Bringing Forth Truth
Groundbreaking Ceremony for Longquan Middle School Held

The rhythmic music of a brass band and deafening bursts of firecrackers accompanied local officials and church leaders as they stepped side by side through the ankle deep mud of what had been a terraced rice field a few weeks before. They were joined by several dozen students and their teachers, representatives of the Amity Foundation, and a group of international visitors. Surrounded by a crowd of onlookers, they celebrated the groundbreaking ceremony for new and larger school buildings in Longquan, a county level city in the mountainous hinterland of Zhejiang Province.

Yangzhen Middle School is the first and so far only school in socialist China founded and run by a Christian church. Functioning as a lower middle school in the Chinese system, it comprises grades seven through nine and currently enrolls 106 students.

During the ceremony 16 year old Hua Jun, speaking on behalf of the students, expressed his gratitude and enthusiasm for the building project and vowed that students would use the new facilities to study even harder. He spoke with conviction. As a boarded student from a mountain village, he is the first in his family to attend secondary school. Before Yangzhen Middle School was founded in 1985, his chances for a proper school education were practically non-existent. His parents, like most other people in his village, never received more than primary school education.

In the county of 270,000 inhabitants, public middle schools can accommodate only about 65% of all primary school graduates. Children from the mountain vil-

ages usually come up empty-handed. Since teacher qualifications are lower in remote areas, students there also tend to do more poorly on entrance examinations than their urban counterparts. The nationwide introduction of a nine years compulsory education in the mid-eighties could not remedy the situation, since in the course of this same reform policy the central government decentralized responsibility for school education, relegating it to city and county levels. With 95% of the education budget eaten up by salaries, the government of Longquan County had no way to expand its school program and even failed to meet the required minimum level.

The situation was improved through the initiative of some local citizens who felt responsible for the youth of their community and did not wait passively for government bureaucrats to solve the problem. Guo Fuwu, an experienced Christian and retired school teacher, grew up in Longquan, where he received his
The new school was established in the premises of the church, the location of the former mission school. The name also is the same: Yangzhen, "Bring Forth Truth." Despite all the changes, the old Christian-inspired dedication to the young and the community's welfare survived. In the new Yangzhen Middle School, the old Yangzhen Missionary School has borne late fruit through those who were shaped by it in their childhood: Having received, they also serve.

The school organizers did not begin with building projects or an extensive bureaucratic structure. Everything was rather improvised. The church furnished classrooms and dormitories; retired teachers, many of them Christians, volunteered; others helped with cooking and cleaning. Fifty students were quickly enrolled for the first class. The government welcomed and supported the initiative, and a nearby public school gave whatever assistance it could, giving Yangzhen Middle School the use of its sports facilities and science classrooms, and encouraging its own teachers to help out at Yangzhen on a voluntary basis.

Yangzhen follows the state education curriculum for public schools. What makes Yangzhen special, however, is the dedication of both the teachers and students, and this may be attributed to the Christian and pioneering spirit which shapes the entire undertaking. Within five years of its founding, the school proved itself better than most: Out of its 40 graduates in 1990, more than 20 passed the entrance examination for upper middle school. The usual rate is only about 40%.

However, the school's facilities are spartan. Classrooms are so narrow and cramped that the air quickly turns stuffy, and it is stifling hot in the summer. Dormitory space allows only two square meters per student, and the boys have to wash outside in the church yard. In the absence of larger meeting rooms, students have meals in their classrooms, and the church sanctuary serves as the school's assembly hall, and of course, moving classes over to the public school for each science and sports lesson can only be a temporary solution.

Plans for expansion got underway once the school, through the Provincial Christian Council, contacted the Amity Foundation. In cooperation with the local church, and the city and county governments, Amity and the school board designed a project for the construction of new premises. Whereas the school originally had
very ambitious plans whose implementation would have cost US$270,000, Amity reduced projected costs to US$110,000, adjusting size and equipment to the local context. The new building will have six classrooms for 300 students, labs for science classes, a library and a canteen. Sufficient dormitory space and a sports ground will also be provided. Amity has donated the cost of construction and equipment, whereas the county government has purchased the land and pledged to cover salaries and housing costs for the additional teachers needed. Amity's contribution has now been fully funded by churches and NGOs in Sweden, Germany and the Netherlands.

