

South East Mission, Myanmar

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The Tenassarim Mission (now South East Mission) was organized in 1919 and reorganized in 1938. The South East Mission territories include Mon State, Taninthayi Region, the southeast portion of Bago region, and the southern portion of Kayin state.¹

Statistics for 2017: churches 27; membership 4,921; ordained ministers 16; secondary school 1² There are six districts (circles) in the South East Mission of Adventists which include Hpa-an, Kamamaung (formerly Ohn Daw), Don Yin, Dawei, Mawlamyine, and Myawaddy district.³

History of Adventism in the South East Mission (1900–1910)

Daw May was a woman who belonged to Mon, one of the major tribes of Myanmar (formerly Burma), who lived in Mawlamyine, the Southern part of Myanmar. In 1900 she learned about the seventh-day Sabbath as found in Exodus 20:11-12, and that she should keep it as God's holy day. She discussed it with her brother, Maung Maung, who was a government worker in Yangon. She became the first seventh-day Sabbath keeper in Myanmar.⁴

A few years later, in 1903, two colporteurs from Kolkata (Calcutta, India), H. B. Meyers and A. Y. Watson, arrived Yangon. They sold Christian literature and met Daw May in Mawlamyine. They discussed the true Christian Sabbath and she accepted the seventh-day Sabbath and was converted to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. When the colporteurs returned to Yangon, they contacted Maung Maung and taught him the Bible truths and he was later baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church.⁵

In 1904 Maung Maung attended the Seventh-day Adventist Church convention in Kolkata and requested that missionaries be sent to Myanmar. Herbert H. Votaw, from America, and L. H. Hansen and his wife (nurse and colporteur) were sent to Myanmar in 1905. Votaw held evangelistic meetings and Bible study classes in Mawlamyine. David Po Hla belonged to the Mon tribe, was a deacon from the Anglican church in Mawlamyine, and he taught the Burmese language to foreigners before he worked for the Adventist church.⁶

David Po Hla, Chit Hla, Daw May, and Maung Maung, were baptized by H. H. Votaw as the fruits of the labor of H. B. Meyer and A. Y. Watson.⁷ There were only three church members in Myanmar in 1905.⁸ In 1907, Dr. Ollie Oberholtzer Tornblad, a female medical doctor, was sent from America to Yangon and she did medical

evangelism in Mawlamyine. As the result of her dedicated labor, the church baptized many souls in Mawlamyine and Yangon.⁹ Po Hla and Chit Hla were the fruits of her labor. Po Hla worked together with her in Mawlamyine and Thaton when he became an evangelist. He was the first ordained minister in the Burma Mission.¹⁰

Mr. Lonsdale met Dr. Tornblad in Mawlamyine and was converted to Adventism at the same time as Po Hla and Chit Hla. He served a few years doing evangelistic work for the mission.¹¹ In 1910, Votaw, the first official missionary, opened the Ohn Daw School to train gospel workers for the mission. Ohn Daw School was the first Adventist Institution in Myanmar.¹²

On November 10, 1910, a nurse, Miss Mary Gibbs, arrived in Yangon. After learning Burmese and Karen, she served as a medical evangelist in Mawlamyine. There she was requested to open a new dispensary in Kamamaung in 1915 and she did evangelistic work in Kamamaung and Ohn Daw villages.¹³ She worked with Eric B. Hare, who was popular among Karen people.¹⁴ Gibbs sent three young Karen boys, Peter, John, and Thomas, from Thandaung district to Meiktilar School because she knew Karen people needed evangelists who spoke their language. Peter became an ordained minister, Thomas a literature evangelist, and John a teacher evangelist in Ohn Daw School.¹⁵ During the years 1902-1910, the missionaries who served the South East Mission were Meyers, Waston, Votaw, Tornblad, and Gibbs.¹⁶

1911-1920

William Carrott was a colporteur who went to towns and cities in the southern part of Myanmar from 1912 to 1920. He sold Christian literature in Dawie and Meik cities.¹⁷ In 1912 George A. Hamilton arrived in Yangon and served as a city evangelist. In 1914 he was assigned by the mission committee to find a place for an evangelistic center among the Karen ethnic tribe. He traveled along the Salween River (now Thanlwin) and found a beautiful land of five acres in Ohn Daw, near Kamamaung village, that was located at the confluence of Yunsalin River and Salween River. The mission bought the land with teak trees in 1915. Hamilton brought carpenter tools and equipment from Yangon.¹⁸

