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Serving Together as Partners in Mission in Myanmar

Wayne and Helen Harray are members of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand who have been serving with the Presbyterian Church of Myanmar since 2018. They have recently returned to New Zealand on furlough. They have written this brief summary of their work so far.

It's been 21 months now since we left New Zealand to work at the Presbyterian Church of Myanmar's Tahan Theological College (TTC). Working in Myanmar has its own unique challenges. The politics of the country are a lot more complex than we, or most people in New Zealand, realise. We work primarily with the Chin people, who are a completely different people group to the other seven ethnic groups in the country. The Chin themselves are broken down into at least 35 language and tribal groups (some put it as high as 54) with their own inter-tribal differences and tensions.

When we arrived, our roles were loosely defined as follows:

- Helen was to teach pastoral theology on a half time basis (6 hours a week).
- Wayne was to develop the 6 hectares of dormant farmland the College owns to create a supplementary income for the college, and create an environmentally friendly farming model that could be used as a demonstration farm for students and the community.

What has actually transpired is slightly different. Helen has been appointed Head of Department of the Liberal Arts department which focuses on teaching conversational English, and this has become more than a full-time job. Wayne has added the major goal of restoring the depleted and impoverished soils to full health. Space doesn't allow for a full summary of what we have achieved so far, but impressions after 21 months can be given.

Helen is teaching with extremely limited resources when we compare what we would take for granted here in New Zealand. However, it is not just TTC that has limited resources; this is true for almost every educational institute across the country that has been affected by 60 years of military rule that did not promote education in any way, shape or form. This does lead to real frustrations.

In spite of this, progress is being made, albeit slowly. Helen has made significant changes to the model of teaching and it is her intention to continue to do so – introducing teaching practices and methods that are more aligned with current world standards.

Wayne has made inroads into restoring the land that he has been entrusted to manage. As he drives around it, two major emotions that envelop him; satisfaction at what has been achieved so far, offset by the challenge of knowing that it will take at least another five years for it to really start to show signs of maturity and bear results.

Wayne says: "I am learning as I go and the overall management system of the property is evolving constantly. Let's hope that COVID-19 becomes a thing of the past very quickly and that we can get back to roles that we very definitely feel called to over the next few years."



Wayne and Helen with fellow TTC staff member Zohmai Rokhum at the Graduation Dinner in March 2020

Wayne and Helen were planning to be in New Zealand until mid-May. However, their return date will now be closer to September. Their original itinerary included visiting congregations and supporters to update on their progress, but these plans were obviously derailed as New Zealand went into lockdown. They hope to catch up on some of these visits in the next couple of months. If you would like to hear from them while they are back in New Zealand, contact them directly or send them an enquiry through Global Mission Coordinator Phil King, phil@presbyterian.org.nz. Wayne and Helen have both written informative articles about their work in Myanmar which have been published in the TTC magazine and also CWM's Insight magazine. You can read these articles here,

<https://www.presbyterian.org.nz/national-ministries/global-mission/myanmar> For more news you can go to their blog site at www.helenharray.com

Rain A Winter Thought by Colin Gibson, Word and Worship

It's the stuff that keeps falling from the sky when you wish it wouldn't. It's what lashes your face in the wind or beats down on your umbrella (if you have one). It's what the forecaster forecast - widespread or coastal, showers or heavy falls in the ranges - when they want to make you happy that you don't live there. It's the very stuff of winter: drumming on your conservatory roof, pattering against your bedroom windows as you lie there snug and warm. It's what we take delight in grumbling about when it happens, and what we yearn for when it doesn't. When children splash through the puddles and the driver peers to see the road through the swish and swipe of the windscreen wipers. When pastures turn grey with exhaustion and the heat shimmers over the land and the creek bed dries out and the dog is left panting in the shade.

Rain, Blessing or curse? For Maori, the fall of rain is a blessing- as the great and forever cheerful Maori poet Hone Tuwhare once told me as we stood together on the steps of the Dunedin Town Hall after a university ceremony during which he had received his honorary doctorate and watched the rain lashing down on the empty street outside. It was Hone who wrote this poem about rain [or is it about God?]. Let it encourage our grateful reflection as we enter the winter months and prepare services for smaller, grumpier congregations, sloshing inside, stamping their feet on the floor and shaking out the umbrellas.

Rain I can hear you making small holes, in the silence rain.
If I were deaf the pores of my skin would open to you and shut.
And I should know you by the lick of you if I were blind.
The something special smell of you when the sun cakes the ground.
The steady drum - roll sound you make when the wind drops.
But if I should not hear, smell, or feel or see you
You would still define me, disperse me, wash over me.

St. Andrew's Rakaia

Tuesday 30th June

10:30 am Fit Kids

*A note from Miranda – When I moved here to NZ from USA almost 3 years ago now I wasn't sure how I would meet new friends for myself and my children. I was informed about a Music group for children and mum's and I'd have to say I was very nervous going to first time, but I stepped out of my comfort zone and went anyways with my then 20-month daughter, Madi. The amount of support I received, laughter, fun the kids have every time and friendships made that will last a lifetime is amazing. We have been coming ever since, Madi will be going to Rakaia School next year so she will no longer be going anymore but I am happy to lead the group now and will be able to see more friendships formed in future gatherings.

This group is held at St. Andrew's Hall at 10:30 am each Tuesday, the 2nd week in the month is held on a Wednesday. 50 cent Donations appreciated. Lasts for about 45 minutes and we all have a cuppa and morning tea afterwards. Great for new mum's, stay at home mum's, even dad's, grandparents, caretakers to form friendships where we support, dance, and have fun.

1:00 pm Steady As You Go | Balance, strengthening and gentle exercises for senior folk's health and well-being.

Tuesday 14th July

11:30 am Rakaia Friendship Gathering | Dinner and afternoon entertainment
Ashburton Organ Club, skiffle group.. Afternoon tea.

Sunday Services

June			
28 th	9:30 am	St. Andrew's Rakaia	Rev. Neville Burns
	10:00 am	Trinity Mayfield	Rev. Arii Taimataora
	10:30 am	St. John's Methven	Tai Taimataora
July			
5th	10:30 am	St. John's Methven	Rev. John Titlow
		Shared lunch if permitted	

2 Corinthians 12:24 - 26

"But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member,²⁵ that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another.²⁶ If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it."