At the groundbreaking ceremony, Amity's Associate General Secretary, Gu Renfa, reminded the audience of why the Amity Foundation had responded to the school's financial request: "Yangzhen Middle School is genuinely a people's initiative, which started from the grassroots and has been self-reliant as far as possible. It is a noble example of Chinese Christians serving the broader society. In all of this, city and county government have played a constructive and supportive role. This is the kind of situation Amity prefers to become involved in."

The new school building is scheduled to be ready in the fall of this year (1991). Our hope is that Yangzhen Middle School will help many young people develop their talents, and serve as an example for the future development of China’s grassroots education.

Emergency Appeal for Flood Relief

11 July, 1991. The Amity Foundation is seeking US$150,000 for flood relief and rehabilitation, as China is facing the worst floods in this century. Caused by extraordinarily long and heavy rainfalls, the floods have killed almost 1,270 people so far, inflicted billions of dollars in economic losses, and damaged vast areas of farmland. Jiangsu, Amity's home province, where most of its projects are located, is one of the hardest hit areas. In this province alone the number of flood victims has mounted to nearly five million. Several hundred thousand houses were destroyed and thousands of factories had to be closed. Water levels of rivers and lakes are critically high, as meteorologists warn of more heavy rain to fall in July and August.

The Chinese Government has responded immediately with rescue and relief operations. Some 12 million soldiers and civilians were mobilized to fight floods in eastern China. 700,000 tons of grain and other supplies were sent to victims in Jiangsu and Anhui provinces.

For immediate relief assistance, Amity has earmarked RMB500,000 (US$95,000) for Jiangsu and RMB250,000 (US$48,000) for Anhui out of its deposit funds. Relief projects will be specified soon. Donations should be sent to Amity's bank account in Nanjing (see box), designated "emergency assistance for Jiangsu floods."
Cooperation for Humanitarian Goals
How Amity Relates to the People’s Government
An Interview with Han Wenzao,
General Secretary of the Amity Foundation

Q: Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are quite uncommon in China. How was the Amity Foundation established as an NGO?

A: Non-governmental organizations are a new phenomenon in China. The establishment of the Amity Foundation in 1985 was made possible through the Chinese government’s reform policy, a policy which promotes decentralization, encourages private initiative and emphasizes the importance of opening up to the outside world. For a long time, we Chinese Christians had been discussing our hope to contribute to the development of the Chinese people. This environment of reform then gave us the opportunity to become actively involved. When Amity was established in 1985, it was the natural result of both our long-standing hopes and the new political climate. Amity’s involvement in society has been an important way to make our Christian presence known in the broader society.

Q: How does Amity relate to different levels of the Chinese government?

A: Our context in Chinese society is socialism. Amity needs to relate to the government in order to get things done well and effectively. In educational projects we relate to the Provincial Education Commissions, in health projects we relate to government health bureaus, and so on.

Q: But in a socialist society aren’t all necessary social services provided by the government?

A: I don’t think the government can handle all the social welfare and development programs that are needed. The authorities establish an administrative framework and general guidelines. They do in fact have many social programs, and have had considerable success. But as relations with this organization are very important for us, I’d like to add that the UFWD functions as a kind of back up for us. In many simple ways official assistance is essential. Their help is especially needed in administrative matters, such as customs clearance, the obtaining of passports, facility or equipment purchases and so on.

Q: Has there been any change in the work of the Amity Foundation over the past two years?

A: Not in terms of our goals and relational structures. But there have been changes in terms of our growth and progress. We were able to increase the number of projects, especially in the field of rural development. For instance, once we had started to sink deep wells, we received many more requests. New irrigation projects or the construction of small hydroelectric stations have helped many rural communities at the grassroots level.

Our medical work increasingly focuses on basic health care and channels support to remote areas. Two years ago we started the training of doctors and medical personnel from Qinghai province in the sparsely populated northwest. Now we have expanded this kind of commitment to other provinces, namely Sichuan, Gansu and Guizhou. We are presently considering new training classes in other areas as we receive requests.