George A. Hamilton was an evangelist among the Karen people who lived around and in Kamamaung and Ohn Daw villages. He worked together with Gibbs and opened a dispensary in 1916. Later he was transferred from Ohn Daw village to be a church pastor in Yangon.¹⁹ In 1913 a self-supporting evangelist, Andrew J. Noyer, arrived in Yangon and helped Dr. Tomblad in garden work and sold Christian literature in many parts of Myanmar. He married a nurse, Mary Gibbs, in September 1918 and worked as a literature evangelist in the South East Mission.²⁰

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Myanmar was founded in 1914 as Votaw extended the evangelistic work in Yangon, Mawlamyine, Meiktelar, and Pyinoolwin (then Maymyo).²¹ In February 1915, A. G. Daniels, president of the General Conference, came to Myanmar and visited Mawlamyine and Hpa-an to give encouragement and directions for the advancement of the mission work.²²

In October 1915, Eric B. Hare and wife Anges, Adventist medical missionaries from Australia, arrived in Yangon to continue the evangelistic work among the Karen people in Kamamaung and Ohn Daw. They learned Sagaw Karen and were transferred to Ohn Daw in 1916. The Hares opened Ohn Daw School as the evangelistic center for Karen villages.²³ He taught his students how to hold evangelistic meetings and preach during summer vacation trips. In their evangelistic trips to villages along Thanlwin River, they cared for the sick villagers and he entertained them with his trumpet and brass band.²⁴

In August 4, 1915, R. B. Thurber and Professor Sarlic Barry visited the newly established Karen church in Kamamaung.²⁵ A. H. William was an English trader who was traveling among the Karen villages and was baptized by Votaw. He went with Hamilton to find land for evangelistic work in Ohn Daw. He lived in Myaingkalay, on the west bank of the Thanlwin River, beyond Hpa-an town. William was appointed as principal of the Meiktila Technical School in 1915. He was known as a Star of Burma.²⁶

Robert A. Beckner, a publisher of Kinsaung Press, and Chit Hla sold Christian literature in towns and villages and preached the gospel from 1917 to 1919. They met Tha Myaing, a Baptist preacher, and taught him from the Bible about the true Christian Sabbath. Tha Myaing was converted by Beckner and baptized by Charles F. Lowry.²⁷ He worked with Hare in the Kamamaung and Ohn Daw district.²⁸ Tha Myaing, Peter, Mya Po, Ohn Bwint, and John were co-workers of Hare. The first village school was opened in Laypota village, a five-hour walk from the Ohn Daw School. Ohn Bwint was the first teacher in the Laypota village school.²⁹

Peter was an evangelist in Ohn Daw, Kamamaung, and Don Yin districts. He was ordained and later he served as a superintendent of the Tenneserrim Mission (now South East).³⁰ Myat Po was a teacher who work with Hare in Ohn Daw School and after that he served as a church pastor in the Htoo Gyi district for many years. After the Second World War, he served as a church pastor in Mawlamyine and a superintendent of the South East Mission.³¹

In April 1918, Naw Hla Khin was the first student baptized by William in the Thanlwin River. There were six members in the Kamamaung church.³² Deacon David was an eldest son of David Po Hla. During 1918, when Ba Tin was serving as a church pastor in Naunglone village, Kayin state, he became acquainted with Kalee Paw's parents and gave them Bible studies.³³ In 1919 Po Hla worked as a teacher in Meiktilar Technical School. He served as a teacher and evangelist in Thaton, Mawlamyine, and Myaungmya.³⁴

In 1919 the Myanmar Mission was officially organized with union status³⁵ and it consisted of three local missions: Yangon and Upper Myanmar Mission, South East Mission, and Ayeyarwaddy Mission. C. F. Lowry served as the leader of Myanmar Union Mission.³⁶

In 1920 Harold Baird, from Australia, arrived in Yangon to assist Hare in Ohn Daw School. He learned Karen and work with Hare through music, medical work, and evangelistic meetings.³⁷

1921–1930

Adventism in southern Myanmar progressed slowly and steadily. According to the Sabbath School report (September 30, 1921) there were 63 Sabbath School members in Kamamaung church. There were 53 students in Ohn Daw school.³⁸ Dr. Tornblad conducted evangelistic meetings in Mawlamyine and Thaton. Ba Tin, Myat Po, and Deacon David worked together with him. At that time there was no organized church in Thaton, Mawlamyine, or Hpa-an cities.³⁹

The evangelistic work was expanded from Ohn Daw to villages such as Laypota, Hteelarnel, Ma Eh, and up to Donyin district. By riding the school motor boat, Hare and Biard went to the villages near Ohn Daw, Kamamaung, and played band music during the summer holidays. From 1915-1925, the Ohn Daw church members were Hare, Baird, Peter, Oh Bwint, Tha Myaing, Mya Po, parents of Kalee Paw, Htay Po (Laypota), and Myat Tun.⁴⁰

