

Bwint, Elijah (1929-2013)

MORRIS CHIT

Morris Chit, M.A. and Ed. S. in education, is the director of education of Myanmar Union Mission and former executive secretary of South East Mission in Myanmar.

Elijah Bwint was a teacher, evangelist, and administrator from Myanmar.

Early Life

Elijah Bwint was born February 28, 1929, in Ohn Daw village, Hpa-pun Township, Kayin state, Myanmar (then Burma). His parents were Ohn Bwint and Mya May.¹ He spent most of his childhood in Ohn Daw village.²

His parents were Karen Buddhists, and his father was a Buddhist monk in Ler Tha Hay village, Belin township, Mon state. They were a large family with nine children. The children's names were Gideon Bwint, Elijah Bwint, Say Paw, Paw Htoo, Elizabeth, Yaw Mu Bwint (Dickson), Robin Bwint, Jenny Bwint, and Paw Pah Bwint. Among the siblings, Gideon Bwint was a British soldier in the Air Force. Yaw Mu was a teacher in Paan Middle School in 1963³ and a training commandant Colonel in Karen National Union.⁴ Robin Bwint was sent to Myaungmya Bible Seminary and later served as an ordained pastor in Thailand and Myanmar.⁵ Among the sisters, Say Paw and Elizabeth were nurses, and Jenny and Paw Pah, were pastor's wives.⁶ Paw Pah served as an office secretary in the Tenasserim Mission headquarters office in Moulmein (Maw-la-myaing).⁷ Through the influence of an Adventist school, Elijah Bwint was converted to Adventism in 1945.⁸

Education and Marriage

Elijah attended school in Ohn Daw until grade 9 in 1952, and then he continued his education at the Myaungmya Bible Seminary in 1963. He spoke Karen, Burmese, and English proficiently. He was married to Beauty Ni, a Karen woman from his own tribe, on March 21, 1952. They were blessed with three children. The eldest son, Htoo Hser, was born March 21, 1956.⁹

Career/Ministry

In 1954 he entered the ministry as a pioneer evangelist/teacher in Tadwecho village school in Hlaigbwe township, Kayin state.¹⁰ In 1954 there were eight churches and 451 church members in the Tenasserim Mission.¹¹ In August 1955, the mission sent Ohn Bwint, Maung Thein I, and Maung Thein II, to evangelize in Belugyune where the Karen people lived. They opened a primary school in Pan Pa village.¹² In 1956 new mission stations

were opened in Belugyune and Kya-in.¹³ Elijah Bwint worked in Pan Pa village, in Belugyune, Mon state, as a church pastor from 1956 to 1960.¹⁴

In 1961 he served as village teacher/evangelist in Hteepadoe village, in Dawei township, in Tanintharyi region, under the Southeast Mission until 1962.¹⁵ In 1963 he continued his education at the Bible Seminary in Myaungmya and finished his study in 1965.¹⁶ He was assigned to Tavoy.¹⁷

In 1964 new territory was entered and the union provided budgets for new work among the Mons. Saya Hla Chit, who had been serving as assistant pastor of the Yangon church, was asked to go to Singu village, Kannbauk area, Tavoy district. Saya Hla Chit daily visited from house-to-house, giving Bible studies. Elijah Bwint and Hla Chit held a village evangelistic effort at Singu. As a result, two Mon families were baptized. In 1964 the total membership among the Mons was ten.¹⁸

In 1967 the South East Mission committee voted to open mission work in Mergui. Elijah Bwint was approached to enter this new field, and he and his family gladly accepted the challenge. In December 1967, Pastor Pein Kyi was invited to baptize three people in Mergui city.¹⁹ Elijah Bwint served in Mergui.²⁰ The mission appointed him as a Tavoy/Mergui circle leader and the circle territories were Tavoy, Mergui, Yebon, Singu, and Teepadoo.²¹ In November 7 to 30, 1967, Elijah Bwint, Hla Chit, and U Po Yee conducted an evangelistic effort and cottage meetings in Wagone village.²² Elijah Bwint and U Po Ye returned from Wagone by sea and the boat was captured by a band of communists. All passengers were stranded on a small barren island where they had to spend the remaining hours of the day and the entire night without food until rescue arrived the next morning.²³

At the August 19-20, 1968, Tenasserim Mid-Year Executive Committee, he was recommended for ordination.²⁴ In December 1968 he was ordained to the gospel ministry.²⁵ The mission issued his ministerial credential on December 17, 1968.²⁶ He was appointed a member of the 1968 executive committee of the Tenasserim Section. The members were Kyaw Balay, chair, Kyaw Tun, secretary, Maung Sawt, Timo, Tun Maung II, Shwe Hlaing, Elijah Bwint, San Nyunt, and Myat Kyaw.²⁷

In 1969 he was transferred to Mergui as an evangelist. During his term in Mergui district, he held evangelistic meetings in Ta-Pu village with his wife and Hla Chit, on March 10 to April 10, 1969. From October 15 to November 30, 1970, Elijah Bwint and Hla Chit, the Hteepadoe church pastor, and Maung Ywa, the Tavoy church pastor, held evangelistic meetings in Wagon. In July 1970, he took two weeks leave and went back to his home village, Ohn Daw, to look after his father who was ill.²⁸

