Meeting Needs In Changing China:
An Introduction to the Amity Teachers Program

Currently the Amity Teachers Program has 67 teachers working in China. Of these, approximately 85% are teaching English in various kinds of teacher training colleges, mostly in province level cities where there are few, if any, other foreigners. Of the remaining Amity teachers, some are teachers of German and Japanese who work to ensure that China's foreign language education is not confined to English alone. Others teach in special schools such as Lan'an Women's College, a college descended from an old mission school which is one of China's few private schools and also one of the few which specializes in education for women.

The early years

The Amity Teachers Program has evolved considerably since its beginning in 1985. Initially the Teachers Program was an attempt to help China modernize. For more than a decade China had turned its back on the outside world, and consequently devoted relatively little attention to foreign language education. However, as China drove toward modernization during the 1980s it faced a dramatically increased need for people who knew foreign languages, especially English. Not only was there a scarcity of professionals who possessed the foreign language skills that would enable them to study abroad, read foreign publications, conduct business so many students. (Many of those language teachers who had been trained in the 1960s and 1970s had learned using traditional grammar-translation methods, and while they were skilled at explaining grammar rules in Chinese and preparing students for written tests, far too many of them had only limited ability to actually speak the languages they taught.)

Thus, during the 1980s, the focus of the Teachers Program was on providing foreign teachers to help meet China's enormous need for language instructors. Most Amity teachers in these years were placed in major cities such as Nanjing, Hangzhou, and Fuzhou, and taught in major technical universities. Amity teachers helped fill a gap by ensuring that universities which otherwise would not have had foreign teachers were able to give their students an opportunity to develop conversational and writing skills, to interact with people from another culture, and perhaps most importantly to experience using English, German, or Japanese communicatively.
The presence of Amity teachers in these schools not only provided speaking practice opportunities and new approaches to language teaching; but also a vitally important boost to students' confidence and interest that resulted from having the chance to use a foreign language in interaction with "real" foreigners.

Narrowing the rural-urban gap

By the early 1990s the situation in China had changed. The economy of China's urban areas, especially the cities of the eastern coast where Amity teachers were concentrated, was growing steadily, and most four-year universities in major cities were able to locate and pay foreign teachers on their own without assistance from Amity. However, one consequence of China's economic development was growing disparity between wealthier and poorer areas of China, a disparity reflected in divergent access to quality education. City students had access to better schools and teachers, hence a distinct advantage over their rural counterparts in competition for scarce opportunities for university education.

This problem was exacerbated by the growing importance of English, a required subject on entrance examinations for both senior middle school and university. Because urban schools, especially urban "key" schools, were better able to recruit and retain qualified teachers of English, students in these schools had a much better chance of success on entrance examinations. Over the last few years, this disparity has been further aggravated by the introduction of a new English language curriculum in middle schools which emphasizes speaking and listening skills more than the older curriculum did. This curriculum is generally considered an improvement over the previous one, but it has also put rural and non-key schools at an even greater disadvantage because English teachers in these schools often cannot themselves speak or understand English very well, hence find it very difficult to meet the demands of the new curriculum.

In response to this problem, in the early 1990s Amity began to place most Amity teachers in small teacher training colleges in prefectoral cities, the colleges which send their graduates to China's regular (non-elite) junior middle schools. These colleges are generally underfunded, hence find it difficult to afford foreign teachers without assistance from Amity, and they generally also have few avenues for locating and recruiting foreign teachers. By placing foreign teachers in such colleges, Amity enables them to train future English teachers who are able to speak and understand English as well as to explain its grammar. Perhaps more important, the presence of Amity teachers helps build confidence and professional pride among students who graduate from these colleges. Because of their regular experience interacting with Amity teachers, graduates know that they can really communicate successfully in English.

Unique features of the Program

The Amity Teachers Program is unusual in the degree to which it has consciously made use of language education as a tool for promoting economic development through enhancing equal access to educational opportunity. The Program consciously places foreign language teachers in schools where they serve a segment of society which is disadvantaged in its access to education because of poor English training; thereby it attempts to give more students outside the urban key schools the opportunity to compete for places in senior middle schools and universities. Rural students who compete successfully benefit not only themselves, but also their families and communities. In a society where power and resource often flow along lines of personal relationships, communities which do not have ties to people in government or business are disproportionately disadvantaged. Advancement to higher positions in society is heavily dependent on education, so by giving rural students a better chance to compete on the English portions of the examinations which determine who does and does not move up the ladder of education achievement, Amity makes a direct contribution to ensuring equality of access to educational opportunity.

