

Newsworthy

A NEWSLETTER OF THE HCD INSTITUTE
Connecting you to children advocacy and development



Newsworthy is an electronic publication of the HCD Institute containing news and information about our work and also the fellowship of the student alumni. It is published three times per year in English.

For information, contact:
HCD Institute (MBTS)
40 AD, Mukim 17, Batu Ferringhi
11100 Penang, Malaysia
Tel/Fax: +6 04 8812462
E-mail: hcd.institute@gmail.com
Website: www.mbts.net.my

The Holistic Child Development (HCD) Institute of the Malaysia Baptist Theological Seminary (MBTS) is a department for training, research and networking in holistic ministries to children. We seek to transform and enable the Church to do child advocacy and development through Christian-based theological education, research and awareness raising. The Seminary is part of the Global Alliance for Advancing Holistic Child Development, a network of theological institutions seeking to promote HCD programs worldwide.

In this issue

Giving our best to God's people

Newsworthy gives you a first hand account of a recent mission visit to northern Myanmar. The team of largely HCDI staff held a series of workshops for children's workers at Pyin Oo Lwin.

Safe places

Read about the *Fah Liang Jia* Children's Orphanage in northern Myanmar where displaced refugee and marginalized children find a safe place to call home. We also acknowledge *Safe Place Funds* – a project by a young couple to bless children with a safe place for play.

Introducing Godly Play

Using objects and artifacts as learning tools, David Pritchard invites us to enter into sacred wonder on the Good Shepherd, life of Abraham and the Nativity.

For a better reading experience, we suggest you view this copy in Full Screen mode. To do so, go to View in your Adobe Reader (or similar PDF reader) and select Full Screen Mode.



A few words...

Dear friends,

The phrase 'safe place' constantly comes to my mind even as our office engages in mission and ministry to children. Where ever the children may be there is always a need for a safe place to rest, shelter from danger, or a loving environment to find oneself again. Unlike a hiding place with limited self expression, a safe place permits children to 'act their age' and appreciate life as God meant it to be. Join us as we think about safe and sacred places.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue.

Rosalind Lim-Tan

Director, HCD Institute



Children playing at *Fah Liang Jia* orphanage located in northern Myanmar

Giving our best to God's people

Pyin Oo Lwin, formerly May Myo, is a scenic hill town in Mandalay Division, Myanmar. It is located in the Shan Highland, some 67 km east of Mandalay at 1070 meters (3510 ft) above sea level.

FROM AUGUST 8-14, a team of five people from MBTS went on a short term mission trip to northern Myanmar with the purpose to encourage God's people there to remain faithful in the Lord.

From Penang, we flew to Mandalay via Kuala Lumpur and Yangon, and then took a 2-hour road trip before reaching our destination, the hill town of Pyin Oo Lwin. In Pyin Oo Lwin, we had the opportunity to share God's word at St Matthew's Kachin Baptist Church for several days. We also conducted a two-day workshop on holistic child development with break-out sessions on starting a childcare centre, managing money, and helping youths find their identities. Before flying back to Yangon, we paid visits to the AOG Immanuel Church, the *Fah Liang Jia* Children's Orphanage and the Myanmar Chinese Christian Bible Institute. We also visited the Myanmar Evangelical Graduate School of Theology and Myanmar Institute of Theology in Yangon where Dr Sunny and Dr Rosalind promoted the HCD program.

Though the trip was short, we learned much about life in Myanmar. Myanmar is a closed country and has little foreign influence. Due to oppressive governmental control and the Buddhist belief in karma, the people generally possess little hope and few options in life. Still, in spite of their circumstances, we were richly blessed by the love and fellowship of God's people at St Matthew's, by their community life, by their sharing of goods, and by the fine hospitality of our hosts Pastor Philip Zau Awng and his wife, more so than what we have to offer them. The love of Christ is truly evident in their lives, from the pastor to the children's workers to the youngsters. They have a capacity for joy and praise, hope and faith.

It is true to some extent that short term mission participants cannot really do much for communities in the field. Nonetheless we are thankful for this small opportunity to bless the people there, and to see the hand of God in their lives. As Vivian, one of the team members, said, "I have no complaint about this trip as long as we can give our best to God's people there."

– Kok Chik Bu

Team comprises Dr Sunny Tan, Rosalind Lim-Tan, Vivian Thor, Tan Mae Lyn and Kok Chik Bu

PRAY AS OFTEN AS YOU REMEMBER...