1931–1940

During 1931 and from 1939-1942, Frank A. Wyman and his wife, Nelli Wyman, went to Myanmar and held evangelistic meetings and medical ministry in Thaton, Mawlamyine, and Myaungmya.⁴¹ In 1934, Eugene A. Crane and his wife, Ethel Crane, arrived in Yangon from America. They were nurses and they worked with Hare in the clinic. The couple learned Sagaw Karen from Mya Po. They were to replace the Hares in Ohn Daw School.⁴² He was assigned to be superintendent of the Tennassarim Mission from 1939 to 1940. Crane and U Pe Yee traveled through the Donyin and Shwedaw districts.⁴³

In 1935 there were seven mission stations in the South East Mission. They were Kamamaung, Laypota, Nnaungkaren, Minze, Nitcha, Telaneh, and Lerthahai. Peter was appointed as a mission superintendent. The mission office was in Kamamaung, in Thaton district. License holders were Crane and Ohn Bwint. Church school teachers were Muang Thein, Ka Lee Paw, Maung Kho, San Nyok, Po Kyaw, Maung Choot, David, and Tun Sein. Other workers were Naw Sein Dwe, Naw Yin Nee, Me Shwe, and Pein Kyi.⁴⁴

In 1937, the Tennasserim Mission field had one church and 134 members. Tun Maung was appointed as secretary-treasurer and the mission executive committee members were Peter, Tun Maung, Ohn Bwint, Tha Khin, Paul, and J. O. Wilson. Kamamaung was recognized as a mission station and the director was Peter.⁴⁵ On May 1, 1937, Kalee Paw and his wife, Yin Ni, went as missionaries to share the gospel among the Karen people in Thailand.⁴⁶

In 1938, Peter, Tha Khin, Maung Ni, and Maung Thein held evangelistic meetings in Laypota.⁴⁷ In 1939, there were 74 students attending the Ohn Daw School.⁴⁸ Peter and his group held evangelistic meetings in Shwedaw in the Donyin district.⁴⁹ In 1939 the mission superintendent was Crane and the secretary-treasurer was Tun Maung. The executive committee members were Crane, Tun Maung, Peter, Baird, Pein Gyi, Ohn Bwint, Tha Khin,

and Paul. The church membership increased to 162. The number of village schools increased to ten in the Kamamaung Mission and ten teachers were appointed to the schools.⁵⁰

The years from 1902 to 1941 were the period that Seventh-day Adventist Church's formal evangelistic work reached its highest level.⁵¹

1941–1950

The Ohn Daw/Kamamaung Middle School was open from 1916 to 1942.⁵² Before the Second World War began, the mission opened nine feeding schools in these villages: Hteelarnel, Ma Eh, Laypota, Naungkarine, Minzee, Nit Char, Nat Kyune, Shwe Daw, and Kawt Than Kar. The village teachers were Kar Yay, Maung Ko, Po Kyaw, John, David, Maung Ni, Shwe Hlaing, Mya Sein Paw, Maung Chit, Ti Moe, Maung Thein, Daw Emelly, Daw Rosy, and Daw Mya May.⁵³

In 1941 E. M. Meleen was appointed as mission superintendent and Pein Gyi was secretary-treasurer. The executive committee members were Meleen, Baird, Ohn Bwint, Pein Gyi, Tha Khin, Tun Maung, and Peter.⁵⁴ The Second World War spread from Asian countries to Myanmar within a short time.⁵⁵ In 1942, Tennasserim Mission and the Ohn Daw School were supervised by Peter. Ohn Daw School was closed as the Japanese troops came to Myanmar from Thailand and crossed Kayin state and Tenneserrim region. During the War, nobody was at the Ohn Daw School and the school buildings and dispensary were destroyed by bombs and fire.⁵⁶

During the War, in the Taungng circle, Paul, Tha Myaing, Chit Maung, A Chu, Baw Dee, Shwe Chit, Phoe Be, Jaw Ni, and villagers lived in Shwe Nyaung Bin and they worked unitedly and helped each other with spiritual and social needs.⁵⁷ When the Second World War was over in 1945, Jim W. Baldwin was the first to arrive in Myanmar and live in Ohn Daw. Due to poor health, he died in Ohn Daw in 1951. Dr. Myrl O. Manley arrived in Myanmar to serve the Myanmar Union Mission in 1946 and plans were underway to open Ohn Daw School.⁵⁸