As you know, needs are desperately great. Amity’s projects will therefore continue to expand quite rapidly.
Q: Does Amity make its own decisions about projects and project criteria or must they be referred to a government decision making body?

A: We formulate our own criteria, and we do our own project screening before we grant support. Our staff go to project sites to make investigations, and we get first hand information. We revise project proposals in a consultation process with local people. We follow through with monitoring the projects. These are our procedures, carried out by ourselves. But of course where a local government body is involved in a project, we include its representatives in our discussion process. This has been the case for instance in our well sinking projects, where we put in seed money and the local government contributes land, labor and infrastructure. But that does not mean we are under government control. No, our style of cooperation is entirely different.

Q: So, in general, would you say that Amity has the initiative to make its own decisions about projects and programs?

A: Yes, that is correct. We are free to do so. Let me add that we are also independent in selecting and hiring our staff.

Q: In your opinion what should be the purpose and nature of cooperation between Amity and government bodies in China?

A: We are willing to cooperate with any government organization which conforms to our criteria. Our main purpose is meeting humanitarian needs; we welcome any government support which is conducive to this end. As long as the government ensures religious freedom and effectively serves the people we have no reason not to be cooperative.

Q: Is Amity free to receive donations from overseas and to use the donations as Amity sees fit?

A: Yes. We have been receiving donations from overseas for six years already, and we spend the money as we think appropriate.

Q: And is there any government requirement concerning how these donations must be used?

A: The only requirement is that we operate according to the regulation on foundations, formulated in the year 1988, issued in order to legalize the activities of non-profit organizations and guard against corruption.

Q: What about financial accountability for the Amity Foundation?

A: When talking about financial accountability, I would say that we are accountable only to our donors, not to the government. We have invited our own auditors to audit our accounts. So, in a sense, we are also accountable to our auditors and to ourselves.

New Project Proposals Published

The Amity Foundation has sent out project proposals for 1991/1992. For 16 new projects in the areas of rural development, social welfare and health work, Amity is seeking over RMB2.2 million (US$420,000).

Projects range from the construction of a local hydropower station to the rehabilitation of polio victims and from the training of rural medical workers to the establishment of a drainage system for villagers. Copies of the Project Proposals 1991/1992 are available from Amity’s Overseas Coordination Office.

"Donations from abroad in kind or cash are tax exempt and must be transmitted to the receiving foundation without deductions. The foundation has the right to use them for funding purposes and shall transfer them free of compensation to institutions or individuals in line with the purposes stated by the foundation. Received donations must not be offered for sale."

Translation from Article 10 of the Regulation on the Administration of Foundations, issued by the State Council on 9 September, 1988.
From Nomad Tents to City Hospitals
Qinghai Doctors Train in Nanjing

It was a winter afternoon, with the penetrating chill typical of Nanjing. But the meeting-hall was warmed by a gathering of 80 people. A ball was passed from hand to hand as a drum beat out the rhythm. Suddenly, the drum stopped and the ball came to rest in the hands of a stout, middle-aged woman with big eyes and dark skin. At a glance, one could tell she was Tibetan.

"Qie Zhong, sing a song," cheered the rest of the group, her classmates.

She stood up, a bit shy, her face flushed. But as soon as she started to sing, everyone quieted down. Loud and sonorous, her voice was typical of Tibetans from the vast grasslands of Western China's plateaus. The folk song carried people's minds far away to the wide open prairie.

The occasion was a New Year's party for the Qinghai medical workers who were being trained in Nanjing, together with their teachers and Amity's staff.

Qie Zhong was one of 38 women doctors enrolled in the 1990-1991 session of the intensive obstetrics and gynecology training program at Nanjing Medical College. The program represents one of three ways in which the Amity Foundation supports primary health care in remote, often minority-inhabited, areas in Qinghai Province.