- For the future of the children and youths in Myanmar; that God in His power and love will free them from their oppression.
- For God's people to remain faithful and to experience God personally, as they try to improve their lots through education, better upbringing of children and opportunities to nurture the talents of their young ones.
- For divine intervention so that justice will be brought to the nation. Pray for situations of tribal tension in the Golden Triangle area, human trafficking, and drug addiction that plague the community.
- For MBTS graduating students Zin Zin Mai and Ah Lu Mee that God will strengthen them as they return to serve their people. Zin Zin Mai will be starting a private school at St Matthew's Kachin Baptist Church while Ah Lu Mee will return to serve at *Fah Liang Jia* orphanage.



Participants from Baptist, Methodist and Assembly of God churches at the two-day workshop held at St Matthew's Kachin Baptist Church in Pyin Oo Lwin.

Safe places

WHAT DOES IT mean to be safe? My safe space is my home – an apartment with guards at the gate and multiple computerized security system. But am I really safe? My neighbor's home in the other block was broken into not too long ago.

Safe place for the children at *Fah Liang Jia* (meaning House of Shining Brightness) Children's Orphanage mean a place where they can lie on their pillows and sleep without fear that someone may snatch or harm them. The orphanage is tucked away at the edge of Pyin Oo Lwin, a hill town located 67km north of Mandalay. In operations for over 10 years, the orphanage was the vision of Fah Liang, then a young seminary student in Singapore who wanted to minister to Chinese refugee children along the Myanmar-China border. Fah Liang died of cancer before he could realize his dream. His widow, Tu Mei Hwa took it upon herself to make her late husband's vision a reality.

Children at *Fah Liang Jia* live as a family. The older children watch over the little ones while the adults manage the facilities. Everyone who is of primary age and above has to do chores which include farming and husbandry. The family rear pigs and chickens and also grows vegetables for personal consumption. Since the children are of Chinese origin, Tu made it mandatory that they learn Mandarin so that they can maintain their ethnic identity. Life at *Fah Liang Jia* is basic and simple but for these children, it is home. As Jurgen Moltmann would agree, it is a safe place where God and children join together in sacred communion.

– **Rosalind Lim-Tan**



Safe Place Fund

The original idea of the Safe Place Fund started as a simple dream to have a playground for children wherever they are located or relocated. It all started when Sandra, my wife, was still living on the MBTS campus. It was during this time that she noticed that the children of the students have no playground or safe place to play in. From that simple observation a dream of building a playground in MBTS came about, however, the campus's location and its terrain made it not suitable for such a venture. Nevertheless, even though the original idea was not practical the dream did not fade away. Instead, as both of us attended "*Childhood in the Cultural Context Lectures*" by Dr Keith White, we started to learn what the idea of a "Safe Place" really meant and in that moment, our dream got lit up again, and it is through faith that we know that this dream can be materialized. As we continue to respond to the nudge of the Holy Spirit, we pray that you will also respond to the calling of the Safe Place Fund. And we hope that through this fund all children everywhere will be able to have Safe Places where they can play. – **by S.P. Elwells**

In 2009, Safe Place Fund sponsored the purchase of toys and books for a children's library located in a low income area and also library books for a school for refugee children in Sarawak.

Photos above: Toys for a children's community library at Rifles Range, Penang; Sandra and Philip Elwell

Introducing Godly Play

IN MOST RELIGIOUS education children are told who God is; in Godly Play children discover who God is.

The HCD Institute had the privilege of hosting two introductory sessions of Godly Play in Penang and Klang Valley, respectively on the 2nd and 3rd of October. The instructor was David Pritchard, the national coordinator of children's ministries for Scripture Union in Spain and an accredited teacher of the program. A total of 45 people came for the Penang session while 15 attended the session held at the seminary's Klang Valley branch.

Godly Play is a response based on Montessori principles to the child's request to 'help me do it by myself'. It mixes story telling with questions and interactive reflection to enrich the faith of children, enabling them to encounter God and his word deeply and with great poignancy. The teacher acts as a spiritual supporter or guide who fully accepts that each child has his or her own relationship with God already. For more information, visit www.godlyplay.org.uk.

Announcement

Celebrating our 2009 Graduates

We rejoice with our 2009 Child Studies graduates at different levels of learning in the English and Mandarin language-tracks. For the English language track, we have four graduates at master level and two at diploma level. For the Mandarin track there are ten students at certificate level. On Nov 13, their graduation ceremony will commence in Penang. Congratulations to the Class of 2009!



Photos: David Pritchard leading Godly Play sessions in Penang