In 1946, the Tenasserim Mission opened the village schools in Taungo, Naungkaring, Minzee, Teponeh, Telaneh, and Laypota. The village school teachers were Baw Kho in Taungo school, Po Gyaw in Naungkaring school, Maung Chit in Minzee school, Maung Thein (1) in Teponeh school, Maung Thein (2) in Telaneh school, and Ma Thein Khin in Laypota school.⁵⁹ In 1948 the Tenasserim Mission was divided into three local districts: Pa-an, Donyin, and Ohndaw.⁶⁰

Leonard N. Hare, son of Eric B. and Agnes Hare, served as principal of Myaungmya School from 1946 to 1949.⁶¹ He was born in Myanmar and grew up in Ohn Daw so he could speak Burmese like a native.⁶² He was transferred to Tennesarrim to serve as principal of the Ohn Daw School and to construct new buildings during the difficult years between 1949 and 1951.⁶³ He constructed new school buildings, boys' and girls' dormitories, and staff and teacher houses. He bought a motor boat to use for evangelistic work and for school transportation. The Tennasserim Mission office was stationed on the Ohn Daw School campus.⁶⁴

In 1950, because of the complicated condition in Kayin state, Leonard N. Hare left the school and returned to America. Then Chit Maung served as a school principal in Ohn Daw. Kalee Paw was elected as mission superintendent in 1954 when he returned from Thailand.⁶⁵ At the end of 1950, Eric and Agnes Hare came to Myanmar and visited the Hpa-an and Mawlamyine churches. They met with their son Leonard and his family, but he could not visit the old evangelistic sites of Ohn Daw and Kamamaung, due to poor transportation and the complicated political condition.⁶⁶

1951–1960

William L. Murrill served in the South East Mission from 1951 to 1966. He promoted and collected offerings for the development of education and health in Mawlamyine, Dawei, and Myeik.⁶⁷ In March 10, 1952, Arthur Eugene Anderson arrived in Yangon. From 1956 to 1957, the houses and office buildings were built.⁶⁸ In 1953, Edwin C. Beck arrived in Yangon to serve as a Yangon church pastor. He was a good preacher and he conducted city evangelistic meetings in Mawlamyine, Yangon, and Pyinoolwin. His wife was a good singer and she supported her husband in evangelism. He organized Mawlamyine church after the city evangelistic meeting in Mawlamyine.⁶⁹

The Ohn Daw School was upgraded to high school level and the teachers who served in the school were Chit Maung, A Kyu, Myat Kyaw, Timo, Tun Sein, and Maybel.⁷⁰ In 1953, the Tennaserrim Mission did not have good communication and transportation to the Yangon headquarters due to the political situation in Kayin state.⁷¹ The mission committee planned to move the Ohn Daw School to a safe place.⁷² The mission bought land near Mawyawaddy Park in Mawlamyine to build an office, church, and houses for the headquarters. Mawlamyine became a center point from which to share the gospel and establish new churches in Kayin state, Mon state, and Tennasserim region.⁷³

In 1955 new mission stations were opened in Belugyune and Kya-in.⁷⁴ In August 1955, Maung Thein (1) and Maung Thein (2) were sent to Kyar-in to open up new work in that area.⁷⁵ The mission sent Ohn Bwint, Maung Thein (1), Maung Thein (2), and Elijah Bwint to evangelize in Belugyune where the Karen people lived. They opened a primary school in Pan Pa village. There was a water problem at the school and it was relocated to Takupatee village. The school teachers were Aung Sein, Kyaw Nyein, and San Shine.⁷⁶ Ohn Bwint established a church in Pan Pa village in Belugyune after the Second World War. The Tennasserim Mission committee sent him to evangelize in Dawei and Hteepadoe villages.⁷⁷

In July 1955, Ohn Daw School was closed and a temporary school was opened in Hpa Lain village that was located near Htone Eyne village and Hap-an.⁷⁸ In 1956 the Hpa Lain School was closed for lack of security and moved to Hpa-an, in P. W. D. Hill. Chit Maung was the school principal.⁷⁹ In 1958 the school was moved to Hpa-Mel Hill about a 20-minute walk from P. W. D. Hill School. The school principals then were Chit Maung, Ti Moe, Aung Win, and Tun Maung (1).⁸⁰

In 1956 Kalee Paw, Pe Yee, and Ohn Bwint went to Dawei by plane to survey the situation of the Dawei district and to expand the mission work. Ohn Bwint was left in Dawei for evangelistic work. He would establish a primary school in Hteepadoe village.⁸¹ After the Dawei trip, the Tennasserim administrators went to Myeik. Elijah Bwint served as an evangelist in Myeik from 1965 to 1970.⁸²

