



ICP NEWS

International Church of Prague

October 2010

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CHINA MEDICAL PROJECT

For the past three years, ICP has supported a medical project in North-west China. The project leader, Florence, shares her testimony and Job Yan gives some of the history of the project



I am blessed to have grown up in a Christian home and come to a trusting faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Since I was a child, I have aspired to one day serve God as a missionary. After moving here, my parents committed themselves to planting and building up a small house club. On graduating from teacher training college I helped my father to run his small family business. Those were eight difficult years and we had to work very hard to make ends meet. But time and again we experienced the Lord's boundless grace and rich provision. In 2004, I began working

full time in student ministry.

Our region of China is a racially mixed and religiously diverse province with a significant minority of Muslims and Tibetan Buddhists. It is also an economically backward and under-developed area. Many impoverished families struggle to eke out a living in its hostile environment. Apart from the economic hardship and low literacy rate, it is an area plagued with a long

history of broken families, domestic violence, gender discrimination, religious superstitions and infectious diseases. Most of the minority tribes here have adopted a passive and resigned attitude to the condition that they are in, holding out little hope of a better future.

My work seeks to alleviate some of these hardships and to give them a hope and a future. We provide practical means of support for their school-aged children. We have started a scholarship programme to encourage parents to keep their children in school for a longer period.

Three years ago, we initiated a project to supply medicine to a number of schools in the Muslim-dominated areas. It is a practical means of providing basic healthcare to the students, who appreciated this greatly. We are grateful for the generous support from ICP to make this possible.

Through my involvement in the life of the students, many of them and their family members have had the opportunity to hear and respond to the Gospel. In some villages, some of the new believers have started to meet in small groups. I try to join them when I am visiting those areas. However, without trained workers to lead these groups, it will be hard for them to grow in their faith. I pray the Lord may send forth more labourers into the field as partners in the Lord to provide pastoral care for these new believers.

Serving the Lord Jesus Christ over these past seven years has been a tremendous joy and blessing to me. I thank God for His willingness to use me despite my many inadequacies and shortcomings. To Him be the glory!

In Sep 2007, ICP began to support a medical project in one of China's most economically backward provinces. This province is home to a large number of ethnic minorities like Muslims, Tibetans and Mongolians. Poor nutrition, severe winters, and congested dorm rooms, have all contributed to a high incidence of respiratory and gastro-intestinal diseases among the children. The project enables basic medicine to be made available to over 4,000 students in four public schools.

This project seeks to empower China's house clubs by letting them take the lead in implementation, with me as an outsider taking a supportive role by providing technical advice, monetary and prayer support. The project leader, Florence, is a qualified



school teacher also trained in the Way. Together with the student sponsorship programme, which she also administers, the medical project enables her and her co-workers to effectively operate as tentmakers and to facilitate their access into the region's minority communities.

For the three years that I have been associated with the project, I have seen Florence serving both faithfully and diligently. She has established close personal friendships with over a hundred students and many of their family members. Through

regular visits to their school dorm as well as to their home, she and her co-workers have had ample opportunities to share the Good News with them. There have been fruits to their labour.

During vacation times, Florence also arranges for short-term service teams from a number of house clubs in China's major cities to spend one to three weeks in the villages. These teams stay in the students' home and help them with personal tuition. The home-stay programme further consolidates Florence's ties with these families. It is encouraging to see the active participation of China's urban house clubs in this effort to reach out to the minority communities – they not only provide the volunteers, but also the funding for the student sponsorship programme.

Job and Jana Yan

The breathtaking Beijing Olympics, an explosive growth of mega-cities, the development of high-speed commuter trains, mass rural migration – China is a rapidly changing country. We experienced these changes in dramatic and personal ways during our visit to this country.

First glimpse: For two years we had been planning an English camp in North-west China where ICP supports a medical project.

Change: Unfortunately we again learned that due to the lingering political tension we could not organize an English camp there.

God's way is higher than ours: A wonderful opportunity opened up for us to hold the English camp in Beijing; Job was unexpectedly connected to a young married couple who had just opened a community centre to reach out to the poor in a village near Beijing.

