's Paragraph:** I was very happy to be a part of the meetings of the new KBCUSA in both Pasadena and in Ft. Wayne and wish all God's blessings on this new organization as it gets

started. I also received word recently that a new Karen organization is being started in Europe. It is called the European Karen Network and so far includes Karen from Sweden, England, Norway and Denmark. Their objectives were of a political nature. They do not have a web site as yet but the Karen in Sweden have a web site at [www.karenschwedishcommunity.org](http://www.karenschwedishcommunity.org).

A new DVD has been made about Dr. Cynthia and the Mae Tao Clinic in Mae Sot. It is called Crossing Midnight and has been produced by Because Productions. For more information visit [www.becausefoundation.org/index.php](http://www.becausefoundation.org/index.php).

Church World Service is one of the 10 resettlement agencies in the US. They are offering 3 – 5 grants of up to \$2000 each to their affiliates or to Karen or Karenni community associations to produce videos that can be shown in the refugee camps in Thailand. They want the video to show the hopes, fears, challenges and goals of those that have been resettled in the US so that information can be conveyed to the refugees still in the camps that are considering resettlement. Interested organizations should prepare a two page maximum application that explains the main themes of the video you would produce, how resettled refugees are involved in the process, the timeline for producing the video, how the videos would be distributed and what budget would be needed. The deadline for an application is August 28, 2009. For more information, contact Andrew Fuys at [afuys@churchworldservice.org](mailto:afuys@churchworldservice.org).

Chicago Welcomes You and Exodus World Service has prepared a new set of materials to help orient new Karen refugees coming to settle in America. They are written in both English and Karen and are easy to understand with ample illustrations. For more information and to see what the look like, visit [www.chicagowelcomesyou.org](http://www.chicagowelcomesyou.org).

**The Tabernacle Baptist Church in Richmond, Virginia.** has a growing Karen, Chin, and Karenni population here in Richmond, {Virginia} and the church has become home to many of them. The Pastor is Rev. Sterling W. Severns.

Excerpt from Karen Ministers Manual: The full thirty page manual is free by e-mail. Sorry no hard copies are available.

## **1. Theology in the United States.**

**A. The five theological positions found in Christian denominations.** Among the Christians of American can be found many different theological positions. For simplification let us look at five general positions.

1. **Fundamentalism.** Fundamentalists believe the Bible was dictated by God and man wrote down what God said. The Bible is literally true. When Genesis says the earth was created in six days, they believe it was six twenty four hour days. They do not accept the theory of evolution or the theory the earth is five billion years old. They view all other theological positions as being wrong. In general they are against abortion, gay life style, etc. Some are against birth control and family planning.

2. **Conservatism.** Conservative believe that God dictated the Bible to man and all of it is true. However they feel some of it is poetic such as the creation story where the six days refer to eras

and not 24 hour days. Most do not accept the theory of evolution. In general they are against abortion, homosexuals life style, etc. Some accept family planning (birth control).

3. **Neo Orthodoxy.** These people feel God inspired men to write the Bible. Much of it was written for a particular time and place and the writers sometimes put their own thoughts into their writings. The New Testament's revelations supersedes the revelations of the Old Testament. The Creation story is a theological statement showing God created all things. Most of the things mentioned were worshiped by people at the time it was written. For example, Form and Void were gods of the Persian Empire. In general holders of this position feel abortion should be an individual woman's choice although most feel it is not the way God wants us to live. Many feel family planning is God given knowledge and should be used. While many reject homosexuality as an expression, they still love the persons who seemingly are programmed to be this way. Many believe in there is continual revelation from God such as the truth that religion should be separate from the State and the State should not help or hinder religion. Most do not have a problem with evolution because they feel God guided the process until it produce man who was able to relate to God.

4. **Neo Liberal.** These people believe God inspired men to write about Him. Some of the Bible is more theologically accurate than other parts. The Bible also shows the development of man's understanding of God starting with being a personal family God of Abraham and evolving into a tribal war god of Israel and then a universal God during the exile. They believe in continual revelation such as justification by faith. The life and teachings of Jesus are the standards by which modern revelations must be judged. Most have the attitude that there are many ways to understand and approach God and so are more tolerate of other Christian expressions.

5. **Ultra Liberal.** These think that man has searched for God and written about their speculations. Many would say God is an idea and not a reality.

In the American Baptist denomination would be found individuals and churches holding the first four of these theological positions. Many denominations hold only one or two of these positions. Some denominations such as the Southern Baptist once had members who held the first three positions but now basically that denomination demands everyone be fundamentalists. They no longer hold the Baptist position that each person can approach the Bible and interpret it as God reveals it to him/her. So the church or denomination's name may no longer be in line with their beliefs.

Karens will run into Americans who hold one position or another. The Fundamentalists and Conservatives think theirs is the only correct and true positions.

**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. This e-mailing is being sent to 288 leaders of Karens.

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