

History

MYANMAR UNION MISSION

Territory and Statistics

Seventh-day Adventist work in Myanmar began with two literature ministry personnel in 1902. Myanmar Union Mission was organized in 1919 and reorganized in 1938. The territory of Myanmar Union Mission constitutes the Myanmar Union, a part of the Southern Asia-Pacific Division, and is divided into five missions: Ayeyarwady, Central Myanmar, South East, Upper Myanmar, and Yangon Attached District.

Statistics for Union (2017) – churches, 233; membership, 30,920; ordained ministers, 13;¹ college, 1; secondary schools, 9; publishing house, 1.

Statistics for Missions – Upper Myanmar Mission: The Upper Myanmar Mission was established in 1919. The Headquarters is in Pyinoolwin, Mandalay Region; churches, 76; members, 8,544; ordained ministers, 21; Secondary school, 5. ***Central Myanmar Mission:*** The Central Myanmar Mission was organized in 1967. The Headquarters is in Taungoo, Bagu Region; churches, 30; members, 4,490; ordained ministers, 13; secondary school, 1. ***Ayeyarwaddy Mission:*** The Ayeyarwaddy Mission was organized in 1919; and reorganized in 1938. The Headquarters is in Pathein, Ayeyarwaddy Region; churches, 62; members, 7,542; ordained ministers, 15; secondary school, 1. ***South East Mission:*** The South East Mission was organized in 1919, and reorganized in 1938. The headquarters is in Mawlamyaing, Mon State; churches, 27; members, 4,921; ordained ministers, 16; secondary school, 1. ***Yangon Attached District:*** The Yangon Attached District was established in 1977. The headquarters is in Dagon, Yangon Region; churches, 38; members, 5,423; ordained ministers, 12.²

ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY

Overview

Pyidaungzu Thammada Myanma Naingngandaw (Republic of the Union of Myanmar), formerly known as Burma, is in Southeast Asia with a population of about 52 million people. It is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world as it is situated between the borders of modern-day Bangladesh, India, China, Laos and Thailand. Myanmar is known to foreigners as the Golden Land not only for its golden pagodas but also for its rich natural resources. It is a country boasting emerald green rice fields, a multitude of tropical flowers and fruits and brilliantly painted temples. To its south, about one third of Myanmar's total perimeter of 5,876km (3,651 miles) forms an uninterrupted coastline of 1,930 km (1,200 mi) along the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea.³

"Myanmar's history dates back to the mid-900s BC. Various kingdoms rose and fell until 1824, when Great Britain launched a 62-year war, which ended with England incorporating Myanmar into the Indian Empire in 1886."⁴

In the 9th century, the Bamar people entered the Upper Irrawaddy valley and, following the establishment of the Pagan Kingdom in the 1050s, the Burmese language, culture and Theravada Buddhism slowly became dominant in the country. In the 16th century, reunified by the Taungoo Dynasty, the country was for a brief period the largest empire in the history of Mainland Southeast Asia.⁵ Early civilizations in Myanmar included the Tibeto-Burman-speaking Pyu city-states in Upper Myanmar and the Mon kingdoms in Lower Myanmar.⁶

The early 19th century Konbaung Dynasty ruled over an area that included modern Myanmar and briefly controlled Manipur and Assam as well. Previously an independent kingdom, Myanmar was annexed by the British Empire into the colony of India. The occupation brought social, economic, cultural and

administrative changes to the once-feudal society. The Japanese Empire invaded and occupied the country during World War II but it was returned to British control until independence in 1948; become a democratic nation and then, following a coup d'état in 1962, a military dictatorship. In 2011, the military junta was officially dissolved following a 2010 general election, and a nominally civilian government was installed.⁷

"The name of the country "Burma" was changed to "Myanmar" in 1989 by the ruling military government, officially recognized by the United Nations. But, some national governments, such as Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States do not recognize this name change because of political arguments."⁸