In 1971 he was transferred to serve as church pastor in the Hpa-an church in Tenasserim section. While serving there he led the church in a building project on the P. W. D. Hill site. Myat Kyaw was assigned to collect donations from the church members for the Hpa-an church building fund. The new church building was completed and dedicated on October 18-19, 1974.²⁹

In 1974 he was appointed as the circle leader of the Hpa-an district by the Tenasserim Section Executive Committee. Other circle leaders appointed were Tun Maung II, Ohn Daw circle; Timo, Don Yin circle; San Nyunt, Moulmein circle; Ah Taw, Kawkerik circle; and Shwe Hlaing, Tavoy circle.³⁰

The Tenasserim section conducted the Combined Effort and Revival Meeting in Nat Kyun church on October 17 to November 6, 1976, and in Nnaungkaraing on November 14 to 30, 1976. Elijah Bwint was a director of the revival meeting and coworkers were Aung Yin, San Nyunt, Edward Paw, Wellington Tun, Ohn Khin, Ah Taw, Scamon Hlaing, and Khin Than.³¹

The Tenasserim Mission conducted a city effort at Hpa-an during the month of November 1975. Pastor E. Dwe was director and Pastor Elijah Bwint was assistant director for the city effort. Others workers were Mrs. Ohn Maung, pianist, and San Nyunt, Ah Taw, Tember Chit, Aung Yin, Edward Paw, Scamon Hlaing, Wellington, Nant Khin Than, and Paw Pah.³²

In 1976 he was transferred to serve as an evangelist in Hpa-pun among the Karen hill tribes in Kayin state 1976. Also in 1976, the section executive committee rearranged the circles and Elijah Bwint was assigned as a Salween West circle leader, including the territory of the districts of Papun, Laypota, and Ohn Daw. In 1977 he was elected to serve as Sabbath School secretary and Stewardship advisor at the Myanmar Union headquarters in Yangon.³³

Under the leadership of Pastor Elijah Bwint, the Sabbath School department increased Sabbath School classes, membership, and offerings. In 1977 there were 157 Sabbath Schools, membership was 8,862, and Sabbath School offering was 75,860 kyats. Within two years, in 1979, there were 160 Sabbath Schools, membership was 10,044, and Sabbath School offering was 81,367 kyats. He provided Vacation Bible Schools for all sections with teaching aids, instructional materials, and enough teachers for the children. Children learned the Bible and the love of God through stories, coloring pictures, making crafts, and playing games. Students from the Bible Seminary had opportunity to work as Vacation Bible School teachers during the summer holidays and thereby earn their school fees. Within four years, 119 students from the Bible Seminary served the VBS in various places.³⁴

The work of the Sabbath School department is to reap souls and maintain the precious souls. Within four years, from 1977 to 1980, 1,158 souls were added due to the work of the Sabbath School department.³⁵ Pastor Elijah Bwint conducted Sabbath School teacher training twice in those four years. The first training was held March 3-6, 1977, when the General Conference Sabbath School director, Elder Ashlock, and division Sabbath School director, M. C. Moses, gave training lectures. The second training was held April 25-26, 1979, when C. L. Brooks, from the General Conference, and M. D. Moses, from the division, presented the Sabbath School teacher training. The trainees learned the importance of teaching methods, preparation for teaching, getting the attention and interest of the students, and lesson objectives and values.

Elijah Bwint was able to publish the Sabbath School lessons in the Chin and Mizo languages, which made it easier for those tribes to understand.³⁶ Then he was elected as mission president in South East Mission from 1981 until his retirement in 1989. His wife, Beauty Ni, passed away one year before he retired.³⁷

Later Life

Retiring from the ministry on December 31, 1989, he lived in Ohn Daw village near the Ohn Daw Junior Bible School. He married Naw Dee Paw while he lived in Ohn Daw. Though he was a retired worker, he supported and actively participated in the church and evangelistic programs in the Southeast Mission. In 1999, Pastor Elijah Bwint left his Ohn Daw home and went to Bangkok, Thailand, assisted by his brother, Pastor Robin Bwint. He joined with Bangkok church pastor, Sayagyi Mervin Myat Kyaw, for the Global Mission project among migrate Karen and Burmese workers in Bangkok and others places. He assisted Mervin Myat Kyaw in the work of the Voice of Prophecy in the Burmese language, and he accompanied him to prisons, factories, markets, and hotels where Burmese migrants worked. He did evangelistic work for three years with Mervin Myat Kyaw and baptized many converts in Bangkok.³⁸ In 2002 he moved with his family to Utica, New York, United States of America. He passed away in Utica in July 2013.³⁹

Contribution/Legacy

Elijah Bwint was considered one of the founder of Belugyune Bible School and Hteepadoe Elementary School. He also led in the Hpa-an church building and the Hare Memorial School building in Ohn Daw.

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