Second glimpse: Our plan had been to hold an English camp.

Change: Two weeks before departure the couple told us it would instead be advertised as a 'summer' camp. Although puzzled at the time by this subtle shift in emphasis we later discovered the reason why. Many migrant children go to badly

community – they wondered how learning English could benefit their children.

God's way is higher than ours:

It was a slow, hesitant start but the children fast realized how much fun they could have at the camp. They came every day, arriving punctually with eager looks and bright smiles on their faces – indicative of how much they were enjoying it. It was fantastic to hear them humming the songs they had learnt as they strolled into the centre. On the final day, a grateful grandmother - who had noted the positive changes in her behaviourally-challenged grandson – approached us. She told us that her dream had been for her grandson to break free of the vicious circle of low self-esteem and self-rejection and to enroll in university. We were thrilled to hear this.

We now realize that if our act of compassion had only touched the heart of this boy and his father, it would have been worth all our efforts.

run schools, staffed by unqualified teachers. Advertising it as an 'English' camp would put off children who have a negative experience of 'school'. While middle-class Chinese children are enthused by English, it was especially sad to see the hopelessness and lack of personal aspiration within this migrant

Third glimpse: We had planned for a camp of 50-70 children.

Change: Prior to our departure from Prague we learned that only 20-25 children had signed up - we were somewhat disappointed.

God's way is higher than ours: Twenty-five children turned up on the first day but word of how fun it was



Glimpses of a Changing China

rapidly spread across the village. By day 4 we had to stop taking more children when enrolment reached 45! We now understand the Lord had started us small so that we could more easily iron out the various hiccups and glitches expected in this first camp. How tempting it was for us to play the number game, to equate size with success! A taxi driver who took us back to the hotel one evening refused to accept our fare. He told us his son was at the camp. His boy would come home each evening bubbling with report of the fun things he did at camp that day. The father had never seen his son so fired up about school before. He kept repeating as he drove us to the hotel, "You are doing such a noble thing." We now realize that if our act of compassion had only touched the heart of this boy and his father, it would have been worth all our efforts.

Fourth glimpse: Our plan after the camp had been to take the train to visit a school involved in the medical project.

REFLECTIONS

Kači Yanová

One of my favourite memories of the English Camp in Beijing is of Ping Yi.

Ping Yi, a four year old boy, was the youngest participant of the English camp. He would come to the centre with his two older sisters and loved joining in with the various activities. Although initially he wouldn't speak, as the days went by, he became more and more talkative and excited by what was going on. One day Ali taught him how to throw a ball and it seemed like he could keep throwing it for hours on end! He was so proud of himself each time he caught the ball.

One day we had a difficult craft to do. We were making puppets from a plastic sheet. It required a lot of patience from

the smallest children to wait their turns as they all needed help to put the small parts together. After a while Ping Yi got frustrated and went back to his home downstairs, a grocery shop run by his family. I didn't want him to miss out while the other children would be playing with their puppets, so I finished making the puppet for him. Then I took it down to his home. When I gave the puppet to him, his little eyes lit up and he started running up and down the street, waving it around and showing it to every passerby.

These children have so little in life yet show such joy at a simple puppet made out of plastic sheets. It was a good reminder to be grateful for everything God has given me.



REFLECTIONS

Helena Reid

It was great to see that once again God had gone before us to China to set things in motion and prepare the way for us. It was awesome to know that he was also there every step of the way throughout the trip, strengthening and renewing us to do his work.

It was a joy to work with the kids at the Agape Community Centre and to build relationships with them and the volunteers. To witness the way they progressed in English, learnt more about love and friendships and responded to us was really rewarding. Throughout this trip God taught me to be patient and to see the positive side of every situation, especially when things did not quite go to plan and I am really thankful for this. I also loved working as part of such an energetic and vibrant team of people. I have some very fond memories of this trip and the fun we had and I know I will treasure them for a long time. It was a blessing to be able to be part of the English Camp and to visit such a beautiful country.