Myanmar is 676,578 square kilometers (261,227 sq. mi) in size. Its capital city is Naypyidaw.⁹ There are 135 distinct ethnic groups officially recognized by the Myanmar government. The government does not recognize several ethnic groups as being among the list of 135 officially recognized ethnic groups. These unrecognized ethnic groups are Tibetan, Anglo-Burmese (Eurasians), Burmese-Gurkha, Burmese-Pakistani, and Bengali people.¹⁰ In addition to the majority Bamar ethnic group, other main groups are the Chin, Karen, Kachin, Kayah, Mon, Rakhine and Shan, which have state territories named after them. The provisional results of the 2014 census show that the total population of Myanmar is (51,419,420).¹¹

Ethnics composition in Myanmar (rough estimate): Burman (Bamar) 68 %, Shan 9 %; Karen 7%, Rakhine 3.5 %, Chinese 2.5 %, Mon 2 %, Kachin 1.5 %; Indian 1.5 %, Chin 1 %; Kayah 0.8 %; and others 5%. Its official language is Burmese. The state religion is Theravada Buddhism 87.9 %. The minority groups practice Christianity, 6.2 %; Islam, 4.3 %; Animist, 0.8%; Hindu, 0.5%; Tribal religions, 0.8 %; other, 1.2 %, and none,

0.1%.¹²

Seventh-day Adventism

At the turn of the twentieth century, a Bama Baptist lady in Mawlamyaing, Daw May mind was shock one Sunday morning when she read in her Bible, “the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God” (Exodus 20:10). . Her forefathers had been the converts of Adoniram Judson, who established the first Baptist Church in about 1827. Her mind was not at peace, because she was not doing what the Lord said. Upon seeking clarification from her pastor, she was told that the seventh-day Sabbath was intended only for the Jews. She was not satisfied with their explanation. In any case, she was convinced that the Bible was correct, and she decided to keep the seventh-day Sabbath without knowing that there were Sabbath keepers in other parts of the world. Thus Daw May became the first Sabbath keeper in Myanmar before the missionaries arrived.¹³

Herbert B. Meyers, who had become a Seventh-day Adventist in Calcutta, India¹⁴ and A. G. Watson entered the country and selling literatures in 1902. They rented a house at 110 Brookling Street in East Yangon and immediately started selling religious books up and down the streets. Meyers’ wife opened a school with eighteen students. In 1904, Maung Maung went to Calcutta, India and requesting to send a missionary. The Church responded his request by sending H. H. Votaws and L. F. Hansens in 1905. These were the first Seventh-day Adventist missionaries to Myanmar. Upon the arriving in 1905, Votaw began evangelistic work in Yangon.

In 7 February 1907, Dr. Ollie Oberholtzer arrived from America and work in Mawlamyaing. Two brothers from Anglican Church, Chit Hla and David Hpo Hla accepted the advent messages. David Hpo Hla accepted the call to serve in the Church and he was the first Burmese Seventh-day Adventist to be ordained to the gospel ministry.

Until 1909, the work in India and Myanmar was directly under the General Conference as a detached mission. In 1909, it became a part of the Asiatic Division. Then in 1910, territory reorganization took place and an 'India Union Mission' was formed in the following missions: The Bengali Mission, North India Mission, the South India Mission, Western India mission, and Myanmar Mission.¹⁵

Herbert H. Votaw attended the General Conference session in America in 1909 and made a stirring appeal for an educational man for Myanmar. In 1910, Robert B. Thurber was sent out to lead Meiktila Technical School. The General Conference set aside a special fund of \$ 129,959.65 for the Myanmar Union Training School.¹⁶ This School was the first Adventist institution in Myanmar.

The first Seventh-day Adventist church was organized in 1907 in Yangon, with 23 members.¹⁷ "The First Myanmar mission convention was held in Yangon on October 9-19, 1908. In February 1915, the first time in their history that the workers of Myanmar have been favored with a visit from the president of the General Conference, A. G. Daniels."¹⁸

An Australian missionary Eric B Hare established the Karen Mission station in Ohndaw, Karen State in 1915.¹⁹ The India Union Mission was established as the Southern Asia Division of Seventh-day Adventist in 1920. The territory included Pakistan, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh.²⁰ By 1922 Myanmar Seventh-day Adventists had six churches with 182 members.²¹ "Maung Myat Htoon @ Walter Martin, Ma Thein Ma, Esther, and Ma May were the first fruits from the work of H. B. Meyers. Maung Maung was the first Burmese Seventh-day Adventist evangelist and ordained in 1927, near the close of his service. He was a forceful and dramatic speaker. J. Philips, president of the Myanmar Union Mission from 1921 to

