

**MYanmar
HOPE**
Christian Mission, Inc.

"You can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving."
— Amy Carmichael

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Happy New Year!

Wow, last year went by fast! It seems as though as soon as you turn around, another year has gone whizzing by. We can look back, though, and see how God was at work in His Church, and we know that we have been undeserving recipients of His great grace and mercy. God is so good!

2010 was an eventful year for MyHope. Palal and Kikim returned to Myanmar in December 2009, and they got right to work—planning and executing leadership training seminars for the northwest churches, scouting and purchasing land for our boarding school, renovating and furnishing our school building, helping our students get to Yangon and get acclimated, conducting and overseeing the school, and much more. The July birth of their daughter, Cherry Nem Nei Them, had to be the highlight of the year!

Palal returned to the U.S. for a short visit in October, and then Chuck and MaryAnn Cherry returned with him to Myanmar for a three-week stay in December. We will share more about that later in the newsletter.

Thank you for your faithful prayers and financial support. Without your help, none of what we do in Myanmar could be accomplished. You are truly partners in ministry, and whatever blessings accrue as a result of the work in Myanmar will be returned to you, in "good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over" (Luke 6:38).



Chuck and MaryAnn with members of the choir which performed at the Kalay Leadership Conference

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Hope School Update

All of the children and staff at Hope Boarding School send their love and greetings to all of our friends and supporters in the West. 2010 was an important year for the school—indeed it was our inaugural year!

Much has been accomplished in the lives of our students thus far, and our first academic year is a little more than half over. We can say with confidence that coming to Hope Boarding School has been an extremely significant life-altering event for each of the children, their families, and even their extended community.

Their lives are very different now, and their health is much improved from when they first arrived. Not only is each child able to attend school regularly—something not possible for them in the villages—but they receive three nutritious meals each day, complete with protein, vegetables, and daily vitamin and calcium supplements.

They have also learned the importance of cleanliness, personal hygiene, and good nutrition, and these are things that they will take back with them and pass on to their families and friends.

Spiritually, they are learning the Bible, basic Christianity,

and how to live and work together in Christian unity. Traditionally in Myanmar, the various denominations have not worked well together, and sometimes have not even communicated with each other. Through his leadership seminars in the north-west, Palal is teaching the pastors and elders the importance of Christian unity, and his teaching is making a big impact among the churches.

We are not only teaching Christian unity at Hope Boarding School, we are modeling it daily. Our students come from many different villages and different denominations—Anglican, Baptist, Methodist, Christian Church/Church of Christ, Roman Catholic, and several others—and they are all learning to live together in Christian love and unity.

Many of our students will be the Church leaders of tomorrow, and what they are learning at Hope Boarding School will go with them throughout their lives.

Jesus said, “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” When the churches live in love and unity, then they will be better able to evangelize their Buddhist neighbors—who are terribly confused by the plethora of denominational names and titles. At Hope Boarding School, we do not recognize denominational names—we are all Christians; not Baptist Christians, or Church of Christ Christian...just Christians.



Preparing for nightly prayer and praise

Believe me when I tell you that these kids are prayer warriors!

The Chin people love to sing, and our kids are no exception. They sing out loudly and beautifully, and most of them are very gifted musically. Their singing is already producing fruit, not only in their own lives, but in the lives of the neighbors. Nearly all of the families around the school are Buddhist, including our immediate neighbors. A girl from the house next door told one of our kids that she loves listening to them sing at night, and she and her sisters have memorized some of the songs (all of which are Christian hymns and praise

songs with Gospel lyrics.) So our kids were spreading the Gospel even when they did not know it!

Please pray that the spiritual seeds which the children are sowing in the hearts of their neighbors—not only with their singing, but also with their kindness and generosity, which is well known—will grow and bear much fruit. Palal emphasizes to them repeatedly that they may be the only witness to Jesus that the people around them will experience. “Christians read the Bible; non-Christians read the Christians,” is one of his favorite sayings.



The children are hungry to learn!

The kids also learn and memorize Scriptures. The first passage they were assigned to learn was the Book of James. Palal chose this passage because when the children first arrived they had not yet learned how to live together in harmony and there were quite a few squabbles among them.

The typical Myanmar response to unruly children is to “beat them” (their way of saying “spank them.”) Palal, however, decided to use a different tactic—he had them start working their way through the Book of James, as he diligently prayed for them and taught them about Christian unity. It was amazing to see the change in their attitudes in just a few weeks. Kids are kids, though, and they are still learning, so we appreciate your prayers for them.

