

# ABGTS Doctoral Students at MAE LA CAMP, THAILAND, the Second Time! (2-11<sup>th</sup> June, 2010)

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## Journey to Camp

It took us 45 minutes by taxi from Bangkok, Sa La Daeng, to the bus terminal. From there we took a midnight coach (7 hours) to Mae Sot. Nado and Solithu (from solitude) fetched us in a truck to Mae La Camp (1 hour). The solitary sandy road to Camp is dotted by trees on the sides and a few houses. We reach a check-point manned by police or soldiers to make sure only people from the camp enter it. They didn't bat an eyelid to let us through because by then the three of us Anthony, Ayan, and I looked like rugged refugees. Some Caucasians go in but not allowed overnight in the Camp. Many visitors can come, visit, teach and stay at the KKBBS (Kawthoolie Karen Baptist Bible School and College) irrespective of their nationality. The Mae La camp is divided into 3 Zones—Zone A, Zone B, and Zone C (what looked like brown atap houses arrayed the plains and mountains.) It was hot and humid all way but we were glad to have finally made it to the Camp. It was in the midst of their KKBBS (Kawthoolie Karen Baptist Bible School and College) Board of Management Annual Meeting where we were just in time to present the LLTEF's (Lilian Lim's Theological Education Fund) LCD gift to the school.



1st & 2nd flrs -classrooms. 3rd flr i-students' dorm & music room. Adjacent building-main hall, , worship

## Facilities and Student Life

Kawthoolie Karen Baptist Bible School and College (KKBBS) can be considered high-tech in comparison to the rest of the camps. It has a computer room for the students' use. Some have their own laptops and quite a number own handphones.

## Our Tropical Abode in the Forest with Eager Mozzies

We were settled in the guest house for the next 6 days. Two Karen visitors shared the room with us. The house is built on stilts with toilets and bathrooms below it. The roof is made of dried large leaves sewn together with sticks. The walls and floors are bamboo sticks tied and nailed together. You can see between the gaps of the walls and floors. The whole house shakes when you step on it – like elephants walking. No concrete or cement allowed for walls or roads because the Camp is considered temporal (even though it has been there for over 20 years). This is a more established building compared to the others outside the school. This makes my humble 3-room flat in Singapore like a 5-star hotel.

Bathrooms have running water taps from the wells. The water is a nice brown which we bathed and brushed our teeth with. People draw water directly from the wells in pails or manual pumps by hand.

The tiny mozzies, smaller than a sesame seed do not just bite, they sting. We take refuge under the colourful mosquito nets hung over our beds. No live-stock is allowed for fear of bringing diseases into Camp, though we do see a few skinny chickens running about and the cock crows every morning under our stilt house to wake us before 5am.

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Anthony Yeo's "Gospel of John" class of 2<sup>nd</sup> year students



Ayan Murray's "Christianity and Culture" class of 4<sup>th</sup> year students.)

(Irene Chiou's "Biblical Greek" class of 3<sup>rd</sup> year students). No picture because I am camera shy!

### Last Day in Camp

It's time to say good-bye. It isn't a holiday for us to be in Camp but it is definitely an experience and eye-opener for the uninitiated. It is a GOOD trip. Students loathe to see us go – they ask for our email and you can see the eagerness to make contact with the outside. We gave whatever we have– our clothes, bag-packs, pens and notebooks, toiletries, knick-knacks, food, etc., that we bring for the trip.



(Senior students and new students are gathered for morning devotion)

As we each say something at the pulpit to the students before we depart for Mae Sot, they gave us each a Karen national costume. We have given so little and yet they were so grateful. They have given us more in terms of faith and their dependence on God. May the next batch of LLTEF sponsored people come to Mae La Camp with humble and big hearts to minister and be ministered.



Anthony giving a word of encouragement to the students

Our ministry to KKBBS is teaching. Our presence this time coincides with the intake of new students from other camps and elsewhere. There are invigilators and faculty to interview and test the 100 over applicants. If they pass they are admitted to year one, B.Th. If they fail, they go for Preparatory One for a year. This year only 3 managed to pass it. The rest failed because of English, so, they will learn English in Prep One. They are in need of English teachers – calling all who are willing and able in Singapore to avail themselves for a year in KKBBS.

We teach the Bible College students 3 hours (9am – 12noon) everyday. Students (mostly in their 20s) are typically shy and keen on the first day of class. Some have interesting names like, "Freedom", "Roller", "Cherry", "Paw" (Karen meaning "flower"), etc. The difference is in their passion. They come with purpose and desire to learn and to propagate it. Some have no choice but many can apply to go to the States, Canada, Australia, etc. Others have the choice to get out of Camp but choose to stay to educate and help those in the Camp.

### Sunday Worship

We were invited to preach in two churches on Sunday.



Ayan preaching in KKBBS Church

There are some mosques along the way to Jericho Church. These are attended by Indian Muslims from Myanmar. They called themselves Indian Myanmese but the Myanmese call them Black/Dark Myanmese. This Camp B division is 45 minutes walk from KKBBS. The markets here have better stock and variety of groceries, electrical stuff, chocolate ice-cream and Coke (local gaseous brown syrup drink).