

2006-2007 Activities

Program- I

Program: *A Special Lecture on Buddhism*

Venue and Date: Thra Mooler Conference Hall, Diamond Jubilee Building, Myanmar Institute of Theology, Seminary Hill, Insein from June 25, 2005 (Saturday).

Lecture Theme: *Real Happiness and World Peace*

Concept of Lecture:

The primary aim of this lecture is to give theological students a general knowledge about essential themes of Theravada Buddhist belief and to enable them to make a critical theological reflection on Buddhist teachings in relevance to their Christian faith and practice.

Methodology: - A special Buddhist scholar was invited to give the lecture. Discussions, reflections, and cross-questions will be an essential part of the lecture.

Resource Persons:

Lecturer: Dr. Mehn Tin Mon , Professor of Dhamma Philosophy at International Theravada Missionary University, Yangon.

Theme: *Real Happiness and World Peace*

Program Facilitator: Revd. U Aung Khin

Participants:

Between 50 and 60 students from MIT and other theological schools based in Yangon attended the lecture.

Program – II

Program: Seminar on *Women Trafficking Issues*

Venue and Date: Thra Mooler Conference Hall, Diamond Jubilee Building, Myanmar Institute of Theology, Seminary Hill, Insein from September 23-24, 2005 (Friday & Saturday).

Theme: *Let My People Go* (Exodus.5:1-2)

Concept of Workshop: Many women and children in Asia today are being sold or trafficked from one country to another either for cheap labors or sexual commodities. Trafficked women end up in despicable work situations in other countries such as Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore, with no access to legal protection or human rights. Those women who served as sex workers were often cheated, threatened, tortured and even driven out by their employers without being paid for their services so that they suffer loss of human dignity, senses of despair, helplessness and psychological breakdowns. In addition, many young

ethnic/tribal women are raped, economically exploited to be sexual victims of tourists, persuaded to be sexually-oriented entertainers, forced to be concubines of rich business men and even compelled to be porters or human shields in some war-torn countries.

The churches in Myanmar must take leadership roles in defending, advocating, and upgrading the rights and dignity of women. Deprivation of the dignity and rights of women must be considered therefore as an urgent agenda for the churches in Asia and Myanmar today. This seminar will serve as a platform where the above issues are extensively discussed, examined and assessed theologically so that many theological educators, students and church leaders may become fully aware of those issues and situation, with a result of striving together for certain collaborative actions against these social problems in Asia and Myanmar. In addition, the outcomes of this seminar such as presentation papers, collections of information data, and evaluation of the issues will be utilized as potential theological resources and teaching materials in the seminaries, theological Colleges and Bible schools in Asia and Myanmar in the future.

Resource Persons:

- Keynote Address: *Overcoming Violence against Women: Moo Paw*
Bible Study –I: *Because of Eve: Reading Genesis 2 and 3 from Feminist Perspectives: Anna May Say pa*
Bible Study-II: *Women and Rights: Biblical Perspective: Lahphai Zau Lat*
Presentation – I: *What is Human Trafficking?: Theingi Min*
Presentation-II: *To Reflect and Act: Naw Dolly*
Presentation-III: *Trafficking of Women in Asia: Pa Yaw & BARS students*

Participants: About 60-80 participants mainly from churches and individuals, lecturers from theological colleges and Bible schools, and Women and Children Education leaders representing regional Baptist Association and Conventions.

Program – III

Program: *Joint-Workshop of Interfaith Leaders on Issues of Street Children and Orphanage in Myanmar*

Venue and Date: Mooler Hall, MIT, Yangon on October 29, 2005 (Friday - Saturday).

Theme: “I was naked and you clothed me” (Matt.25:36)

Concept of Workshop: The number of street children in Asia including Myanmar has increased in number very rapidly in the past twenty years. As the severe impacts of poverty has swept over the nations of Asia, many families both Christian and non-Christian have come to suffer the most severe and impoverished life with the very low income, with lack of nutritious food, drink, clean water, and with loss of access to good medial healthcare. These homeless and street children have experienced loss of their human dignities, senses of despair, helplessness, a variety of psychological breakdowns, and inferiority complexes.