UNDERGROUND CHURCH



Trevor Marshall

I am standing in an underground bookshop in a major Chinese city, and I am confused. I grew up reading Brother Andrew - 'God's Smuggler' - thrilled as a young boy by the tales of holy derring do. Brother Andrew was a Dutch Christian who became famous in evangelical circles for smuggling Bibles to churches behind the iron curtain, and later to China, the Arab world and Cuba. As a church youth group we supported financially, and read avidly of the work of Underground Evangelism.



It was, therefore, with a confusing mixture of emotions that I embarked on a trip to China, with a group from our church, to help out a Christian compassion ministry. Twenty years after the fall of the iron curtain it seems that religious tolerance, if not freedom, has spread to all but a few immoderate Islamic states and China, but my visit has forced me to re-evaluate that list and re-examine that judgement. There still has to be caution, but the situation of the church in China is not how I had imagined it.

While I was in the country I visited a church known in the West as an underground church: it was difficult to reconcile this moniker with the large office building that is its base. Downstairs is a community centre, upstairs a fairly conventional non-conformist evangelical meeting room, complete with lectern, PA system, data-projector and (the first time I have seen this in a church) bubble machines - "oh, we use it for weddings" explained my friend. Other 'underground' churches even have a crucifix visible from the street in their buildings.

That members of the church met freely was intriguing enough: that they felt free to wear Christian logos on their t-shirts, crucifixes around their necks, and to hang crucifixes from their rear-view mirrors - even to attach the familiar fish logo to their cars, required a further re-adjustment of my understanding. One pastor I spoke to explained that, even when they met secretly, the authorities knew when and where they met: to meet openly merely served to reduce the suspicion of the authorities. Indeed, when they moved their location from next door to the police station, the police contacted them later to say they missed them.

I believe I was the only one feeling nervous when we prayed openly to give thanks for our food, even when we were eating in a restaurant salon, and the next door salon was full of police officers. None of the Chinese Christians turned a hair.

It would be wrong to think that this is religious freedom: there is still evidence of the restrictions in place. To evangelise is risky, and to do so amongst children especially so, as non-believing parents could easily complain and this would bring probably

serious consequences for the Christians. Similarly, although we met with the Chinese Christians on a weeknight, toured their premises, even conducted training sessions for them, to meet with them to worship on a Sunday would be too hazardous for them - while for us the consequence would merely be an 'invitation' to leave China early.

On the other hand, we were free to attend any of the lively, thriving international churches in the major cities: the only indication of state interference was that we had to produce our passports to prove our status as foreigners: but even here I was surprised that this is self-policed - the authorities allow the churches to control this, and then leave them alone. Otherwise, the service was exactly as we might expect in any similar church in the west.

One pastor I met discussed a dilemma currently faced by the authorities: this year in South Africa the Lausanne

Movement will host their 3rd congress on world evangelisation. This movement was founded at the instigation of Billy Graham, and this year they have invited, not the official Chinese churches, but the house church leaders. The dilemma is this: this movement is unofficial and not sanctioned, but to deny visas would

when [the church] moved... from next door to the police station, the police contacted them later to say they missed them.

bring international criticism, whereas to allow them will give some sort of official approval. At the time of our visit the matter was undecided.

And so I stand in an underground Christian bookshop in China, but how did we find this bookshop? Well, armed with the address in Mandarin we stopped a pedestrian: we were lucky, she spoke English, and looked over her shoulder and pointed at the large blue sign, declaring in Mandarin and English "Christian Bookshop". In many ways, no different from similar establishments the world over, with everything from Bibles (£1 for a locally-printed Mandarin, £30 for a Mandarin/NIV parallel printed in Hong Kong) to communion cups and all the major Christian classics translated into Mandarin. There were some local touches too - bamboo wall hangings with Bible verses, beautiful calligraphy scrollwork printed on silk, leather-

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AGAPE MIGRANT CENTRE

Trevor Marshall



How can I condense 10 days of packed, joyful work in Beijing into a short article? How can I even convey what Beijing was like, let alone the work that was done, the people we met, the children, the smells, the heat - all in a few words?