1933, said "U Maung was one the best Bible students and preachers I have known." ²²

"The Church bought a lot on a corner- Voyle Road (later called U Wisara Road) and Stewart Road (later called Mawkwunhtaik Road) in 1928 and put up a three-story office and residence building, headquarters of the Myanmar Union Mission, and a beautiful church for the Yangon congregation on the same compound." ²³

"In June 1923, Frank A. Wyman came back again in Myanmar and work for several years in the Delta area – Pathein, Henzada, and Taikgyi. When a property was bought at Myaungmya and headquarters of the Delta Mission was established there in 1927. Tha Myaing, a Karen gentleman met with R. A Beckner and U Chit Hla and accepted their advent message. They were invited to work in the mission and Tha Myaing was the first Karen Seventh-day Adventist to be ordained to the ministry.

In harmony with the denominational plan of Seventh-day Adventists, the mission work in Myanmar was from its beginning duly organized. For the first few years it was simply a local mission, the Myanmar Mission, and was attached to the India Union Mission, which had its headquarters at Lucknow, North India. The first superintendent of the Myanmar Mission was Herbert H. Votaw. Yangon has long been a multi-racial city with many Chinese and Indians living there. Early in the 1920s work among the Telegus (Indians) was started by Andrews Stephen. The Telegu-Indian Church was organized on the Sabbath of 25 December 1922 with fifteen members." ²⁴

"Charles F. Lowry arrived in 1916 and was appointed superintendent of the Myanmar Mission. Early in 1919 the Myanmar Mission was reorganized into the Myanmar Union Mission. C. F. Lowry was the first president and Larue W. Melendy was the first secretary-treasurer. The territory comprised as follow: Central and Upper Myanmar Mission,

Ayeyarwaddy Delta Mission, and Tanintharyi Mission. But, C. F. Lowry's untimely death cut short his service in that capacity. He died of smallpox in 14 February 1919."²⁵

Then came the war! Bombs were dropped on Yangon on 23 December 1941. In two days of bombing, more than 2,500 people were killed in Yangon and that many more wounded.²⁶ Thousands began to leave the city. "On Sabbath morning, 21 February 1942, E. B. Hare, W. W. Christensen, J. W. Baldwin, and E. M. Meleen met in the church for worship, then locked the doors and left the city (Yangon)."²⁷ All Church activities were stopped during the Second World War.

Faithful Unto Death: During the war, the Myanmar National Army under the leadership of Japanese began persecuting the Christians and destroying their property, they killed a Seventh-day Adventist's worker and some members. Those hero of faithful martyrs were as follow: (1) Po Shwe, pastor and evangelist; (2) Kan Bane; (3) Po Johnsie, (4) Po Be, (5) Po Cho, (6) Po Ngwe, (7) Ba Kyine, (8) Daniel, a student (9) Than Shwe, a student.²⁸

Postwar Developments

Literature was one of the most useful tools to spread the gospel message. "The Myanmar people are fond of reading, and gladly welcome the colporteur. The sales of some of the workers have reached as high as \$300 a month. Strange to say, while other denominations have been work in Myanmar for something like a century, Seventh-day Adventists were the first to sell their books and papers. The first attempt to sell reading matter in the Myanmar language was made in 1911, with a 32-page booklet entitles, "*The Sign of the Times and End of the World.*"²⁹ In 1912, Burmese magazine "*The Kin Saung,*" was started by Robert Beckner. After the war, the new publishing facility "Kin Saung Press" began working in 28 May

1950 with J. O. Wilson as its first manager, Maung Sein as factory foreman, and Saya Saw U as editor.³⁰ The first Seventh-day Adventist literature published in the Karen language was "*Christian Sabbath*," translated by Mary DeNoyer and Tha Myaing.³¹ The only and first printed book of Ellen G. White in Myanmar before the Second World War was *Early Writings* and was printed in Poona, India."³²