The children are doing well academically, too, in spite of the enormous challenges they faced in coming to Yangon and enrolling in the government schools. At first the schools did not even want to admit them, since they were Chin Christians from the villages. The school principals and staff assumed that the children would not be able to read and understand Burmese, and that they would be a drag and a distraction to the rest of the students. Palal convinced them to allow our students to enroll, and now our students are not only catching up to the Burmese students, some are even surpassing them. We

have no doubt that within the next couple of years all of our children will be at the heads of their classes.

There are a number of reasons for this high level of confidence. First, our kids get better nutrition than probably ninety percent of the other children in school—almost all of whom are very poor. Second, our kids not only attend the required private tutoring classes (some of the teachers now even come to our school to give their tutoring lessons), but they also get one-on-one help from our staff and the other older students.

Third, our children have the Holy Spirit to help them succeed, because they are loving God with “all of their heart, soul, mind, and strength.” We are more than confident that our children will not only succeed in their studies, most if not all of them will excel.



Ngam Kho Len is at the top of his class

Their education will enable them to escape the endless cycle of poverty that their families have been trapped in. They will graduate from high school—something only a very tiny minority of ethnic Christians are able to do—and many of them will go on to university. Some want to be doctors, or teachers, or Christian ministers. Others want to work in the computer and I.T. industry. Whatever they do, they will be able to help themselves, their families, and their extended communities to eventually become self-sufficient, self-supporting, and to live the kind of abundant lives that we Americans take for granted.

Thank you so much for your continued support, both with your prayers and your finances, so that Hope Boarding School can continue. We have great plans for the future, and we hope that you will partner with us to make that future a reality!

Hope Boarding School Current Needs and Projects

Our recent trip to Yangon allowed us to see first-hand the condition of our boarding school, and we realized there are several areas that need immediate improvement. In addition, we identified several projects that we would like to see accomplished this year. Please consider sending a donation today to help us pay for these much needed renovations!

Immediate Needs

1. **Diesel Generator:** The electricity in the area around our boarding school is erratic and unpredictable. Some days, especially during the dry season, it is off all day. Other days, it will be on for awhile, then off, then back on. A generator will allow the school to continue to have light and power, even when the electricity is off. The cooks need electricity for the rice cookers and hot plates, and the children need light in the evenings to study. **Cost: about \$1,500.00; additional costs would be incurred for fuel (we estimate fuel expenses to be about \$15.00 to \$20.00 per week).**
2. **Phone Line:** There is no telephone at the school, except when Palal or Kikim are there with their cell phones. In case of emergency, someone from the school must run to the nearest home with a telephone, ask permission to use it, and then pay for the call. We believe the school needs their own phone line—not only for emergencies, but also so that the children can communicate with their families in the northwest more often. **Cost: about \$3,000.00 to purchase a telephone and have a line installed.**



Palal next to a generator

Short-Term Goals (One Year or Less)

1. **Ceilings:** There are no ceilings in the building yet, and this causes several problems. The problem downstairs is that sand and dirt from the floor above falls through the cracks in the second story floor boards. Not only is this very unsanitary, it is also a real nuisance for the people living and working downstairs (the cook’s family and the girls).

The problem upstairs has to do with heat, especially during the summer (when temperatures frequently rise into the 100’s). The roof is made of corrugated steel, which gets very hot when the sun shines on it. This heat is



We need ceiling tiles between the 1st and 2nd floor

then radiated throughout the whole upstairs. An insulated ceiling layer, along with proper ventilation, would go a long way toward keeping the upstairs cool enough to live in during the hot summer days. **Cost: \$2,500.00 (estimated).**

2. **Truck/Van:** Transporting the students can be a real challenge. Whenever one or two need to be transported, a taxi can be used.



A truck/van of our own would be a great blessing

However, when we need to transport the whole group of children, we have to rent a bus or truck. Also, delivering rice each month, and food each week, is difficult. It would be a great blessing to the staff and students at the school to have their own truck to use. **Cost: \$25,000 to \$30,000.00.**

3. **Two Additional Lots:** The lot on which our school is located is 40 feet wide by 60 feet deep. Most of that is taken up by the building, latrines, and concrete water storage. The only place for the children to play is a small area on the right side of the building, about 9 feet by 15 feet in diameter. We have a short window of opportunity in which to purchase the properties on either side of our own. We believe that the property values around the school will only go up in price, due to the new construction happening just to the south of our neighborhood. If we could acquire these two lots while they are still for sale at a reasonable price, we would triple our space, give our students adequate space to exercise and play, and have room to grow our school in the future. **Cost: The property on the left side is \$13,000.00; the property on the right is \$35,000.00 (it has a concrete building, thus the higher price).**

4. **Sewing Machines:** We would like to purchase two sewing machines for the school. Kikim could teach the girls the skills of a seamstress, and also use the machines to mend the children's clothing. **Cost: \$250.00 per machine.**



A manual sewing machine

Please Help Us!