A second unique feature of the Teachers Program is that it is a project sponsored and administered by a Chinese organization. Amity's ability to identify and address pressing needs in Chinese society is based in large part on the fact that Amity itself is Chinese, and partnership with Amity allows foreign agencies to contribute to endeavors which are guided by greater insight into Chinese society than would be possible if goals, agendas, and methods were set outside China. By working through Amity, partners also identify themselves with the aspirations of the Christian church in China. This allows teachers to aid China's social and economic development in a context which makes their contribution a part of the work of the church.

A final distinguishing mark of the Teachers Program is its international ecumenical nature. Over the years, teachers have come from more than a dozen nations, and from a great variety of denominational backgrounds. The ecumenical breadth of the Teachers Program is also quite amazing; teachers come both from churches which are part of the organized ecumenical movement and those that are not. As such, the Teachers Program is an important witness to the universality of the church.
SNAPSHOTS OF THE AMITY TEACHERS PROGRAM

Teacher Placements

-1985: 1st year. 22 teachers were placed in 2 provinces, Jiangsu and Fujian. More than half the teachers were in one city (Nanjing), and the majority taught in four-year universities. 3 Amity teachers worked in teacher training colleges.

-1990: 5th year. 74 teachers were placed in 18 cities in 8 provinces (Jiangsu, Fujian, Zhejiang, Jiangxi, Shandong, Hebei, Anhui, and Shanghai). Most still worked in four-year universities in large cities, with 19 in Nanjing alone. 23 (roughly a third) of the teachers worked in teacher training colleges.

-1995: 10th year. 81 teachers worked in the same 8 provinces as in 1990, but spread out over 32 cities. Only 7 teachers were placed in Nanjing. By now the typical Amity placement was in a prefectural level city (53 teachers) working in a teacher training college (39).

-Today: 12th year. 67 teachers are spread out over 30 cities and the great majority (56) work in teacher training colleges.

Ecumenism in Practice

Since 1985, the Teachers Program has had teachers from various denominational backgrounds in 14 countries, giving an idea of how broadly ecumenical the Teachers Program is:

-Australia: Anglican, Uniting Church Belgium: Catholic Canada: Anglican, Mennonite, Lutheran (Missouri Synod), United Church. Denmark: Pentecostal Finland: Evangelical Lutheran Germany: Free Charismatic, Lutheran, United Methodist Holland: Reformed, Society of Friends Japan: Anglican, United Church of Christ New Zealand: Presbyterian Norway: Lutheran Philippines: Catholic Sweden: Baptist, Catholic, Church of Sweden, Lutheran, Mission Covenant, Pentecostal United Kingdom: Anglican, Baptist, Church of Ireland, Church of Scotland, Pentecostal, Presbyterian (N. Ireland), Salvation Army, Society of Friends United States: American Baptist, Catholic, Cooperative Baptist, Disciples of Christ, Episcopal, Evangelical Lutheran, Lutheran (Missouri Synod), Mennonite, United Methodist, Presbyterian, Reformed Church, Society of Friends, Southern Baptist, United Church of Christ

» Partner agencies have included: Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (USA), Danish Missionary Society, Dienst Over Grenzen (Holland), Evangelisches Missionswerk in Deutschland (Germany), Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission, Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (USA), National Council of Churches Japan, National Council of Churches USA, Norwegian Missionary Society, Presbyterian Churches of Aotearoa New Zealand, Southern Baptist Convention (USA), Swedish Mission Council, United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia (USA), United Church of Canada, and Uniting Church of Australia »

New Amity teachers meet farmers in Xuyi County, Jiangsu
Making A Difference In China’s Countryside:
The Teachers Program in its 12th Year

We tend to overlook the impact and significance of what we see as natural, as routine and as part of daily life. The Amity Foundation’s Teachers Program is a case in point. One of Amity’s oldest projects, the Teachers Program seems to have long lost its novelty. Every year teachers come and go rather quietly. On the part of Amity, we realize that the effectiveness of the Teachers Program is indeed hard to measure numerically. We have had over 1,000 teacher-years. These teachers have taught at least 10,000 students. Yes, but so what? Figures do not say much.

