

Kawthoolei Karen Baptist Bible School & College

P.O. Box 11, Mae Sot, Tak 63110. Thailand.

Email: simon2_kkbc@yahoo.com or simon2kkbc@gmail.com

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Dear all,

The Kawthoolei Karen Baptist Bible School & College started with the desire of most of the Karen Leaders (both Spiritual and Political) to coming back to the teachings of the Bible such as Ps. 127:1 Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord guards the city, the guard keeps watch in vain. John 15:5 I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Matthew 6:33 But strive first for the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. The peaceful demonstration of the Karen people with their four slogans (1) Give the Karen State at once, (2) Show us Burmese one Kyat - Karen one Kyat now, (3) We don't want communal clashes, (4) We don't want civil war ended with killings and the armed struggle of the Karen people for their rights to have peace, justice and freedom started on January 31, 1949 when U Nu the then PM of Burma and his colleagues ordered the attack of the Karen National Union Headquarters in Alone and Insein in the capital Rangoon/Yangone. I was born in that year and so the struggle of the Karen people for their freedom and rights and the civil war between the Karen and the Burmese is as old as my age. After a long struggle for freedom and justice, the Karen Leaders (Christians) decided and established a Bible School in Kawthoolei in order to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness in June 9th, 1983. The Kawthoolei Karen Baptist Bible School started with only 4 teachers and 6 students at Htee K'Haw near Mae La in Pa-an District and before finishing the first year it had to be relocated to Wallei in the 6th Brigade of the Karen National Liberation Army area due to the intensifying military operation of the Burma Army. While in Wallei, the troops of the Burma Army attacked the place and all the people there had to cross the border and taking refuge in the Thai side and the KKBBS conducted its combined graduation exercises of the 1st and 2nd batches of the graduates under the trees in the jungle near U Hu Tah village on February 14, 1987. Dr. Neil Sowards was there and witnessed the graduation exercises. But when the Burma Army withdrew from Wallei, all the people went back to rebuild and restart their lives again. Then in the end of 1989 and beginning of 1990 the people of Wallei had to evacuate and run for their lives again. This time, they cannot go back because the Burma Army occupied the place. So finally the Kawthoolei Karen Baptist Bible School had to be relocated to Mae La camp along with the displaced Karen people in middle of March 1990. I left Rangoon/ Yangone and my ministry as one of the professors at the Burma Institute of Theology (now MIT) in March 1989 with my family (wife and 3 daughters and parents-in-law and 4 sisters-in-law and a nephew and arrived Mar Ner Plaw, the Karen National Union Headquarters in early June, 1989 staying with Saw Ba Thein Sein (the then General Secretary of the KNU) and met Gen. Bo Mya and other KNU and KNLA leaders. As the request of my father-in-law, Rev. Johnny Htoo to be allowed to go to Wallei in the 6th Brigade (where Johnny Htoo was once the Brigadier) so he could meet with some of his old friends and soldiers and the people there to pray for them and bless them as it was the desire of his heart. He didn't want to get involved in politics but would like to pray and bless his people and he did it faithfully until the Lord called him to rest in peace with Him on April 25, 1996. All

the leaders at Wallei knew our family well and knew I taught in BIT/MIT, so requested me to help the Bible School there. And at the Annual Mass Meeting of the KKBC held in Mae The Mee Tah, Tavoy-Merguio area in Oct. 1989, I was elected as the Principal of the KKBBS as Rev. Jerry Lynn retired. We came back to Wallei and after few months or days, we have to evacuate Wallei and cross the border and became refugees or displaced people in Thailand. So I became the newly elected Principal of the KKBBS without school buildings, without teachers and students. But we prayed to God, seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit and finally we came to Mae La, talked to the leaders and all agreed to have the KKBBS relocated and resume the teaching and equipping ministry in and through the KKBBS in Mae La camp. We started constructing the buildings for the teachers, for the school, and dormitories for the students and were able to open the KKBBS in June, 1990. We are here living and serving the Lord for more than 22 years in this Mae La camp and experiencing the faithfulness of God's provision of all our needs through His loving children around the world. Our sole purpose is to train and equip our young people with the Word of God to be well-equipped for every good work as it is our MOTTO. In 1993 we added 2 new programs to our KKBBS, namely the BTS and BA. Then we replaced the BTS program with B.Th. changing it from a 3 year program to a 4 year and suspended the BA program leaving it to the camp education committee as the camp now have this program. We also extended the name of our Kawthoolei Karen Baptist Bible School to Kawthoolei Karen Baptist Bible School & College(KKBBS). BUT on the 28th of April, 2012 while my wife and myself and few students were leaving Noh Poe camp after officiating the wedding between Naw Htee Thalar Wah and Saw Doh Lweh (both graduated from our KKBBS and serving the Lord in Noh Poe Bible School under East Daw Nat Area of Churches Association) news came in through the phone that the fire caught on our KKBBS. We can't do anything but pray to God that His will be done.