We want to bring real, positive, *lasting* change to the lives of our brothers and sisters in Christ in Myanmar, and we believe our school is accomplishing that mission right now, and will continue to do so for many years to come. However, we are

just getting started, and we have many needs associated with a start-up.

Please pray about how you can help us with these immediate needs and short-term goals. When you partner with us prayerfully and financially you are changing lives, impacting God's Kingdom for eternity, and making this world a better place to live right now! God has promised to bless that kind of giving.

We have many more projects lined up, and some very ambitious long-term goals, but space is limited, so we will share those with you in another edition of our newsletter.

Christmas Meals



Tingkaya, one of our poorest villages, sharing a Christmas feast

We are so happy to report that many of you stepped forward and donated toward Christmas meals for our poverty-stricken churches in northwest Myanmar! Thanks in large part to the fund-raising efforts of our new Board Member, Kevin Hughs, **twenty-four churches were able to share a Christmas Day feast with their friends, families, and neighbors!**

This is such a special blessing for these churches, because they are too poor to purchase enough food for everyone to share on Christmas Day. Usually, the church members pool their resources and purchase a pig or a cow, along with rice and vegetables, and they all share a communal meal as part of their celebration. Many of the church members are too poor to contribute anything, and feel too ashamed to share in the meal.

When they heard that believers in the West had donated funds so they could all have enough, and to spare, they were overjoyed and very thankful. Not only were they able to share a delicious feast among themselves, they used the opportunity to reach out to their non-Christian neighbors by inviting them to the church to share in their celebration. God bless all who donated funds toward Christmas Meals!

Yangon Christmas Outreach

The funds donated for Christmas meals also enabled Yangon Christian Church, joined by members of Dalah Christian Church and Hlaing Ta Ya Christian Church, to host two Christmas outreach events on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

On Christmas Eve morning, the area in front of Palal and Kikim's apartment building was cleared, tables and chairs were set up, and a favorite Burmese meal was prepared for the families living in the apartment building. Palal and his family are the only Christians in the entire building; all the rest are Buddhist. Invitations were given out a few days before Christmas, and we ordered enough food for one hundred meals. We had no idea if anyone would even show up—this was the first time anything like this had been attempted at this location.



Christmas Outreach seen from Palal's apartment

God's hand was at work! Though we advertised that we would provide Christmas meals from 7:00 am until 10:00 am, the response was so great that we ran out of food by 9:00 am. This type of generosity is rare in Yangon, and it really made an impact on the people. In addition, Palal and Kikim were able to interact with many families that they had not yet met. Each person who attended the meal was given a Gospel tract upon leaving.



Boys escorting a neighbor to our outreach

It was wonderful to watch the children interacting with their neighbors, inviting them into the yard to share a meal even as they walked by in front of the school. Several boys were stationed as "lookouts" on the street in front, and whenever they saw anyone coming their way, other students would run to greet them, take them

by the arm, and escort them into the school yard. Again, two or three of the boys made sure that each person received a Gospel tract as they left. We saw many people reading their tracts as they walked home, and not a single tract was found discarded.



Buddhist neighbors enjoying the meal

Please pray for the seeds that were planted in the hearts of these followers of Buddha, both at the apartment building and at the school. Many of them had heard about Christmas, but none of them knew the real meaning of the day. Palal, Kikim, and the staff and students at Hope Boarding School are bright, shining lights in a very spiritually dark city. Please pray that many people will see that light and be drawn to the love of Christ through their lives.

Khongsai Family Update



Kikim, Palal, Cherry, and Solomon

Palal, Kikim, Solomon, and Cherry continue to do well in all areas of life. They are all healthy and happy, and they stay very busy in the work of ministry (well, at least Palal and Kikim stay busy with ministry work—Solomon stays busy with school, and Cherry stays busy just being a good baby).

MaryAnn and Chuck were able to spend a lot of time with them in December, and we can report that Baby Cherry is even cuter in person than she is in her pictures! Solomon just loves being a big brother, and he is very good at it.

Speaking of Solomon, he is now six years old! He is doing very well in school, and is starting to read on his own. Chuck taught him how to play "Hangman" and he loves it. He caught on immediately, and was quick to correct Chuck if he ever neglected to follow the instructions exactly as he had first given them. Whenever Solomon "wins" by guessing the word, he does a little dance and sings, "I win! I win!"