Poverty brings many children from poor family backgrounds to illiteracy and makes them grow without hope for their future education. Deprivation of the dignity and rights of these

street children must be therefore considered as an urgent agenda for the churches in Myanmar today. The seminar will serve as a platform where the above issues are extensively discussed, examined and assessed theologically so that many religious educators, students and organizational leaders may become fully aware of these issues and situation, with the hope of working together for certain actions against all the social problems in Asia and Myanmar. The outcome of this seminar such as presentation papers, collections of information data, and evaluation of the issues will be utilized as potential theological resources for sharing and teaching such issues in the seminaries, theological Colleges and Bible schools in Asia and Myanmar in the future.

Resource Persons:

Keynote Address : Daw Khin May Aye , World Vision, Yangon.

Interreligious Forum on Street Children Issues:

Panelists:

1. U Kaw Thala, Buddhist monk from Buddhist Perspective
2. Alhaj-jah Prof. Dr. Tin Tin New from Islam Perspective
3. Fr. Henry Eikhlein, Rector, St. Joseph's Catholic Major Seminary, from Christian perspective

Participants: About 60-80 participants came mainly from four major religious groups based in Yangon. Representatives from Social and Development Departments under YMCA, MBC and MCC, and others from the Roman Catholic Churches and other NGO organizations also joined the seminar.

Program – IV

Program: Joint-Workshop of MIT and St. Joseph's Catholic Major Seminary
On "*The Wider Ecumenism for Myanmar Churches in 21st Century*".

Venue and Date: St. Joseph's Catholic Major Seminary, 14 Malikha Road, Mayangone Township, Yangon on November 5, 2005 (Saturday).

Theme: "*What Unites us is greater than What divides us*"

Concept of Workshop: Ecumenism as both Catholic and Protestant churches in Myanmar understand it today remains still ecclesio-centric and is confined largely to the boundaries of its own church tradition, though each church tradition is not meant less significant. To transform those differences of our church-bound traditions and faith-practices into constructive tools, we need to come together and build a new ecumenical community in Myanmar. This new ecumenical community will help affect in turn the larger section of the Buddhist society to transform itself into a wider or share community where people from all walks of life and faith can enjoy living together in harmony, peace and justice. This joint workshop is hoped to help Christians envision a new and better world for religious harmony and communal relations in Myanmar.

Resource Persons and Inputs:

Keynote Address: "*The Wider Ecumenism for Myanmar Churches in 21st Century*"
- Arch Bishop Charles Bo

Ecumenical Theology: Dr. Simon Pau Khan En

Visions of Ecumenical Unity: Fr. R. Saw Htoo Lay

Ecumenical Visions for the 21st Century: Anna May Say Pa

Participants:

196 participants from St. Joseph's Catholic Major seminary, Holy Cross Theological College, Myanmar Institute of Theology, and from other seminaries attended the seminar.

Program – V

RESEARCH SCHOLAR PROGRAM (RSP) for 2006 - 2007 Academic Year

CALL FOR

The Judson Research Center of the Myanmar Institute of Theology calls for applications from all the MIT Alumni/nae for a one year research scholar program in MIT with effect from 2005-2006 academic year on the following terms and conditions.

FOCUS OF RESEARCH

Scholars who plan to apply for this scholarship program must focus their research and writings in the following areas and fields of academic interest: (i) Contextual Theologies; (ii) Cultures and Religions; (iii) Theology and Current Issues (Poverty, Child Abuse, Human Trafficking, Human Rights, etc); (iv) Church and Society; (v) Interfaith Dialogue; (vi) Feminist Theology/Gender Issues/Liberation Theology; (vii) Environmental/Ecological Issues; (viii) Violence and Peace; (ix) Myanmar Church History; (x) Pastoral theology/Counseling.

DURATION

Duration of research works may take about 6months from June to November of each academic year. The first 2 months shall be for collecting supportive research materials, meeting with persons for interviews, and for securing one's settlement. The second 4 months shall be for writing his or her projected book/ essay. During the project, the research scholar will be fully in compliance with MIT's school calendar and rules/ regulations for proper proceedings of his or her research works.

