

2016-17 Annual Report
Khasi Hills Sponsor a Student (SAS) Committee
Submitted by Cathy Doherty and Allen Duncan

Brief Description of the Work of the Committee

The Khasi Hills SAS Committee provides financial support for a Unitarian elementary school in the village of Mawkisyiem in the Khasi Hills, located in northeast India. In addition the program makes possible transformational personal connections between the students there and their sponsors in Ann Arbor. While India has stated a commitment to providing “universal access” to publicly funded primary education, such is not available in many areas, including northeast India. Private schools are necessary to ensure access, and tuition waivers must guarantee the possibility of inclusion in these private schools. Our financial support helps to improve access to education in the region.

Additionally, the SAS program provides a conduit for written correspondence between congregation members and the students of the school. Congregation members (sponsors) provide support in the form of unrestricted contributions and are then assigned to a particular student. The relationship and communication between a particular congregation member and a particular student are maintained throughout the student’s tenure in the school (or the congregation member’s participation in the program).

The committee also organizes occasional pilgrimages to the Khasi Hills. Such trips were made in 2006, 2011 and 2016. The next trip is tentatively scheduled for October of 2021. There is also a possibility that committee members and interested members of the congregation may attend the biennial conference of the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists (ICUU), to be held in northeast India in February, 2018.

Demonstration of UU Core Values

Without elaboration, the committee directs its work to support the following Unitarian Universalist principles:

1. The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
2. Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
3. The goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all;
4. Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are all a part.

Highlights of Activities taking place from May 1, 2016 through April 30, 2017

Representatives of the congregation (and committee) traveled to India in October of 2016 to meet with the Education Committee of the Unitarian Union of Northeast India (UUNEI), to train teachers of schools sponsored by UUNEI, to meet with students and teachers at the Mawkisyiem Lower Primary School, to teach a knitting class (primarily attended by students), and to

participate in other community activities. The travelers used the trip to (among other things) assess the long and short term needs of the UUNEI and Mawkisiyiem Lower Primary School.

Participants in the Committee include Laura Bauman, Cathie Breidenbach, Hal Breidenbach, Mary Ann Camron, Cathy Doherty, Allen Duncan, Janet Duncan, Deborah Golden, Rick Johnson, John Seeley, Hashen Sohtun, and Robert Treadway

Plans for 2017/2018

- Continue support of the Unitarian school at Mawkisiyiem through the sponsorship program
- Tentatively plan to send representatives from our congregation to the ICUU conference in February 2018 (to include a visit to the school in Mawkisiyiem)