Developing rural areas

One important point of significance, a point not easily seen, lies in the role Amity teachers have played in the development of China’s rural areas. Last summer I visited a relatively poor and isolated county in Huaiyin, northern Jiangsu, and was told that now all regular English teachers (“regular” meaning on government payrolls) in that county’s high schools had graduated from Huaiyin Teachers College. This means that they had all been taught by the Amity teachers there. These schoolteachers are now not only able to teach the entire English curriculum, but also to finish it several months in advance so that pupils have some time to review lessons and prepare for the college entrance examinations.

The host told me this matter-of-factly as if it was a routine thing of little significance, but as I was listening to him, I could not help recalling the situation in the early 1980s. In those days most high school English teachers in that county were themselves only recent high school graduates with a little bit of additional training in English. They could not meet the requirements of the curriculum, so by the time students left senior high, they had only completed the three junior high textbooks. The students, if they studied at all, never studied hard because they knew that, having come from a poor village and learned so little English, they would always fail the college entrance examinations. There were even talks about merging senior high programs in the county because the enrollment was low. Today, even if we are critical of the tradition of rote learning, which is still widely practised in the classroom, the fact that students are willing to spend time committing facts to memory and that teachers are working them hard shows the marked improvement in the morale of both the teachers and students.

I was even more impressed when I reached the village. There, I saw a schoolteacher scolding a young man by saying, "You don't have the faintest idea how much work we teachers have put into you." The young man had just barely passed the college entrance examination and had been assigned to a relatively undesirable school where there were vacancies in the enrollment. However, unhappy with the failure to enter a college he had signed up for, he decided not to go this year but to try again next year, like some of his village playmates who were now in colleges they had chosen for themselves. I stood there, totally amazed. Up until the early 1990s, no one from this village had ever entered college, with the only exception of two brothers who had managed to enter a vocational school and were now working as leaders of other towns. I was sympathetic with the schoolteacher but also cherish the fact that these village kids could now have some choice and could expect to receive higher education.

Opening the doors to college education

It is not an exaggeration to claim that Amity teachers have had a role in these village kids’ success in entering college. High school children have to overcome two hurdles to become college students: senior high and college entrance examinations. The higher educa-

Those who will benefit: rural middle-school students

This is hardly surprising if we examine the situation in rural middle schools. It still happens that some schools in the countryside have no English teachers and thus do not offer English, or do not offer it to all grades, or do not complete all the textbooks. Some schools can only offer English
nours a week instead of 5 as required in the curriculum. Small wonder that when village high school graduates enter the testing room, they are already at a great disadvantage.

A life-shaping experience

Most Amity teachers teach in small prefectoral and provincial teachers colleges that directly serve the local educational development. The Teachers Program helps narrow the gap. It helps educate teachers who will directly work with children from the countryside. In such areas as Huaiyin, Nantong and Jiujiang, where Amity started to send teachers in the 1980s, almost all children in the country are learning English from teachers who were at one time taught by Amity teachers. Several times when I have run cross some of these rural middle school English teachers, they excitedly mention the names of their former teachers: Margaret, Everett, Enrika, Ban, Lisa, Bo, Stan and Norma. Many of these Amity teachers left China a long time ago, some to lead a quiet retired life, except for their students, few would remember their names. Yet their work made a difference. As these areas develop, kids go to college and people there leave behind poverty. Our teachers have played a part in this.

The second point of significance of the Teachers Program is the growth of teachers themselves as they participate in the growth of their students. This is also difficult to measure quantitatively. In coming to China to serve the educational needs of people in the countryside, Amity teachers forego much of the life they are used to, lot to mention being separated from their friends and family back at home. In committing themselves to the work in China, they do not think much of personal gain, since there are hardly any such gains they could possibly think of. Rather, what they put above all else is what they can do for the people in such a Third World country as China.

They are living out a value which many others only cherish verbally. It would be hard to overestimate how spiritually enriching this experience is. "I came to make my students different, but now I am leaving as a different person," said one teacher. "For the rest of my life, I will not get China out of my mind." Many others claim that the Amity experience has tempered and confirmed their belief in the meaning of life. Wherever they live and whatever life they lead, they will think of Chinese students, of colleagues and their families. What these Amity teachers gain is spiritual wealth.