Kikim is doing a great job at keeping the accounting straight. We maintain a set of books in America, but they also maintain their own set in Yangon. We use a computer



Solomon and Cherry watching a DVD

program, and they use pen and paper. However, Palal learned double-entry accounting when he was the Administrative Secretary of the Baptist Association in northwest Myanmar, and their accounting books reflect this. Kikim keeps very detailed records of every expenditure related to the ministry, and she cross-checks these amounts using separate books.

We knew that Kikim, especially, was very detail oriented, and very careful with money, but were encouraged to see first hand the care she takes with ministry funds. You can be confident that any funds donated are used carefully and correctly.

Special Report: Trip to Myanmar

On Wednesday, December 8th, Chuck, MaryAnn, and Palal climbed into Phil Harris's truck (which was loaded down with thirteen large, tightly-packed suitcases and duffel bags, three carry-on bags, and three laptop computers) and headed out for a long trip to Yangon, Myanmar—via St. Louis, Los Angeles, and Taipei.

We would need a whole newsletter to tell about everything that happened, both on the trip and while we were there, but we will try to condense it down, and possibly share other details in future newsletters.

We saw God's hand at work many times during our trip, both on the way there and while in Myanmar. The first big



Palal poses with the welcoming committee

answer to prayer happened at the airport in Los Angeles. Somehow, Palal's return ticket from LA to Taipei had been cancelled, and the gate agents said they would have to schedule him on a later flight. This was very worrisome, because we all needed to arrive in Yangon together. It was too late to call our travel agent, so we just started praying that the office in Taipei would somehow find room for Palal on our flight.

Finally, after several hours of waiting and praying, at the last minute we got word that Palal could fly with us to Taipei!

Arriving in Yangon on Friday, December 10th, we also sensed God at work. We all made it through immigrations and security with no problems, but we were mainly concerned about getting through customs. We were loaded down with thirteen large bags and duffels full of clothing and gifts for the school. More importantly, though, Palal had packed dozens of his seminary text books, and had them stashed throughout the bags to spread out the weight.

We knew from others who had brought expensive-looking books into Myanmar that at least some of them would probably be confiscated (and resold). If the customs agents looked through all the bags, and found the books and clothing, it would raise a lot of questions about what we were going to be doing in Yangon, and could also get Palal in trouble.

Praise God, because the customs agent only looked in the very first bag, and only asked Palal a couple of very easy questions! Then with a big smile he waved us all through, as we pushed three large carts loaded with the bags (and one box all taped up) stuffed full of contraband!

We were greeted at the airport by Kikim, Solomon, and a host of family, church members, and students from the boarding school. It was a joyful reunion!

On Saturday we visited the neighborhoods and homes where Palal and Kikim previously lived. We were shocked and astonished at the level of poverty that surrounded us as we visited their old homes. We had seen lots of pictures, of course, but they failed to prepare us for what we saw with our own eyes. I realized then that pictures cannot tell the whole story. In order to really know what Yangon is like, a person has to experience it for themselves. The visual shock is accompanied by the smells and sounds, and together the senses are overwhelmed. Pictures tend to hide much of the reality.

After a few days we began to get used to the environment, and the shock of seeing so many living in such abject poverty began to wear off. The sense of anger, injustice, and feelings of inadequacy never left us, though.

The highlight of our trip was visiting Hope Boarding School, of course! We tried to visit there at least once a day,



Visiting Palal & Kikim's first house/church

whenever possible, and to spend at least a few hours each time interacting with the children. When we first arrived, the students had a program all prepared for us, and it was a joy to watch them sing, dance, recite, and perform little dramas.

The children were very nervous around us at first. We were the first Americans they had ever met, and we look very different from the average Myanmar citizen. As each child came forward to introduce himself or herself to us, Chuck would reach out and hold their trembling hands. They spoke to us in English, helped by Palal, and that was also a reason for their nervousness.

We wanted so much to just wrap them all up with big smothering hugs, but we restrained ourselves because we knew that hugging is not a part of their culture, and they were so nervous around us. We are happy to relate, however, that by the time we were ready to leave Yangon, the children all knew how to give really good hugs, and they were very comfortable doing so!

The children were all very excited and grateful for the clothing which we brought. Kikim sorted through it all, and distributed it to them according to size. The girls got more clothes than the boys, but that somehow seemed appropriate. They especially loved the jeans, and they all wore them whenever they could.

Another highlight was when we distributed the cards and letters that we had been collecting for them from many of you. MaryAnn



Lhing Nei Lam, in her "new" clothes, receiving her cards and letters

did a great job of making sure each student got a nice big stack of cards and letters, and as we handed them out, you could literally see the children trembling with excitement. We made sure that all of the kids had their cards before we let them begin opening them, and the children who got theirs first could hardly sit still while they waited for the others.