SCHOLARSHIP AND MENTORS

Free room and board will be provided on MIT campus by the Judson Research Center to each selected scholar during their research period. In addition, each scholar shall be given a scholarship of Ks. 400,000 (Kyats four hundred thousand only) for stationery and other expenses. No scholar is allowed to bring their family or stay with them. Each scholar will be assigned a mentor and scholars needing advice and help may consult their mentors after fixing an appointment. Mentors are not tutors, they will be available only for consultation and advice, but not to oversee the work of the scholars. If special help is needed including English/Burmese language problems, the mentors will arrange for available resource. The staff of the Judson Research Center will also coordinate in assisting them in their need of library resources.

HOW TO APPLY

Scholars of MIT alumni/nae who expect to avail themselves of this opportunity should submit their application by the end of April, 2005 along with the following documents: (i) research proposal, *written in not more than 1500 words with computerized A4 size;*(ii)

curriculum vitae, (iii) medical certificate taken within the past 4 months; (iv) recommendation letter from mother church's pastor or mother institutional head to:

Dr. Samuel Ngun Ling
Director, Judson Research Center
Myanmar Institute of Theology
Seminary Hill, Insein 11011
Yangon, Myanmar.

Research proposals should show clearly how your fields of study relate to the focus and academic interests of this research scholarship program. The administrative committee of the Judson Research Center will make the final selection of the applicants and selected scholars will be noticed.

Program - VI

Program: Ethnic Minorities in Mekong Region: Religion, Situation and Theology

Venue and Date: Conference Hall, Lutheran Theological Seminary, Hong Kong.

Date: November 25-27,2005.

Motivation: Right through the Mekong area one of the most important cultural divides are found. Namely, on the one side the area where Chinese culture has been a dominating factor and on the other the area where the dominating influence has come from India. This divide follows the stretch of mountains that – connecting with the Himalayas to the West covers the northern part of Myanmar and a large part of the southern Yunnan province of China, most of Laos and the northern part of Thailand and further marks the boarder between Vietnam and Cambodia. This mountainous area between the two spheres of political, cultural, religious etc influence has been home to a large number of smaller ethnic groups and peoples for millennia. For long periods of time, these peoples haven't been touched much by the developments taking place in the lowlands where the dominating groups in the region had their homes. Rather, the peoples of the mountains have often been considered as lesser developed and primitive by the lowlanders.

Only in recent times has the mountain area been formally divided between the states in the regions and many of the peoples of the area have as a result found themselves divided between many different states. This, however, also represented the beginning of hardship for many of the peoples. War has taken its toll and many of the peoples have lost their lands due to the appetite for natural resources and new farming land (e.g. the highland coffee production that has made Vietnam one of the world's biggest producers of this commodity in an amazingly short timeframe). This has not only put the minority peoples' economic basis in jeopardy. It has also meant that their cultures and religions have come under severe stress.

However, the Christian church has entered the region and had come to play an amazing role in the life of these peoples that – together with the fate and culture of this people – is not well known in a wider Christian context.

Aim and means: It is the aim of this program to increase the understanding of the cultural and religious heritage of the minority peoples in the region, to provide a basis for a better understanding of the life situation of these peoples, and to introduce their style of theological reflection to outsiders. This will be achieved through inviting a number of theologians specialized in the field from the region and from other areas of Asia who either work with or represent ethnic minorities to give lectures and lead discussions.

Audience: Theological students and academics, representatives from the churches in the region, representatives for mission agencies and other organizations actively working or interested in the region. There are no formal criteria for participants' formal theological training but it is expected that participants will be able to follow a theological discussion.

Resource Persons:

Keynote Address: *Ethnicity, Religion and Theology: A Myanmar Christian Perspective* –
By Samuel Ngun Ling

Aye Nwe – ‘*Wa Issues in Myanmar*’

Thra Paulu – “*The Karens of Myanmar*”

Rev. Eang Chhun, president of KCC, - “*Ethinc Issues in Cambodia*”

Participants;

Two participants from Cambodia, 10 participants from Myanmar, 4 from Hong Kong and about 10 students from different Asian countries studying at Lutheran Theological Seminary,