For the very young among the teachers, the experience of teaching in China helps them to plan a meaningful life for their future. This goes much deeper than merely career preparation. Working with a Third World people, in fact, does not give them graduate course credits, nor does it bring them any income. Yet, "it is life-shaping," as one teacher put it. They may acquire a new perspective. Many young teachers, upon return, choose to go into fields of teaching, social work and ministerial work. In designing their own lives, they come to show more concern for other lives. It always amazes people that upon returning from one of the world's most secular societies, some of these teachers would choose to enroll themselves in a seminary.

Teachers are ambassadors

A third point of significance of the Teachers Program lies in the program's role in bringing people together. It promotes people-to-people friendship and understanding, and Amity teachers serve as ambassadors.

Most Chinese students know very little indeed about the world outside China. Likewise, people outside may know very little about happenings inside China. Only through living and working togeth-

Ting Yen-Ren
No Longer Strangers:
Amity Teachers and Churches in China

Dedicated to promoting knowledge and understanding, the Amity Teachers Program not only encourages educational and social development in China, it also encourages the development of stronger relations between the church of China and the global Christian community. During the course of their two-year commitment, Amity teachers have an opportunity to experience sustained fellowship in a Chinese church, and to translate that first-hand experience into educational opportunities for friends throughout the world.

Sharing a common faith

From the outset, many Amity teachers have a better-than-average knowledge of both the history and current situation of Christianity in China. Sending organizations provide background information for the teachers in their own countries, and when the teachers arrive in China, Amity provides a detailed orientation in the form of both up-to-date reports and face-to-face dialogues with Chinese church leaders. As a result, Amity teachers understand and respect the Three-Self principles of Chinese churches, and they seek to relate to their local churches in ways that are consistent with that attitude of respect.

At the most basic level, this is expressed through the simple medium of “presence.” Some foreigners find it difficult to give up habits of “doing” or “leading,” but experience has taught most Amity teachers that simply “being” with Chinese Christians in the act of worship and fellowship lays the strongest foundation for a healthy relationship with the local church. Simple gifts of presence such as regular attendance, warm encouraging smiles, or squeezing a hand when it is offered all go a surprisingly long way toward building a lasting atmosphere of mutual trust.

In the more remote areas of China where many Amity teachers are placed, there may be little or no history of contact between foreigners and local residents. Local Christians may be somewhat wary of the sudden appearance of a stranger -- especially one with whom they cannot communicate -- and, in the beginning, the teachers themselves have little experience or understanding to help bridge the gap. Sitting side by side on hard wooden benches through wilting summer heat and bone-chilling winter cold allows both the Amity teachers and the local Chinese to discover what they truly share -- an abiding faith in the same Lord, a common need for fellowship and corporate worship, and a commitment to letting their very lives be a witness of their love and obedience.

Once a relationship is established, the churches sometimes seek ways to make worship more accessible to their foreign friends. Some Amity teachers report that their churches post the scripture passages in English as well as Chinese, making it easier for them to follow along. Even Amity teachers who are relatively fluent in standard Chinese may have difficulty following a service conducted in the local dialect. In at least one church, an elderly, but educated brother thoughtfully volunteered to translate the sermons from the local dialect into putonghua (standard Chinese).

Praise through music is a special love that Christians share throughout the world, and some churches have invited Amity teachers to share their musical talents publicly. Mary Elizabeth Ray (Xuzhou) and Greg Dahl (Ningbo) are just two examples of Amity teachers who have become regular members of the choir in their local churches. Special occasions such as Christmas or Easter also provide opportunities for foreign friends to share a hymn in their own language or, in some cases, to perform a hymn in Chinese.

Singing along

This love for music can also prove to be a frustration, however, when teachers begin to feel limited by their language ability. Some sing along in their own languages if the hymn tunes are familiar, but for hymns of Chinese origin, the Amity teachers have often had no choice but to stand and listen in silence. In response to this problem, two Amity teachers began an innovative project with local Chinese Christians that has resulted in the recent publication of the Chinese hymnal in both pinyin (Romanized Chinese) and Chinese characters.