The Seventh-day Adventist church grew, and by 1939 there were 25 schools, 43 teachers, and nearly 1000 students in Myanmar. Foreign missionaries stayed in the country during World War II until early 1942, when they had to flee to India. Following the war, cross-cultural missionaries returned until 1962, when the military junta took over Myanmar. At that time 26 missionaries left the country.³³

A Shan young man name Sam Gaw, was a British soldier. He met with a British army Chaplain Baldwin in India and read copies of the *Signs of the Times*. He was convinced through these papers and baptized in 1948. He was the first Seventh-day Adventist from the second largest group of Shan people.³⁴ Today only a handful of Shan people are in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Institutional development

In May 29, 1957, the Union High School was opened in Kyauktaing (Toungoo) with Chit Maung as its first principal. Several schools were opened everywhere, but all educational institutions were nationalized by the government in 1966.³⁵

In 1960, under the direction of W. W. Christensen, a two-year program Seminary was started with 15 denominational workers. In 1991, the Seminary was introduced a four-year curriculum for Bachelor of Arts in Religion; in 1996, Bachelor of Business Administration and Bachelor of Arts in Education

programs were added.³⁶

“In 1947, with funds from a Thirteenth Sabbath Offering overflow, an old hotel was purchased in Yangon and converted into a 115-bed hospital under the direction of Dr. J. C. Johannes.³⁷ The school of nursing was opened on 1 June 1953, with its first class of 17 students.³⁸ “The new wing of the hospital was opened on Sunday afternoon, January 2, 1955, by the Honorable U Nu, Prime Minister of Myanmar. Elder W. R. Beach, Secretary of the General Conference, was attended this opening ceremony.”³⁹ This Yangon Seventh-day Adventist Hospital was nationalized on July 5, 1965.⁴⁰

A voice of Prophecy Bible Correspondence School was opened in Myanmar on March 21, 1951, with Mrs. J. O. Wilson as director.⁴¹ In 1984, Adventist Development and Relief Agency commenced work in Myanmar. It becomes registered with the Ministry of Home Affairs in 1992.”⁴²

“In April 1950, the shortwave Radio station in Goa, India began to carry the syndicated American program, “Voice of Prophecy” for Southern Asia. Eight years later (1958), the Myanmar Broadcasting Service in Yangon, 50 kw. in the 25 metre band, with the American “Voice of Prophecy” began.⁴³ In 1966, Adventist World Radio-Chin and Sagaw Karen started broadcasting.⁴⁴

In 1 April 1965⁴⁵ the government nationalized all the Christian Institutions like schools, hospitals, and training colleges. The military junta perspective was that these private schools especially those run by the Christians constitute a system apart from the government run schools undermine the Burmese culture and does not promote nationalism. Together with this nationalization the foreign missionaries were asked to leave the country. Several people thought that by these measures the

Christians in Myanmar would disintegrate and the church would only exist in name as in the Burmese monarchical days. But soon they were surprised to discover that the Church not only survived but flourished by leaps and bounds. The Seventh-day Adventist Church operated several schools from Kindergarten to college level under the umbrella of “monk school – seminary.”

From 1902 to 1966, the year they were asked to leave the country, “168 overseas missionary families served in Myanmar. When all overseas missionary families leaved the country, the total church membership stood at 3,713.”⁴⁶ After all foreign missionaries leave the country; national leadership began with the appointment of Kalee Paw as president, Tun Sein as secretary, and Pein Kyi as treasurer of the Myanmar Union Mission in 1966.⁴⁷

Myanmar Union sent foreign missionary: “There are many Karens in the hills of Thailand, just across Myanmar’s eastern border. Leaders of the Adventist mission in Thailand learned that many Karens in Myanmar were receiving the light, so they wrote to the leaders in Myanmar and requested that a Karen couple be sent to Thailand as missionaries. The Union administration has chosen Kalee Paw as a missionary in May 1937 and sent him to the neglected Karens over the border of Thailand.”⁴⁷