First of all, God took an idea - or he planted an idea, quite a long time ago - that ICP should send some people to China. We took this idea and planned to go to North-west China, in 2009. This, of course, became impossible: the political tensions around Tibet stopped us going, and in fact there were riots and killings in the neighbouring province at exactly the time we were to have been there. But God had a plan.

So we tried again this year, and Job persisted, even though the chances looked slim, until eventually he realised that the situation had not changed sufficiently for us to run an English camp in the North-west, but that we would at least be able to visit, and perhaps work with some migrant children in Beijing. God was in this plan.

Meanwhile, in Beijing, a young married Christian couple, Joshua and Joann are their western names, opened the Agape Migrant centre in Beijing. They had secured funding, and premises for a year, and they started working with these children and their families. Job came to hear of them via a mutual contact, and it was arranged that we would join with them and run a camp for the children of their migrant village.

And so the ICP - International Club of Prague - English Camp, Beijing 2010 was born. Remarkable. The Agape Migrant Centre did not exist when we first planned it, when God first planted the seeds of interest in the hearts of those who went, but God knew.

He also knew that

the rather exceptional amount of money needed would be faithfully provided by his people - speaking personally, this was the first time I had

Joann stopped me at one point as we discussed ideas and problems: "it's God's work" she said, with such utter simplicity and conviction.

set out on such an adventure with no solid idea about where the money would come from, but God provided. Faithfully. Thank you those of you who responded to the need.

The Agape Migrant centre is in a migrant village in the NE of Beijing. On our first day, after checking in to the hotel, we walked there, and the walk to the migrant village was a journey to another land. 'Village' is misleading - both in terms of size, and in case anything about the word conjures up quaint images. This is a seedy suburb of unmade roads, uncleared rubbish and questionable sewerage systems.

Joshua and Joann. God's people, working in a place where few of us would wish to be. The Migrant Centre where we were based has two rooms with AC - a real blessing in this heat,



and Beijing has been letting us off lightly. But the shared toilet facilities literally take the breath away from twenty paces. On some days during our stay, there was no water - it happens, apparently. No water to flush the misdirected ordure away, nor to wash hands. Joann stopped me at one point as we discussed ideas and problems: "it's God's work" she said, with such utter simplicity and conviction. Pray for them. Although the situation is freer than I expected, there is always the risk of harassment, arrest and trouble-making. They do not know if their funding will continue next year, and there is talk of tearing down the whole village in 2 years or so.

The days of camp are very busy - with little knowledge of the facilities or abilities of the kids before we came, we had to prepare things a day at a time, so although we had a long lunch-break, we generally filled it with



preparing the craft activity for the afternoon. With Ali in charge of craft, we never knew when the idea bubble would spring up, nor what it would contain, but one night saw us cutting out over 600 pieces of thick plastic with cheap scissors, so the children could make puppets from them, and lunchtime next day saw us burning holes (sometimes 2, sometimes 5) with soldering irons in these pieces so they could be joined together, and then attaching split rings. The hotel must have wondered what on earth these crazy westerners were up to in the room. So by the time the kids went home at six, and then we went for a meal, and purchased the things we needed for the next day, it was often past eight when we got back, and then had to start planning for the following



day.

All this in the kind of heat and humidity that most of us are not used to - humidity like I have only experienced in a sauna or swimming pool, where air seems more solid than gas, more H₂O than O.

During the camp we spend the morning working round a theme - who we are, where we live, the clothes we wear, and in the afternoon we engage in craft activities and games: 45 Chinese children and a dozen Chinese adults singing the Hokey-cokey, with no idea what's going on, and a tremendous amount of fun.

And fun, I think, is one of the defining words of this camp: fun for children, many of whom are lone children because of the official policy on one child families, and for whom life might not contain many pleasures. A child who we see defecating on the street (nothing unusual in that) as we walk in one morning, who comes to the centre and has fun, who comes to accept it as a place of enjoyment and safety.

A number of these children are quite troubled - broken homes, absent parents, parents working hard and long hours. One of the joys of the time in Beijing was to share with Joshua and Joann some tips and advice on working with troubled children, and for Helena and Ali to lead a 2-hour training session with Sunday school teachers from the illegal house church movement, on how to make their time with the kids fun and engaging, sincere and relevant.

