

**First Myanmar Baptist Church Dedication: A “Full Circle” Missions Story**

The First Myanmar Baptist Church held a dedication service on Sunday, February 5. The CMBA-member church is sponsored by First Baptist Columbia and is meeting in Woodfield Park Baptist Church’s facility. Leaders from across the CMBA and South Carolina Baptist Convention were welcomed at the service, which included about 60 members of the congregation.

“God is bringing the nations to our city, and we are seeking to begin churches in their language so that thousands can hear the gospel in their heart language and come to find life in Jesus,” says Associational Missions Strategist Jamie Rogers.

Myanmar, once called Burma, is a multiethnic and multicultural country located in Southeast Asia. Launched in 2006, First Myanmar Baptist members initially met in a Sunday school room at First Baptist Columbia and engaged members of the Burmese community living in the Midlands. The following year the church called its first pastor, Zawnaw, who served until 2022 when current pastor Thomas Thein was called to lead the 60-member congregation.

“I thank God and First Baptist Church for the ways they have assisted us and for how they’ve cared for members of our church. They have helped and guided us when we have needed it and showed love and kindness. We are blessed and happy, and know it is the right time for our church to become autonomous,” says Pastor Thein, adding that moving forward his church “plans to reach out to Burmese people living in surrounding Columbia area, especially the lost and those that don’t go to church or have lost their way.”

According to First Baptist’s International Minister Ryan Dupree, who has been instrumental in the church’s launch, missions and evangelism have been key elements of its larger story.

“It’s come full circle. First Baptist was a financial contributor for a Baptist missionary named Adoniram Judson who trained under missionary William Carey and who was sent to Burma. Thomas is a spiritual descendent of that missions work in Burma, and now he’s here establishing the first-ever multiethnic Burmese church in Columbia,” Dupree says. “This church is reaching the Burmese community here and back at home, as much as they can. It’s significant.”

Senior Pastor Wes Church is “thrilled” to realize how missions giving that took place several hundred years ago through First Baptist Columbia and funded work in Burma has led to the present-day church plant. He says one of his desires is that “all peoples in the Midlands have access to the gospel, and one of the greatest challenges we have is reaching ethnic communities living here. We want to intentionally help foster outreach and establish churches to reach these communities,” including Vietnamese and Chinese congregations the church is also helping to plant.

For his part, Pastor Thein expressed appreciation for the support his church is receiving while inviting continued cooperation and partnership going forward.

“We are one in Christ as brothers and sisters in the Kingdom of God and for the ministry of God. I appreciate what First Baptist, CMBA, and the South Carolina Baptist Convention have done for us. We feel we are a part of these ministries, that we are a family, and hope to work together here,” he says. “If God is willing, we will spread our faith through those living around the world.”