Ayeyarwady Adventist Seminary

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Ayeyarwady (formerly Irrawaddy) Adventist Seminary (AYAS), an Adventist complete secondary boarding school located in Myaungmya, Myanmar, opened in 1927 as the first Adventist primary school in the Ayeyarwady region and is accredited internationally by the Accrediting Association of Seventh-day Adventist Schools, Colleges, and
Developments Leading to Establishment of Ayeyarwady Adventist Seminary

Among the pioneer Adventist missionaries that came to Myanmar (formerly Burma), Robert A. Beckner, Frank A. Wyman, Eugene A. Crane, and Alfred J. Sargent dedicated their services in the delta region where the Ayeyarwady Mission headquarters was located. Beckner arrived in October 1908; Wyman, in 1913; Sargent, in 1929; and Crane, in 1934.

Robert Beckner worked among the Burmese Buddhists in Mandalay and Meiktila. He moved to Myan Aung around 1918 and 1919 to distribute Christian literature. Together with a local man named Chit Hla, Beckner engaged in gospel work, distribution of Christian literature, and medical ministry. Then he opened the Delta Mission office at Hinthada in 1923. To expand the work among the Pwo Karen people of the Irrawaddy Delta, a new location was sought at Myaungmya.

Frank Wyman initially started the work in the Myaungmya area among the Pwo Karen people. A rice mill owner, San Thoo, at Myaungmya came to know the seventh-day Sabbath by reading an Adventist magazine, Signs of the Times. He accepted this belief, and he and his son, Ba Myaing, donated their garden land of about 30 acres to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, but they did not become Adventists. There, Wyman established a primary school and the headquarters of the Delta Mission of Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1927.

Founding of Ayeyarwady Adventist Seminary

The primary school consisted of a two-story school building as well as two cottages (one for a boys’ dormitory) and a dispensary for the school’s operation and was located in Myaungmya.

In those days, people in the remote area lacked education, and very few people knew how to read and write. When the Seventh-day Adventist Church introduced its education system at Myaungmya, parents willingly sent their children to this Christian school run by Adventists. A number of those who attended the primary school when it began in 1927 continued to attend through their high school years. After they completed high school, they took up the work in the Ayeyarwady Mission. The following graduates all became mission workers in the Ayeyarwady region: Ba Nyein, Kyaw Yae, Kyaw Zan, Yae Aye, Mu Sein, Maung Htwa, Mya Din, Thin Ohn, and Nan Shein.

This school was upgraded to elementary level in 1934, and Chit Maung became the principal of the school at Myaungmya. In 1936, the school started accepting students as a boarding school. By 1939, there were 75 students at the Myaungmya school. When Chit Maung was called to be a principal at Kyauk Taing High School in 1939, Ah Chu became the school principal at Myaungmya in 1939. Then Arthur Ba Tin succeeded him from 1940 to 1942. Then the school at Myaungmya was completely closed down during the Second World War from 1942 to 1945.

After World War II, in 1946, Lenny Hare was the principal of the Seventh-day Adventist Mission School at Myaungmya until he was transferred to Kamamaung in 1948. Robert Myat Pe was the principal after Lenny Hare. The steady and dedicated operation of this school gave the parents in the area confidence in it, so they continued to send their children there. This paved the way to open more schools as an avenue for evangelism in different places in the delta region, such as in Thein Lar, Taung Baw Su, Kywe Chan, Inma, Hlei Seit, Pet Tann, Tagu Seit, Wei Chaung, Ba Maw Shauk Chaung, Kyauk Pya, and Hsin Doh.

After the 1956/57 school year, the high school program was moved to Toungoo, and the school became Myaungmya Middle School.

In March 1966, the Myaungmya Middle School was nationalized by the government and put under the supervision of the government in Burma Union Education Department. When the government was unable to appoint someone as principal, the government requested Daniel Lwin, who had been the Myaungmya Middle School principal, to continue as principal for the 1966/67 school year. Thereafter, the government closed all Adventist mission schools in the whole country, so no Adventist schools operated in Myanmar from 1967 to 1978.