“Pein Kyi was sent to Dacca, East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) from Myanmar to serve Secretary-Treasurer as missionary post for 5-years (1958-63)”⁴⁸ Ba Khin was chosen as Youth Ministry Director for Far Eastern Division post for 2 years (1989-1990).⁴⁹

Entered to the Neglected Lands: One of the larger tribes in the hills and mountains of Upper Myanmar is the Chin people. Some scattered farther down in central Myanmar and Ayeyarwaddy Delta region. The first American Baptist missionary couple,

Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Carson arrived to the Chin people in Chin Hills, on 15 March 1899.⁵⁰

With Arthur Carsons, two Karen Baptist missionaries came to Chin Hills and opened schools on 1902. He formed up the first Baptist Church in the Chin Hills at Khuasak on 17 February 1906.⁵¹ Even though the "Seventh-day Adventist Church entered and started working in lower Myanmar on 1902, they sent missionaries to Chin Hills, north-west of Myanmar after 50 years on 1953."⁵²

"On April 3, 1953, the union president, Cecil B. Guild, together with A. E. Anderson, Robert Myat Pe, and Freddie Ba Tin, flew to Kalaymyo for surveying the situation. In 1954 Arthur E. Anderson and family moved to Tiddim and opened the Chin Hills Mission. Zakhuma and Lalkhuma assisted in opening the work in the Mizo villages in Tahan. Ngul Khaw Pau and Rualchhinna assisted the work in Kalaymyo and Tiddim. The work in the Chin Hills moved very rapidly. Five years after the Andersons arrived, 12 churches and several companies have been organized."⁵³ "From January to March in 1954, A E Anderson conducted an evangelistic meeting with the help of Go Za Kham as interpreter. On May 8, P A. Parker, the president of the church in Central and Upper Myanmar Section baptized 26 precious souls."⁵⁴ Within sixteen years, "the membership in the Chin Hills has grown rapidly, being at the end of 1969 about 1,100."⁵⁵

Myitkyina is the provincial town of Kachin State where work was started in the early 60s. Elisha Paul and E Dwe Tha held several evangelistic meetings there. After six decades of waiting, Pe Yee and Tember Chit explored the Nagaland in the far north, and in 1970 a mission station was opened in Homalin. Thangpu was sent there to work among the Naga Hills tribes.⁵⁶

Territory realignment as a result of political pressure

Then in 1986, a major restructuring of unions was necessitated due to the political conditions in India. Pakistan merged with Trans-European Division. Myanmar, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka became part of the Far Eastern Division.”⁵⁷ The ethnic diversity of the country makes modern Myanmar a very difficult place to share the gospel. In countries such as Myanmar, Christians are often misunderstood and are often considered a Western aberration. Adventist writer and church leader, Pe Yee (Hti Lar) challenge the present leaders of the church as follows: “Today present leaders of Myanmar Union Mission need to consider for working among the Telegu and Chinese people in Yangon.”⁵⁸

Myanmar Church Growth Rate

The first Christian mission to arrive in Myanmar was the Roman Catholic Barnabite Mission in 1722. In 1807 the English Baptists opened a mission but the first permanent Baptist Evangelists and mission came in 1813 from America, under Adoniram Judson. At his death in 1850, there were 74 churches and 7,904 baptized members.⁵⁹ For Adoniram Judson, it took only thirteen years to baptize 7,904 people while the Seventh-day Adventist church needed 86 years for 10,000 people. It was because “the missionaries in Myanmar preached almost entirely in English, the language spoken by educated people in the larger town and cities.”⁶⁰

| Year | Churches | Membership |
|------------------|---|-------------------|
| Ministers | Duration | |
| 1902 | Seventh-day Adventist work in Myanmar began with 2 literature ministry personnel. | |
| 1907 | 1 | 23 |
| | 1 | 6 years to form a |

church⁶¹

| | | | |
|------------------|-------------------------------------|--------|------------------|
| 1948 | 23 | 1,052 | |
| 4 | 46 years ⁶² | | |
| 1960 | 36 | 2,138 | |
| 7 | 12 years ⁶³ | | |
| 1965 - 66 | 54 | 3,258 | |
| 9 | 6 years ⁶⁴ | | |
| 1983* | 105 | 8,353 | |
| 11 ⁶⁵ | | | |
| 1987# | 122 | 10,786 | |
| 21 ⁶⁶ | 86 years for 10,000 members. | | |
| 1997+ | 166 | 18,223 | 22 ⁶⁷ |
| 2000 | 176 | 20,750 | |
| 21 ⁶⁸ | 13 years for another 10,000 members | | |
| 2017 | 233 | 30,920 | |
| 17 ⁶⁹ | 17 years for 10,000 member | | |