"I LOVE THESE!"

One of the girls, Neng Nei Cing (Ci Cing), held her cards up to her face and kissed them, saying "I LOVE THESE!!" Another boy shouted out (which was very unusual —the children never do that), "THANK YOU FOR THESE!" The majority of the children had never received a card or letter before in their life, and this was a tremendous blessing for them.

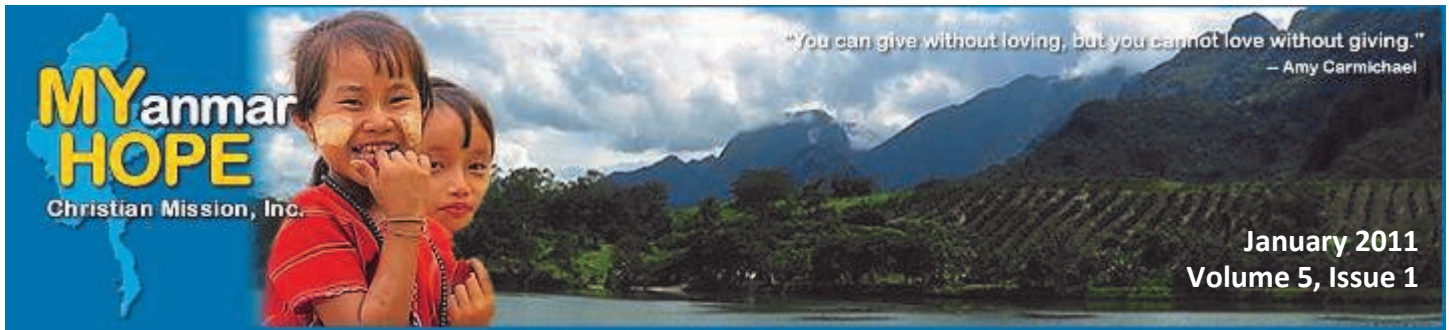
Spending Christmas at Hope Boarding School was also a very special time for us. The children are always so thankful for everything, but they really got excited when we gave them gift bags. These little bags contained trinkets, pencils, little pads of paper, some candy, and other odds and ends that we found to put in them. When we handed them out, you would have thought those kids had won the lottery, they were so happy!

There are so many other things we need to share with you about our trip, especially our visit to Kalay in the northwest, where we held a day-and-a-half long leadership seminar for over two-hundred people. God was working there, too! It was a Spirit-filled, life-changing experience for all of us. We also want to tell you about the first ever Field Trip Day for Hope Boarding School. We will cover all of these things, and more, in our next newsletter.

the batch Cookies for MyHope

Mrs. Lisa Burris will be donating all February proceeds from her ministry, "The Batch," to MyHope! Lisa bakes and sells hundreds of dozens of cookies, and donates all of the profits to a different ministry each month. We are so grateful that she has chosen us for February, and we hope lots of people buy her delicious cookies!

For more information about The Batch, or to order her cookies, call Lisa at (217) 793-3473 before February 24th.



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**Bringing the eternal hope of Jesus Christ to the people of Myanmar in a holistic manner
 by addressing their spiritual, physical, emotional and educational needs**

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Meet Our Newest Board Member: Dr. Saira Silas

We are glad to introduce our newest board member, Dr. Saira Silas!

Saira and her husband, Phil have three boys—Joshua (8), Michael (7), and a third son due to arrive in April. Saira is the daughter of Salim and Shamim Wahab. Her parents are from Pakistan, and their family have been Christian for generations.

Her father, Dr. Salim Wahab, is a surgeon with a strong missionary spirit. He worked in a mission hospital in Pakistan, did part of an orthopedic residency in England, and performed general surgery in the U.S. He has done mission work in Zambia, Africa, and in Papua New Guinea. Dr. Wahab is now retired.

Saira was born in Harlan, Kentucky. She graduated from

Southern Illinois School of Medicine in 1998, and from SIU's Family Practice Residency in 2001, where she was the Chief Resident.



Dr. Saira Silas at home in Springfield, Illinois

She maintained a full-time private practice from 2001 to 2004, at which time she left the practice to stay home with her boys. She now works part time performing urgent care work, which still allows her time to be a wife and a mom. She and her husband, Phil will celebrate their twelve-year wedding anniversary this July.

We are excited to have Saira on our board, and we look forward to her help and advice as we embark on our next big project—the Hope Medical Clinic in Bokkan Village.

Please pray for Saira, and all of our board members, that we would have God's wisdom and knowledge as we serve the people of Myanmar. Thank you!



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