Praise the Lord for what He has done to our KKBBS. The fire that torched to ashes all the buildings in the compound of the KKBBS is to me a fire of –

- (1) Ceasefire. It must be the end to the 63 year old civil war between the Burma Army and the Karen Army (and the Burma Army and other Ethnic Armies). The book of Ecclesiastics ch. 3 says, there is a time for everything and a season for any activity. A time for killing and a time for healing, a time for war and a time for peace (vv.3,8). If it is a sincere peace and a genuine peace, it is time we can go home and rebuild our life in our own beautiful land called Kawthoolei. It is my prayer and the desire of my heart that it will be a fire of genuine ceasefire.
- (2) Ecumenical Fire. As the fire started all Buddhists, Christians, Muslims, Animists rushed to fight the fire expressing their unity, love and cooperation.
- (3) Forgive and forget. All records gone with the fire. Gone with the fire are our sins and transgresses, Not His mercy and grace. Gone with the fire are buildings and materials that can be replaced even with the better ones, But praise God no life was lost. Gone with the fire are the 4 visitor's Note books containing the prayers, best wishes, words of encouragements and promises written by friends and brothers and sisters around the world, but not their love, care and concern expressed through their continuing prayers, helps and supports. Gone with the fire are our fears and doubts, not our hope and faith in the Almighty God. Praise the Lord.

- (4) Peace and prosperity. Ps. 133. When brothers dwell together in unity – there God will command His blessings, and eternal life. It is only through mutual love, respect, understanding, kindness, and helping one another/bearing one another’s burdens, we can live in peace and unity. Let this fire be a reminder to all of us to live in peace and unity, if we want to enjoy peace and prosperity.
- (5) Cooperation. It is time to hold our hands together and rebuild our KKBBS. Thank you so much for expressing your sorrow with us and at the same time extending your great love to us through your love gifts, and prayer support. So let us join our hands together and with our hands let us rebuild the KKBBS and make the world a better, and a meaningful place for living.
- (6) Giving all glory and honour to the Almighty God. Let God’s name be glorified through what He has done. God’s glory and honour revealed when Daniel thrown into the den of lions and Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego thrown into the fiery furnace heated up seven times more than was customary.
- (7) Reminder/sign that He is coming soon. Be ready and be prepared to meet Him.

We are now rebuilding our buildings so we can continue our teaching and equipping ministry in time. We were able to reopen our KKBBS as decided by the emergency meeting of the Board of Trustee to reopen our KKBBS on June 24th, Sunday, 2012 with a Thanksgiving Service, but as the building for the class-rooms not yet completed, we cannot hold our classes and have to wait until it was completed and dedicated on July 19, 2012 my birthday and classes resume as usual. Thank you all for sharing with us the blessings you received from the Lord and for helping in the rebuilding of our KKBBS.

The student enrollment for the academic year 2012-2013 is as followed: -

Programs	Class	Female	Male	Total
Karen Program	KTS – 1	17	18	35
Karen Program	KTS – 2	9	13	22
Karen Program	KTS – 3	4	8	12
Karen Program	KTS – 4	6	6	12
Karen Program	Total	36	45	81

B.Th. Program	B.Th. – Pre-class	47	53	100
B.Th. Program	B.Th. (I)	51	62	113
B.Th. Program	B.Th. (II)	37	38	75
B.Th. Program	B.Th. (III)	26	24	50
B.Th. Program	B.Th. (IV)	26	25	51
Total		187	202	389
Grand total		223	247	470

It is really amazing to see so many young people wanting to study the Word of God and be prepared for the ministry of the Lord. The year 1996 was a very difficult and critical year in the life and plight of the Karen people and also for us living in Mae La camp, especially our Bible College. The split of the DKBA from the Karen National Liberation Army resulting from the fall of Mar Ner Plaw, the General Headquarters of the Karen National Union and the Karen National Liberation Army and to the moving of smaller camps into the safer camps, making the total refugee camps under the Karen Refugee Committee from more than 40 camps to only 7 camps. That year we have experienced the attack and burning of the camps by the DKBA soldiers and the great flood of September 24, 1996 at Mae La camp destroying our Htee Ger Nee Karen Baptist Church and our kitchen and dining hall and destroying books in our library and rice from our store house. That year, only few students joining school. We started this new year with the burning of all our school buildings and making us busy with the rebuilding project, yet remarkably 135 new students joining the College, making the total enrollment of the student at 470. Praise the Lord. We now completed our first building and have our MOTTO for the New Rebuilding Project – With their hands they rebuild (Nehemiah ch. 3) – ALL TO THE GLORY OF GOD. – Always growing stronger, greater, higher, and better in the Service of the Lord.

May God bless you all.

"Let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Galatians 6:9."

Sincerely yours in His ministry among the displaced Karen people in the camps and the IDP areas,

Rev. Dr. Saw Simon.
Principal of the KKBBS.
Mae La camp.