* The last year in Southern Asia Division

The first year in Far Eastern Division

+ Far Eastern Division divided into 2 Division, Myanmar in Southern Asia-Pacific Division (SSD)

Some Anticipated Challenges

A Professor once asked a question: Can a Myanmar Buddhist be a Myanmar Buddhist Christian? Christianity had been introduced since the 16th Century in Myanmar, yet the Christian population is only 6% of the total population. This 6% of

Christians are from the minority tribal groups such as Chin, Kachin, and Kayin. Only a handful of Barman accepted Christianity. Why? Why does the Gospel remain so alien to the people after almost two centuries of its presence in this land? What are the issues and challenges?

“Three Burmese dynasties subdued the tribes and nations around Myanmar and ruled them for centuries. During that time Myanmar had the largest army in South East Asia. King Sinbyushin was victorious over the invading Chinese armies. Their noteworthy historical past gives the Burmese a distinctive national pride. Therefore, they see no reason to listen to the White Westerners.”⁷⁰ W. C. B. Purser, a church historian reflected on the Burmese people’s pride in their culture and religion: “The Burman is proud of his race, his literature, and his religion.”⁷¹ “The Burmese national pride as a people of history, culture, and religion manifests itself in the form of a superiority complex that has been a hindrance to Christian mission work down through the centuries.”⁷²

Adoniram Judson and other missionaries were suffered terribly in prison and other form of tortures. Although they were men of God, they were not saints and they did not practice the Christian virtue of forgiveness.”⁷³ So, “Adoniram Judson himself seemed to have felt that the only means to evangelize to Burmese people—was to annex the country into the British Empire. This is evident in Colonel Benson’s letter to the Governor-General of the British India, quoted by Dorothy Woodman: “This gentleman (Adoniram Judson) avows himself predisposed for war, as the best, if not the only means of eventually introducing the humanizing influences of the Christian religion.”⁷⁴

Myanmar people see Christian missionaries one of those “3Ms” in the process of the British colonization of their country. First White people came to Myanmar as merchants. Then

missionaries arrived as chaplains to care for the souls of the merchants. Last, the military came to protect the merchants and the missionaries. Later, these 3M took over Myanmar and made it colony of Britain.⁷⁵

Maung Htin Aung writes: "Since 1885 the British had followed a policy of divide and rule; they deliberately separated the hill peoples from the Burmese. This policy had the full support of the Christian missionaries, who had looked upon the Burmese as their opponents since 1826, and who regarded the British victories as their own. Finding it almost impossible to convert the Burmese Buddhists to Christianity, they turned their attention to the hill peoples, with whom they had some success since those people were still primitive animists. Only a minority of those peoples accepted Christianity."⁷⁶

"Most Europeans believed that the people outside Europe were not civilized or perhaps not even fully human. For this reason, they killed and mistreated; many people in the countries they colonized"⁷⁷....They thought they could rule Myanmar more easily if they separated the ethnic groups from one another, and they also felt that they were protecting the smaller, less powerful ethnic groups from the larger ones. For example, they used Kayin, Kachin, Chin and other minority ethnic groups as soldiers. They used these soldiers to fight Burman rebellions, which caused problems between these groups later on.⁷⁸ Up to these days, Myanmar and tribal people are fighting around the country. The State Councillor Aung San Su Kyi tries to get peace in Myanmar through National Reconciliation Treaty.

Colonization brought religious change. The British government did not protect or promote Buddhism. With them missionaries were entered and converting animists who lived in the hills (Kachin, Kayin, Chin, Kayah). Even though the missionaries were trying to do good things, their activities caused tension

between the converts and other people in Myanmar. Therefore, religion is the source of division among the ethnic groups.⁷⁹

The change of the country's name from "Burma" to "Myanmar;" the former capital "Rangoon" to "Yangon," "Bassein" to "Patheingyi," "Prome" to Pyaw," etc. and name of roads in Yangon city reveals the ever-present anti-western feeling among the Myanmar people.

