

KAREN CHRISTIAN LEADER' S NEWSLETTER

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First Karen Baptist Church of Omaha to be welcomed: On Saturday, Sept. 19th, the First Karen Baptist Church of Omaha will be formally accepted into the American Baptist Churches of Nebraska. This new Karen church has been meeting at the First Baptist Church of Omaha for almost a year.

News Article and Radio Program: We were told of a new program on National Public Radio about the refugee situation along the Thai Burma Border featuring Dr. Cynthia's Mae Tao Clinic in Mae Sot. The broadcast can be downloaded at: http://soundprint.org/radio/display_show/ID/761/name/Green+Tea+and+Landmines .

Also, the Buffalo News in Buffalo, New York recently published an article about the Karen there. This article can be read at: <http://www.buffalonews.com/home/story/744722.html>

New Site Available for Refugee Related Ministry: The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship is making a Karen group available on their Ning site (Ning is a social networking site). Join the group and you can start or join in on conversations related to the Karen ministry in your church or community. Compare notes on where to find materials or resources, what is working for Sunday school sessions, where to find thread for weaving, etc. To join the group go to: <http://fellowshipportal.ning.com/group/karenministryusainternational>. There is no cost and if many people sign up and use it, it can be a good way to communicate with each other.

Job Interview Questions: Some time back we offered four pages of job interview questions in English and Karen. Somehow the masters were misplaced and we were unable to send them to those who requested them. Those masters have now been found and hard copies are now available upon request. Sorry no electronic version is available. These interview questions are helpful to prepare Karens for job interviews.

KBC in USA News: Many of the Karens in the camps had not married but lived together. Therefore the Arizona Karen Baptist Church at Montevista Baptist Church, AZ has encouraged them to marry and one Sunday they had five weddings. Over twenty people were baptized on one Sunday. Tha Hgay, pastor of that church also reports, "In addition, I was given more responsibilities for the mission work organized by the Karen Baptist Churches in U.S.A. I have been able to visit and help organize Karen churches in other states: San Diego church in California (Thara Htee Set); two churches in Colorado (Thara Ler Moo and Tharamu Daborah); a church in Utah (Thara Hsar Hset Plo). Currently, I am working on visiting Boise, Idaho, to help them get organized. Every six months, I visit these churches/fellowship and help them by leading a communion,

conducting marriage ceremonies, and baptizing.” Tha Hgay and Tha Hser Tun are now on the staff of that church.

Neil Sowards visits Burma: Neil Sowards visited Burma July 30 to Aug 21. He visited 8 Bible Schools and Seminaries, four clinics, two training schools, three libraries, BARS, and other places and people related to Friends of Burma, Inc’s work in Burma.

DVD Available: The Karen Baptist Convention has produced a short DVD on their clinic at Insein. It is available from Neil Sowards for \$5 postpaid.

New Book Available: “Games Played in Mai La Refugee Camp” is now on Lulu.com where it can be down loaded free. It is in English and Karen languages and illustrated by a thirteen year old Karen boy, Min Naing Lin, from the camps. It can be purchased but costs \$21.20 plus shipping. The author is Neil Sowards. 31 pages.

From the North Shore Baptist Church in Chicago: This summer has been a time of significant steps forward in our ministry with Karen (and some Karenni and Burmese as well) refugees from Burma.

Jobs have stabilized the Karen community in Chicago. Some of you have heard how Pastor Doug made a connection last spring, through a Baptist business owner at a sister church, with a food company in need of workers. He and Poe Clee shepherded the first 10 Karen job-seekers through the interview and orientation process. When they proved to be excellent workers, more and more were gradually hired. Poe Clee has been working all summer on identifying appropriate applicants and assisting them in obtaining jobs at Little Lady Foods. By late July fifty refugees from Burma, and another fifty from other countries had found employment there. It is impossible to overstate the importance of this breakthrough. Karen families are no longer leaving Chicago as quickly as they arrive, and a stable community is beginning to grow.

Sunday English tutoring builds momentum. During July and August, Sunday morning English tutoring has served as many as 70 Karen each week. Sunday by Sunday room 315 has grown more and more crowded and rung louder and louder with the sounds of simple praise choruses and chants of "nice to meet you" "nice to meet you". Under the expert leadership of Alan Totire, and with the enthusiastic assistance of a dozen or more North Shore volunteers, small groups divided by age and proficiency level have then practiced their English skills. But perhaps most importantly, the group has begun to develop an important sense of community that was lacking as long as families struggled with unemployment and relocation to other parts of the U.S.

Leaders decide to begin Karen language worship. Pastor Roger Poenyunt and Poe Clee have been consistently working to build up the Karen community and its leaders; Pastor Roger through pastoral care and visitation, and Poe Clee in employment and other challenges of adjusting to life in the U.S. On August 4, they gathered 20 leaders among those Karen who attend North Shore, to discuss next steps. Calling themselves the Karen Fellowship of NSBC, they decided to continue to attend English worship at 10 am in the

fall, but also to begin Karen language worship at 11:30 am. Youth in grades 6 and up will also participate in Karen worship. Children 5th grade and younger will be part of our Adventures in Learning classes. When this decision takes effect, on September 13, North Shore will become the only church in Chicago to offer worship in the Karen language.

We have come a very long way since the first refugee families from Burma began attending North Shore in October of 2006. All those families have since moved on, as have many, many others whom we welcomed and assisted in their first months in the U.S. There is a long way yet to go, but as summer turns to fall, the hard work and gracious welcome extended by so many is bearing new fruit. We are watching important new steps on the part of our Karen sisters and brothers. As a new language group forms at North Shore, we are living out our call from God as it is articulated in our vision statement:

*North Shore Baptist Church is a
multicultural community
growing in faith
through God's love in Christ.
Empowered by the Holy Spirit,
we live out the Good News
in our city and the world.
In humility, we embrace both member and stranger,
honoring our differences,
while we worship and learn together.*

*"Christ is our peace who made us one, and has broken down the dividing wall..."
Ephesians 2:14*

Grace and peace, Rev. Carol McVetty

From the Karen Baptist Church in St. Paul, MN

(Aye Aye Thaw sent this in just after the last newsletter. It is already in Karen so I will translate it into English and include it.)

Testimony from Naw Hsar Paw: I would like to express my gratitude to Thara Tha Hser Tun for his kindness. As a pastor, Thra Tha Hser gives his all to the church and the church members. I would like to thank him for always being available to encourage my family spiritually and help us with our needs. He helps me in so many ways. He accompanied me to the doctor's appointments. When I had to submit applications for government assistance, he helped me by giving me a ride and interpreting for me in the office. Since I was laid off from work, Thra Tha Hser spent his time helping me look for a job. He made inquiries at many places on my behalf. Due to his effort, I found a job as a housekeeper at a hotel. Thra Tha Hser prays for me and my family continuously. I

appreciate him and I am very happy that Thra Tha Hser is our pastor. Naw Hsar Paw,
Phoenix, AZ

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.

Past Issues of this newsletter are available on www.karenkonnektion.org.