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International Ministries Joins Myanmar Baptist Convention in Meeting with Myanmar Government



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A delegation from International Ministries (IM), also known as the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, joined leaders of the Myanmar Baptist Convention (MBC) in a series of meetings with government officials representing the Republic of the Union of Myanmar on October 17, 2018.

These meetings followed a two-day intensive workshop presented by the MBC to provide leaders of its affiliated ethnic conventions and associations with the training to encourage good Christian citizenship and engagement in nation-building within a young democracy. During this event, 22 leaders from 16 of the MBC's affiliated organizations engaged in learning and dialogue around the topics of "Baptist Heritage, Faith and Emerging Democracy," "Principles for Christian Treasurers," "The Role of Women as Good Citizens" and "Mentoring."



State Counselor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi greets the Rev. Leslie Turley

The Rev. Leslie Turley, IM area director for Southeast Asia and Japan, had been approached by the leadership department of the MBC more than a year ago with the vision for this event. She led a team of facilitators including the Rev. Dr. Reid Trulson, former IM executive director; the Rev. Jim Bell, IM associate executive director for Global Mission; the Rev. Kyle Witmer, IM global servant in Thailand; Lisa Simmons, director of discipleship and associate in Mission Support for the West Virginia Baptist Convention; and Marlene Po, IM associate missionary and director of the FOUNDATIONS Judson Communities training program of Central Baptist Theological Seminary.

Turley noted, "We were honored to be invited to work together with the MBC to encourage and equip Baptists to become actively engaged in their country's ongoing development of democratic government."

The subsequent meetings with government officials were a further expression of the MBC's initiative to establish cooperative relationships throughout Myanmar society.

The hour-long discussion with State Counselor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi emphasized the importance of Christian values and principles in the development of a democratic society. The meeting concluded with prayer for wisdom and strength for the counselor to persevere in her important role.

The MBC and IM delegation next met with U.T. Khun Myat, speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw (the lower house of Myanmar's Parliament), to discuss the importance of the inclusion of all citizens in building a democracy. The day closed with a prayer service attended by the speakers of both houses of Myanmar's Parliament, Mahn Win Khaing Than and U. T. Khun Myat, and leaders from Baptist and other Christian communions in the capital city of Nay Pyi Taw.

The two-day training and the meetings with government officials both highlighted the historic relationship of American Baptists and Baptists in Myanmar, which grew out of the pioneering work begun in 1813 by IM's first missionaries, Ann and Adoniram Judson.

Leaders of the MBC hope that the training and meetings with government officials have initiated cordial relationships and laid a foundation for collaboration in addressing issues of mutual concern as Myanmar continues its transition toward democracy.

“Democracy in the United States is also still developing,” Trulson stressed. He noted the significant contributions of Baptists in framing the ideals and constitution of the United States, especially the guarantee of freedom of religion in the Bill of Rights, as an example of responsible engagement in democracy in the interest of the common good of all citizens. “People in Myanmar and America who follow Jesus have important contributions to make in helping their governments to act with justice for the good of all their people.”

Shown in photo:

Bottom row (left to right): Sayama Lu San; Rev. Jim Bell, Lisa Simmons; Rev. Leslie Turley, U T Khun Myat, Saya Billy Kan Myat, Marlene Po, Dr. Naw Lay Htoo

Top row (left to right): Rev. Kyle Witmer, Rev. Dr. Reid Trulson, Gillian Moh, Dr. Pau Lun, Rosie