In 2016, the new democratic government passed four new laws to protect their religion, people and culture. These new laws prohibited the Buddhist to change to other religion and not to marry with other religion. This action brought hatred to the colonialists included the missionaries. The Myanmar Buddhists also considered the tribal Christian as instruments of the colonialists. From the founding of the country to these days, there is fighting between the Myanmar Buddhists and other tribal people. Why could they accept the teaching of their enemies' religion? All these are made by the missionaries. "They came to Myanmar as teachers and preachers not as students. They came as a conqueror and oppressors not as friends. The missionaries try to introduce their new culture into Buddhists. But they failed, as Judson mentioned, "To gain a convert from Buddhism is like pulling the tooth of a tiger."

The challenge of Christian missionaries in Myanmar is how to instill the gospel message in the mind of the Burmese while removing their negative attitudes toward the religion and culture of the gospel. For Christians, Christianity is the truth and the best of all religions and their God is the only true God. But the Buddhists experience their Lords (spirit *nats*) presence in their daily lives and believe their Lord protected them from the invaders hands. So they oppose the Western imperialistic and superior Christianity. What the Burmese really need is a Lord to protect their country, their people and their lives.

There are some challenges to be obtained from the Buddhist

perspective: (1) Christians in Myanmar have not found a way to communicate the gospel in a way that Buddhists readily understand. We must show grace and love in action. (2) To make the gospel accessible, it must be presented in Burmese thought forms of life. This does not mean compromising the Truth; rather it is being sensitive in presentation when providing evangelism tract. (3) Until the Church understands the Buddhist mindset, they will not be able to play a significant part in Myanmar culture. (4)"⁸⁰

Executive Officers

Superintendents: H. H. Votaw, 1905-1914; R. H. Thurber, 1915⁸¹

Presidents: C. L. Lowry, 1916-1919; J Phillips, 1921-1926; T. J. Michael, 1927-1928 Interim; J Phillips, 1929-1932; J. L. Christian, 1933-1938; E. A. Crane, 1939-1941; E. M. Meleen, 1942; M. O. Manley, 1946-1951; C. B. Guild, 1952-1961; W. L. Murill, 1962-1965; Ka Lee Paw, 1966-1972; Kyaw Balay, 1973-1987; Thein Shwe, 1988-1990;

Ba Hla Thein, 1991-1995; Sandy Dee, 1996-2000; Tin Tun Shin, 2001-2003; Muller Kyaw, 2003-2010; Memory Tun, 2011-2015; Timothy M Paul, 2016 –

Secretary-Treasurers: L. W. Melendy, 1919-1925; T. Killoway, 1926-1928; O. Asprey, 1929-1930;

1. Mainstone, 1931-1936; D. C. Jacob, 1937-1938; Pein Kyi, 1939-1951;

Secretaries: R. Myat Pe, 1952; Ka Lee Paw, 1959-1965; Tun Sein, 1966-1972; Pein Kyi, 1973-1975;

Thein Shwe, 1976-1987; Ba Hla Thein, 1988-1990; Ba Khin, 1991-1993; Sandy Dee, 1994-1995;

V Kipzanang, 1996-1998; Muller Kyaw, 1998-2003; Memory Tun, 2003-2010; Min Lwin, 2011-2015;

Kelly P. Lyan, 2016 –

Treasurers: Pein Kyi, 1952-1956; W. L. Murril, 1957-1961; Tun Sein, 1962-1965; Pein Kyi, 1966-1972;

Ba Hla Thein, 1973-1987; Do Hen Pau, 1988-1993; Muller Kyaw, 1994-1998; Kham Khan Lian, 1996-1998; Memory Tun, 1999-2003; Nang Do Dal, 2003-2015; Cally Thein, 2016 –⁸²

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[tml](http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-fact-book/geos/bm.html). Religion estimate is based on the 2014 national census,
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