So was it worth it? What did we achieve? Of the 45 children who came, about half were new to the centre. All of them brought a parent or other relative to the day out to the Natural History museum that we funded, and 20 or so brought a parent to the parents' evening which ended the camp. Joshua and Joann have used this to launch a parents' programme which has just started.

In addition, nearly 20 university students, mainly non-Christian, came and helped with the camp, translating and working with us and the children. One in particular talked with Ali about her faith, and we were able to give her a Bible of her own to read. Pray for the continued contact with



Sarah and with others - Joann was able to explain to them all why we had come all the way from Prague to help in the camp.

We all were convinced that it had been a worthwhile experience, and one that, God-willing, we would want to see happen again, maybe even next year. Please pray: is this God's will? Is this a good use of his resources? Who should go?

UNDERGROUND CHURCH

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bound journals and chop-sticks printed with verses of scripture.

What message would you like to send to the church in the west, I asked one of the pastors I met? Tell, them, he said, tell them to stop thinking of us as the underground church. Tell them that we meet openly in homes and office blocks. As I stand in the sous-terrain, and idly watch the feet of the passers-by, I think how apt this is as the 'underground' church in China moves from hiding into the full light of recognition.



GLIMPSES OF A CHANGING CHINA

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Change: Job had tried to book the train tickets two months earlier, only to be told that they would only be on sale ten days before the journey. But, ten days before the trip when Job went to buy tickets, he found they had all been sold.

God's way is higher

than ours: We didn't know why God had closed that door to us. We prayed to know what we should do. For some time, we found it difficult to

...in all things God works for the good of those who love him...

accept that the Lord would stop us from getting to the North-west when we were already so close. God had other plans! Our extended stay in Beijing enabled us to organize Sunday school teacher training for a house church of about ICP's size. The pastor was so impressed by what he saw at the camp that he wanted his Sunday school teachers to learn from us. This gave us a rare opportunity to have extended fellowship with an established house church in Beijing. We also found time now to help the couple improve the community centre by acquiring and installing some more functional office furniture.

A week later, we learned why we had been prevented from going to North-west China. Just before



our trip, the medical project worker Florence and her entire family had been called up for questioning by the police because of their Christian activities. Our presence in her area at such a sensitive time could have significantly complicated the situation and compromised Florence.

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28)



LAUSANNE CONFERENCE



John Waldrop

As a church, ICP has a vision of being "a radiating centre for the gospel, locally, regionally and globally."

Our connection with China through the Medical project and the recent English Camp is just one example of how we are putting this vision into practice and is symptomatic of the way that the face of modern missions is changing in our increasingly globalised world.

Many people have noted how forces

of globalisation (the world is flat), urbanisation (the world is moving to the cities), and pluralism (the world is represented in cities—large, global cities) have contributed to a seismic shift in the way missions is done. No longer "from the west to the rest," missions is now "from everywhere to everywhere" - and increasingly, from international city to international city. It's amazing to think of reaching Chinese for Christ in Prague - through the Bible study group that Job and Jana lead - and making an eternal difference in the great city of Beijing from the capital city of the Czech Republic! That's the nature of missions today, and goes to the heart of the strategic potential of international churches.

It is this strategic potential, I believe, that has, by God's grace, given me the opportunity to participate in the third Lausanne Congress on World

"a radiating centre for the gospel, locally, regionally and globally"

Evangelization in Cape Town this October 16th-25th. It was a great surprise and honour to receive an invitation to this Congress which is the third of its kind. The first was convened in 1974 by Billy Graham and John Stott and produced the influential Lausanne Covenant.

Lausanne II (in Manila, 1989) produced the Manila Manifesto, and it is hoped that Cape Town 2010 will also produce a

similar document designed to unite and guide the Church in the coming years. Of the six issues of vital interest to the church that will be addressed at the congress, one is my area of focus: "Globalization and the Gospel". Please pray that God will use Lausanne III to bring clarity and impetus to the Church at large—and ICP in particular—as we seek to help fulfill Christ's Great Commission in our globalised world.

International Church of Prague

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