

# Rice Bowl

## MISSION



Global Mission's Myanmar Newsletter

March 2018



Students at the Presbyterian Church of Myanmar's Victoria school and boarding hostel in Mindat, southern Chin State, The Ricebowl Mission has offered financial support to the boarding hostel which caters for students from all ethnic and religious backgrounds, including Christian, Buddhist and animist. Want to teach here? See the back page.

Welcome to the new edition of Mingalaba, Global Mission's Ricebowl newsletter, sharing news of the mission partnership between the PCANZ and the Presbyterian Church of Myanmar. Recent activity has seen a young adults Going Global programme at Tahan Theological College in December, and a visit by Global Mission coordinator Phil King to the PCM's General Assembly in Mindat, in the remote southern Chin State. Phil was accompanied by PCANZ members Andrew and Karen Murch of Hawera (pictured above). This visit included a chance to observe projects supported by the Ricebowl Mission in the Chin State, meet some of the recipients of project funding, attend the TTC graduation, have a project committee meeting to review progress and discuss new mission projects, and discuss plans to host three members of the PCM in New Zealand later in the year. This was the first time anyone from the PCANZ has visited the southern Chin State, which until recently was off-limits to foreigners. As Myanmar opens up politically, it has now become possible to travel freely into the Chin State. Read on ...



## Going Global Myanmar 2017

In December a team of seven (five young adults and two leaders) visited Tahan Theological College (TTC) in the city of Tahan at the foot of the Chin Hills. There they took part in the college's Christmas Fun Fete and learnt about the PCANZ's relationship with the Presbyterian Church of Myanmar. A story about their visit can be found in the autumn edition of the PCANZ's *Spanz* magazine. One of the team members, Nicola Froud from St. Columba in Botany Downs summarized her experience this way, "I was surprised to find God in the daily, in the rhythm and heartbeat of the place, in the mundane and in the gentle nature of the people of Myanmar." Here are some photos from their trip.



With staff and students at TTC



Sarah Lawry finding her balance at the TTC Sports day



The team joins the TTC musicians on stage for an item at the Christmas Fun Fete



(Left) Stephanie White worshipping with students early in the morning.

(Right) At Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon. It is important to understand Buddhist culture when visiting Myanmar.





### **Nurse Aid Scholarship Students Complete Their Training**

We gave scholarships to five students to complete a nurse aid training course. Each one graduated from the course with a valuable skill that will enable them to either go on to further training or make a contribution to healthcare in their home region. The five students all came from the Chin State, with one achieving the third-place prize from their class of twelve students. The training has also given them opportunities to meet new friends from other synods within their church and grow in confidence in their lives. The report says, "We glorify Almighty God for the PCANZ who helped these young women to become strong as a result of their training." We met one of these students, from the Tedim Synod, Mawi Deih Vung. Although very shy, she was proud of her achievements and hopes to go on to complete further study.



**Global Mission Coordinator Phil King with sponsored student Mawi Deih Vung, who graduated from the Nurse Aid training course in February.**

**Project Updates** – It was good to see progress on recent projects we have supported, and meet some of the recipients of scholarships. Some of these are included here:

**Kanpalet Church** – Kanpalet is in the southern Chin State where the PCM has outreach to animist and Buddhist communities. There is some opposition to their work here, but dedicated leadership is seeing significant church growth. The church is nearing completion and will strengthen their mission capacity. The pastor of the Kanpalet church Rev. Awm Kee is below (right); beside him is the previous pastor and now D. Min student Rev. Bawi Zaw, who is the beneficiary of a Ricebowl scholarship. Both men are dedicated servants of the church in this remote part of Myanmar.



**Fartlang manse** – the former manse in this remote Tedim synod location was built from local materials and was destroyed in a storm in 2011. Since then the pastor has had sub-standard accommodation so this will ensure a solid home for the future.

**Hakha stallrooms** – this is an income generating project for the church, as well as providing accommodation and office space for the synod secretary on the top floor, so is a multi-purpose building.





## Presbyterian Church of Myanmar General Assembly in Mindat, Chin State

Local people are proud of their traditional heritage in Mindat. Many gathered to celebrate the opening of the new church at Mindat during the General Assembly, seen here with Andrew and Karen Murch, and the PCM's Associate General Secretary.