Braving hardships with a smile: trainees from Qinghai in Nanjing

Besides the training course at Nanjing Medical College, Amity offers internship training to surgeons and general physicians who have already received college-level medical training. Nine doctors are currently enrolled in an internship program at Jiangsu Provincial People's Hospital and another five at Drum Tower Hospital.

The third way in which Amity supports primary health care in Qinghai involves half-year training programs for rural medical workers held in Xining, the capital of Qinghai Province. The training at this level is carried out in a variety of areas such as ophthalmology, plague prevention and treatment, lab work, and primary health care.

Situated in the northwestern part of China, Qinghai is a remote and underdeveloped province. A great part of the province consists of grasslands inhabited by nomads from different ethnic minorities. Due to the scarcity of medical services, peasants and herdsmen often suffer and even die of diseases that could be easily treated in big cities.

"The hospitals, especially those in pastoral areas, are very poorly equipped and are very few in number considering the sheer size of the area. As a result, there is a high death rate of women in labor," said one of the obstetricians.

The nomad women, by custom, give birth on dried cow dung in order not to dirty the bed. And right after a baby is born, the mother often has to move on with the herds, riding on horseback.

"You know, as the herdsmen are scattered all over the prairie," another doctor added, "to visit women patients we have to go on horseback for hours. We take great pains to persuade pregnant women to have regular checkups. More problems arise when, after an illness is diagnosed, we find ourselves lacking proper facilities to perform the needed operations."

The 38 doctors attending the one-year training program at Nanjing Medical College are from seven different ethnic groups: Han, Bai, Hui, Tu, Sala, Mongolian and Tibetan. Most of them work in local hospitals spread throughout the vast grasslands, often days away by bus or by horse from Xining, the provincial capital.

Qie Zhong is from a county hospital in Yushu, a Tibetan inhabited area in southern Qinghai. It took her 11 days to travel from her hospital to Nanjing on the east coast.

Dr. Zhao Xinwei is now doing his internship at the Internal Medicine Department of the People's Hospital. "Since graduation in 1984," he said, "I have always worked in a small hospital and never had an opportunity to deal with many of the complicated diseases, let alone use advanced medical equipment. But here in this big hospital, with the help of my more experienced colleagues, I can diagnose and treat nearly all..."
of the problems we see. I'm sure I'll make good use of what I've learned this year."

It would be hard to estimate how much effort the trainees have put into their work. Ma Jie, a Tibetan obstetrician/gynecologist, comes from a county hospital. Her teacher, Doctor Zhang, is not satisfied with her performance in class and refers to her as "a product of the Cultural Revolution."

There is truth in this remark. Born into a poor herdsman's family, Ma was still illiterate in 1966 when she was 16. That year the Cultural Revolution broke out and she was permitted to go to medical school because of her "good family background."

"Actually," Ma admitted, "I didn't understand anything in class at that time. It was then she began to learn Chinese characters. The very words she started with were "men" and "women" in order to use the lavatories. She did not learn much during her school days since all her efforts went into learning the Chinese language. Despite all of this, she was promoted quickly after graduation and is now head of the obstetrics and gynecology department in her hospital, where few people have any training at all.

"It's ridiculous," Ma said, "I know I am not qualified and now at age 40, I find it very hard to study. But back in my county, in Qinghai, doctors are badly needed. Everyone back home is expecting me to do more for them after I return; many came to see me off for Nanjing. I'll try my best to learn as much as I can."

The two major problems that doctors face during their year of training are Nanjing's climate and the local food. Many of these doctors are Muslims or come from Muslim families. Their bodies react strongly to anything smelling of pork, even the utensils in the kitchen.

Shortly after classes began, two trainees had to return to Qinghai with dietary problems. One is from the Sala minority and the other is a Hui. Both are Muslims. Those who stayed have to struggle with this difficulty constantly. One of them is Liu Wenzhong, a surgeon from the Hui minority who is the monitor of the doctors' internship group at Drum Tower Hospital.

Rubbing his hands, he complained about the cold: "I didn't expect such cold weather in Nanjing and I haven't brought my heavy clothes with me. I thought 'Nanjing' meant southern capital and that it would be much warmer."