During this time, compulsory Sabbath classes became a great challenge for Adventist students. The Burma Union (now Myanmar Union Mission) sought a solution for its faithful young people with the guidance of the Burma Union Education department. Burma Union, with the arrangement of the Southern Asia Division, Division School Leaving Certification Program (DSLCP), introduced the DSLC examination center at Myaungmya in 1973.

In 1979, the Ayeyarwady Mission school reopened under the name Myaungmya Junior Bible Seminary. Beginning in 1979, the school had an education program for kindergarten through grade 8. Thereafter, it was upgraded to a high school and became the examination center for the Division College Eligible Certificate (DCEC), Southern Asia Division Board Exam for Grade 12. The school was attached to Myanmar Union Bible Seminary for one year in 1988/89 because the school had no principal for one year.

The number of students gradually increased year after year. As a result, space on campus and in the dormitories became very limited. Regardless, students continued enrolling.
Development of the School

After Smile Shein became the principal of this school in 1993, the number of students abruptly increased. During Smile Shein’s principalship (1993–2001), many improvements were made. Additional teachers were added for the Grade 11 and Grade 12 programs.

With the help of Yan Aye, the president of Myanmar Union Adventist Seminary, who was the main contact person to donors, Smile Shein added new classrooms to the high school building in 1997 and lengthened the land as part of the school campus to be used as a vegetable garden, and the produce was used in the school kitchen.

A girls’ hostel was constructed in the following year. A new chapel, which could accommodate more than 1,000 people, was built. The school study program and curriculum were improved through the guidance of the Myanmar Union Mission Education department. The name of the school was changed from Junior Bible Seminary to Ayeyarwady Adventist Seminary. Smile Shein built a new dormitory for the girls, made an extension of the boy’s hostel, and also set up the first library and a cafeteria.

Maung Maung Tun continued the work begun by Smile Shein. During Maung Maung Tun’s principalship, the physical appearance of the school campus was completely changed. With the help of Yan Aye and Memory Tun, Maung Maung Tun replaced the bamboo-walled, wooden houses of the faculty with eleven brick houses on the campus. Moreover, he prepared an overhead tank and water system and made a plan for school campus beautification and a sidewalk all over the school campus. Maung Maung Tun, who served as principal from 2002 to 2004, systematized the work program of the school during his tenure. Students were motivated to pay attention to the importance of physical exercise for creating mental power. Houses for faculty were built during his administration.

As the number of boarding students increased, the girls’ hostel needed more space to accommodate new incoming female students. Dhay Htoo Sein built a new library and a computer center using a donation received from an Australian friend, Mr. Mark Vodell. Dhay Htoo Sein set up a clinic and dispensary for the students.

Claudius Brown became the principal of Ayeyarwady Mission in 2013 and served until 2015 and he extended the girls’ dormitory. He organized students and initiated a band to meet the requirement for a music class. A big earth well was dug for the girls during his management. He planned a playground for primary and elementary level students. During the days of Claudius Brown, about two hectares (about five acres) of land and a light truck (Toyota Townace) were bought for the school. Then Internet service was introduced to the faculty and students.

When Memory Tun became the principal of the school in 2015, he fulfilled all that Claudius Brown had dreamed, such as a mini garden and mini playground. Cafeteria I and a library donated by Tabuchi were constructed since the time of Smile Shein.

In 2016, during the leadership of Min Lwin, a bell tower and a fence for the girls’ hostel security were built. An extension to the boys’ dormitory, fencing for the boys’ hostel, and a new vehicle (Dyna) were added to school properties in 2017.

Moreover, the number of students and the number of teachers have gradually increased in the present decade. The Ayeyarwady Adventist Seminary statistical report for 2008–2017 shows the following development.

Statistics for 2008–2017

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<th>Teachers</th>
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<td>579</td>
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<tr>
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<td>277</td>
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<td>569</td>
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<td>303</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>636</td>
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<td>26</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>570</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>27</td>
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</tbody>
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Principal List


SOURCES


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NOTES


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