

## **American Baptist leaders organize first-ever Burmese Baptist meeting**

By ABP staff (12 August 2008)

VALLEY FORGE, Pa. (ABP) -- In October, the American Baptist Churches USA will convene the first-ever national conference for Burmese Baptist leaders serving in the United States.

More than 30 pastors and lay leaders are expected to attend the Oct. 21-22 event, to be held at Chin Baptist Church in Dallas. American Baptist Personnel Services and ABC Asian Ministries -- two divisions within ABC's home-missions agency, ABC National Ministries -- will sponsor the conference.

The event will help newly resettled pastors and lay leaders in local churches become familiar with American Baptist processes for attaining professional standing, ordination, and theological and continuing education.

Burma -- also known as Myanmar, the name given to it by the military junta that has ruled the Southeast Asian nation since 1962 -- was one of the first nations that Baptist missionaries targeted in the early 19th century. It has long been home to significant numbers of Baptists and other Christians, particularly from its many ethnic minority groups.

However, worldwide human-rights organizations and the U.S. State Department consider the Myanmar regime one of the world's worst violators of religious freedom and other human rights. Many Burmese Christian refugees have escaped to camps in neighboring countries as a result of the oppression. In recent years, many of those have immigrated to the United States.

The Burmese Baptist conference will provide an opportunity for networking and fellowship for Baptists from the Karen, Chin, Kachin and other Burmese minority groups. Many of them and their congregations have come to America from refugee camps in Thailand and Malaysia.

Following the Burmese event, the American Baptist Asian Pastors Conference and Asian Caucus Convocation will convene at Chin Baptist Church Oct. 22-24.