Yes, Nanjing is in the south. But the temperature may easily drop below zero in winter, while houses, by regulation, are not heated south of the Huai River. "It's horrible. Inside it is just as cold as outside," said one of Zhao's colleagues who was dancing around to fight off the cold. In order to keep themselves warm, many go to bed early in the evenings and do their reading in bed, under heavy quilts and blankets.

On top of everything, these doctors from Qinghai miss their loved ones back home, children, husbands or wives. But if life has been hard for them, they do not let things get them down. In their crowded dorms, eight to a room of bunk beds, they still manage to enjoy life.

Amity will continue these kinds of training programs. But beginning in the fall of 1991, the trainees will not only be selected from Qinghai, but also from remote areas in Sichuan and Gansu, areas which are also inhabited by ethnic minorities. Tentatively, Amity will receive 20 G/O doctors from Sichuan, 20 from Gansu and five from Qinghai. In addition, the internship program will bring 20 physicians and surgeons to Nanjing, whereas four six-month training courses will be held in Xining, the capital of Qinghai."

Yu Xiaomin

Ms. Yu has been on the Amity staff since 1990 and works in the Medical and Health Division.
Amity Extends Its Work to Tibet

In April 1991, the Amity Foundation sent its first delegation to Tibet. Headed by Li Enlin, a team from Amity's Medical and Health Division spent three days in Lhasa, capital of the Tibetan Autonomous Region, to explore possibilities for cooperation with local hospitals in the prevention and treatment of blindness. Tibet is one of the few regions in China not yet included in Amity's scheme for the ophthalmological training of rural doctors.

Li was accompanied by Dr. Norval Christy, a medical consultant for the Christian Blind Mission (CBM). At the age of 69, Dr. Christy spends several months each year traveling with Amity staff and giving lectures and demonstration operations in various areas of rural China. Also on the delegation were Dorothy Christy, Norval's wife who is a highly qualified nurse, and Kurt Bangert, CBM representative for East Asia.

The Amity delegation met officials from the Tibetan Health Bureau and visited the Lhasa People's Hospital, the largest hospital in Tibet, where they held in-depth talks with the hospital director and the head of the eye department.

Asked about the outcome of the trip, Bangert explained: "We found medical standards in Lhasa insufficient to initiate eye programs. Instead, we invited authorities in Tibet to send doctors to our training courses in Xining (Qinghai Province) and Chengdu (Sichuan Province). These courses include the diagnosis of common eye diseases and the surgical removal of cataracts. We hope that this alternative serves as a way of promoting eye care in Tibet."

Before the Amity team arrived in Lhasa, they visited Hunan, Guanzxi and Sichuan Provinces, where Dr. Christy held several seminars. Their last stop was Xining, capital of Qinghai Province, where they attended the opening of another six-month training course sponsored by Amity/CBM.

An earlier course of this kind was held from August 1990 to January 1991. Twenty-three doctors from county hospitals all over Qinghai Province were taught by eye specialists from Xining as well as an additional expert sent by Amity from another region in China. For one week, the teaching team was joined by an American ophthalmologist.

After three months of theoretical classes, the trainees practiced cataract surgery on rabbits and observed operations in city hospitals. For the final two weeks, they operated under supervision in nearby county hospitals.

Total costs of the six-month program amounted to RMB45,000, two-thirds of which was contributed through Amity by CBM, with the remainder provided by the Provincial Health Bureau. In addition, CBM equipped trainees with ophthalmoscopes, tonometers, and surgical kits.

Ophthalmological courses in Xining are only one way for the Amity Foundation to support basic health care in Qinghai Province. Amity also invites doctors from Qinghai to gynecological training courses at the Nanjing Medical College and to internship programs at different hospitals in Nanjing (see "From Nomad Tents to City Hospitals" in this issue).

The Amity Foundation was created at the initiative of Chinese Christians for the purpose of promoting health, education and welfare in the People's Republic of China. It is an independent Chinese voluntary organization in which people from all walks of life may participate. Amity represents a new form of Chinese Christian involvement in society, through which Chinese Christians are joining hands with friends from around the world to serve the needs of China's modernization.

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