In 1959, F. C. Wyman, Myat Po, Ohn Bwint, Maung Sein, Maung Twa, Pe Yee, and W. Martin went to Kawkareik, Mawlamyine, Dawei, and Myeik for the Uplift Work program.⁸³

1961–1980

In 1966 the Hpa-an Adventist School was nationalized by the government. During the years, 1956-1966, youth camps were held on the river side of Hpa-an.⁸⁴ All the foreign missionaries left Burma and the work was left in the hand of national leaders. In the Burma Union Mission, the president was K. Paw, the secretary-treasurer was Pein Kyi, and Tun Sein was associate secretary. On March 27, 1967, the Ye Bu church was dedicated and K. Paw from the union attended the dedicatory service.⁸⁵

In 1967 the Tenasserim Mission had seven districts or circles: Papun circle, Ohn Daw circle, Shwegoon circle, Pa-an circle, Donyin circle, Moulmein circle, and Tavoy/Mergui circle.⁸⁶ In 1973 the Tennasserim Mission planned to establish churches in Thaton where Wyman held an evangelistic meeting in 1931. The mission sent Jimmy David and San Ba to evangelize in Thaton for a few years. Tember Chit arrived in Theinzayat in 1973 to serve as an evangelist.⁸⁷

From 1977 to 1980, the churches at Noketta, Ye Bu, Kawtlyan, and Melwall were constructed and dedicated. The churches of Wargone, Bawtharaw, Noketta, and Kawtlyan were organized. The believers in Kawtthanka, Thukabee, Maelar, Paret, and Kawmoorah were organized into companies.⁸⁸

Beginning in 1900, when Daw May who lived in Mawlamyine read about the Bible Sabbath from the Ten Commandments and kept the seventh-day Sabbath, Adventism has spread so there are now 4,912⁸⁹ Adventist church members living in many parts of Myanmar.

South East Mission Statistical Report 1915–2015

Year	Church	Company	Church Membership	Sabbath School Membership	References
1915	1			5	90
1919	1		10	17	91
1921	1			63	92
1976	6	10	1,392		93

Year	Church	Company	Church Membership	Sabbath School Membership	References
2015	27	17	4,819	6,009	94

Workers Statistics (1915-2015)

Year	Workers	References:
1915	13	95
2015	40 (Regular) + 173 (Contract) = 213	96

List of Presidents (1919–2018)

Eric B. Hare (1919-1934); E. A. Crane (1934-1935); T. Peter (1935-1939); E. A. Crane (1939-1941); E. M. Meleen (1941-1942); Chit Maung (1947-1949); Kalee Paw (1949-1951); No Record (1951-1953); Kalee Paw (1953-1959); Myat Po (1959-1962); Baw Dee (1962-1964); Tun Maung I (1964-1967); Kyaw Ba Lay (1967-1969); Elisha Paul (1969-1972); Pe Yee (1970-1972); Kyaw Din (2) (1973-1975); Moses Po (1976-1978); V. Kipzanang (1979-1980); Elijah Bwint (1981-1990); San Nyunt (1991-1995); Aung Sein (1996-2000); Calab Paw (2001-2005); Langh Sawm Mang (2006-2007); Reigner Ywa (2007-2010); Khin Maung Yin (2011-2015); Saw Keh (2015-present).⁹⁷

Lists of Secretaries-Treasurers (1938–1990)

Tun Maung (1938-1941); Pein Gyi (1942); Tun Maung (1947-1954); Myat Kyaw (1955-1956); Pe Yee (1957-1963); Kyaw Din (1964); Thein Shwe (1965–1967); Kyaw Tun (1968-1969); Kyaw Balay (1970-1971), Timo (1972-1974); Sandy Dee (1975-1981); Do Hen Pau (1982-1986); Sandy Dee (1987-1990).⁹⁸

Lists of Secretaries (1991–2017)

Thangpu (1991-1994); Aung Sein (1995-1997); Reigner Ywa (1998-2007); Saw Keh (2008-2010); Morris Chit (2011-2015); Shwe Thet Oo (2016-present).⁹⁹

Lists of the Treasurers (1991-2018)

Stephen Sein (1991-1994); Kyaw Nyein (1995-1997); Memory Tun (1998-1999); Cally Thein (2000-2005); Lay Moo Kyaw (2006-2009); Cally Thein (2010-2015), Ler Say (2016- present).¹⁰⁰

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