The PCM General Assembly was held in Mindat, a town built high on a ridge in the Chin State, with steep drops and spectacular views everywhere. There was a mood of general cheerfulness at the Assembly, made even more positive by the fact that they finished their business early and had some free time to spend together. The PCM is a multiple-language church – there



are ten synods, each of which speak a different dialect; added to this, everyone also needs to communicate in the Burmese language which is different again. As you can imagine, this makes church unity challenging. We were fortunate that many members of the church can converse in English, and we were made to feel welcome.



Traditional meets modern in this photo of a young girl with her grandmother in Mindat. Tribal women in this area wear heavily tattooed faces. I (Phil King) saw the little girl keeping very close to her grandmother, and noticed she was wearing a sweatshirt with a Mickey Mouse logo. I couldn't help but wonder at the strange collision of cultures between this ancient tribal lifestyle, and the modern world.



The PCM made an historic decision at their Assembly in agreeing to ordain a female pastor for the first time. From the Maturam Synod, Rev. Cherry will serve as a probationary pastor (this is standard) before being ordained. This is a big leap forward for the PCM. We wish Cherry God's richest blessings as she takes on this significant leadership role.



## Progress Report on Plans for Wayne and Helen Harray to Serve in Myanmar

Plans for Wayne and Helen Harray to serve at Tahan Theological College are still progressing. This has involved an application to The Council for World Mission for funding and it has been a slow process to date. While this has taken much longer than we had anticipated, we are still hopeful that this might be completed in time for them to be ready to start with the new semester in June; but this depends on the paperwork being completed by CWM. Plans include Wayne developing a demonstration farm on TTC land, and for Helen to teach English and counselling practice. The slow progress is frustrating for Wayne and Helen, so please continue to pray for them and these plans as they wait for final approvals.



### Congratulations to TTC Lecturer Dr. Mar Lar Myint

It was great to be able to personally congratulate TTC lecturer Mar Lar Myint (left) on achieving her Doctorate in Ministry. Mar Lar, whose specialty area is the New Testament, graduated from the Lutheran Seminary in Hong Kong in 2017. She is the first female member of the PCM to be awarded this honour. In recognition of her achievement Phil King presented Mar Lar with a gift on behalf of the PCANZ. Mar Lar visited New Zealand in 2014.

### TTC Graduation

While we were present in Tahan, we were able to attend the TTC Graduation. PCANZ has contributed a great deal to TTC over the years and will be continuing to support the development of the College in the future, so it was great that we were able to spend time celebrating the completion of their academic year. In recognition of our partnership, Phil King was invited to give the address at the Thanksgiving Dinner – photos of the dinner and ceremony are below.





## Life in the Chin State

Life in the Chin State is very challenging. Work is hard with many people living subsistence lifestyles in challenging conditions. But the people are friendly and always willing to talk if they are able to converse in English, or if a translator is present. Years of neglect from the Government has had a long-term effect. Poor health and low education levels are common. It is changing slowly now but the improvement will take time to benefit society at all levels. Thank you for your support for the Ricebowl Mission - in supporting the ministry of the PCM, we are helping to bring some whole-of-life improvements to the Chin people.

**Thank You!**

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Domestic scenes in Mindat;  
and students at Victoria  
Boarding school.



### Want to Visit Myanmar, Have an Amazing Experience, and Teach English? They Want You!

There are opportunities for suitably qualified people with an interest in cross-cultural mission to teach short-term English courses in Myanmar. You will cover your own expenses but there may be some subsidies available on request. Options include:

- 1) **A short-term course at Tahan Theological College.** The College is developing a B.A. Liberal Arts programme and they have requested speakers of English to help teach the course. The length of the course depends on your availability. Time-frame is negotiable. Tahan is a pleasant location where you would be assured of a warm welcome. Accommodation would be in a reasonably priced, comfortable hotel.
- 2) **Victoria Boarding School, Mindat.** This would be teaching a summer school to high-school students (pictured above). Time frame would be during the months of March, April or June. The students are hungry to learn English and do not have enough teachers. Travel to Mindat and accommodation are for the slightly more intrepid; but you will be guaranteed an amazing experience as you spend time with these special young people.

**If you are interested in following up for more information, contact Phil King, [phil@presbyterian.org.nz](mailto:phil@presbyterian.org.nz).**

**Donations to the Ricebowl Fund are always welcome! Online donations can be made to: 02 0500 0086963 10; or cheques to Global Mission, P.O. Box 9049, Wellington 6141.**