In 1991, Amity veterans Stan and Norma Foskett began to ask friends at their local church for help in transcribing hymns into pinyin. Though they were studying Chinese characters, they longed to sing and found the pinyin to be more immediately accessible. As their collection of pinyin hymns grew larger, they began to consider how this material might benefit other foreigners. Soon their efforts grew into a full-fledged project involving Christians in both China and America, and just this year, in 1997, the full Chinese hymnal in both pinyin and Chinese was printed and published to
facilitate the worship and involvement of Amity teachers in their local churches.

Among the first to benefit from his pinyin hymnal were the new Amity teachers participating in the 1997 Amity summer orientation in Nantong (Jiangsu Province). Most of these teachers had only received 5 hours of formal instruction in Chinese pinyin, and a few ours of instruction by their personal tutors, and yet the first time they attended the church in Nantong, they were able to sing the hymns in unison with the rest of the congregation. The effect of the pinyin hymnal on the teachers' level of participation surprised Amity Hong Kong staff member Judy Sutterlin, who served as Spiritual Advisor for the orientation. "I knew it would make a difference," said Judy, "but until the moment I saw them all singing with the rest of the congregation, I had no idea what an incredible difference it would make!"

Judy was especially pleased that the hymnal was used first in Nantong since it was there that the Foskett began the project, and since the members of the Nantong church were directly responsible for providing a large number of the pinyin transcriptions for many of the hymns. The labor of love and worship that the Foskett and their Chinese brothers and sisters began in Nantong had finally come full circle.

**Learning and educating**

In more economically developed locations where good relationships have been formed, churches have sometimes asked Amity teachers to teach English to members of the church staff or to members of the local Christian Council responsible for receiving foreign visitors. Occasionally, in cities where there is a larger foreign community, the church has also worked with Amity teachers to provide registered international fellowships that serve the worship needs of foreign Christians.

Where genuine respect and a willingness to listen and serve converge, Amity teachers often find that there are ways to become actively involved in their local churches. All Amity teachers, however, have the opportunity to make an important contribution to the church of China through the service of education.

Domestically, the church is served and strengthened when Amity teachers make a positive contribution to China's development through the teaching of English and other languages. When the professionalism and dedication of Amity teachers who are known to be Christians win the respect of a community, both the Amity Foundation and the Chinese Christian community become the beneficiaries of that respect.

Internationally, Amity teachers provide an educational service to the Chinese church by sharing their experiences with the world community. In Jiangxi Province, Jessica Farrar helped facilitate a pen-pal project between English speaking members of the church in Yi Chun and members of her home church in the USA. More often, Amity teachers educate their friends abroad through personal letters and newsletters, or through speaking engagements when they return to their own countries.

On a broader scale, some regularly write articles about the Chinese church for publications connected with their home churches and sending organizations, while others give verbal or written reports about their local situation to The Amity News Service for global publication. In each case, the information Amity teachers provide about what they actually see and hear enables Christians abroad to pray for and relate to the Chinese Christian community with greater knowledge and understanding.

Through the quality of presence they bring to their Chinese communities and through their commitment to education — both in and out of the classroom — Amity teachers actively promote the love and respect Christ desires among all people, and thereby support the church of China in the development and fulfillment of its mission and ministry.

*Kim Dickey*
Building Bridges And Healing Wounds:
Being an Amity teacher in China

For Minoru Kato, becoming an Amity teacher has taken more than ten years. He learned of Amity’s founding in 1985 through a friend who was involved in the National Council of Churches in Japan. At that time, however, his responsibilities at home prevented him from applying to be a teacher. Later, he and his wife of 35 years, Rei Kato, still wished to apply but could not do so because of the necessity of caring for his mother-in-law who will be 103 years old on her next birthday.

A few years ago, their desire to teach in China was re-ignited when they read in a Christian newspaper that their good friend Yohane Shimamura had become an Amity teacher. It was only in 1996 that Minoru was finally able to come to China to teach. Last year, his first in China, his wife stayed home to care for her mother. This year, her younger sister is caring for their mother so Rei can join Minoru in Hefei where he teaches Japanese at the Hefei Union University.

Minoru’s training and background has prepared him well for living and teaching in China. He is fluent in Mandarin, having studied Chinese in university before going to seminary. After graduating from seminary in Japan in 1962, he spent 4 years as a pastor in Hirasuka city and then 2 years in Ninomiya town. His first encounter with a totally Chinese milieu was when he ministered to a Japanese Christian Fellowship in Hong Kong between 1968 and 1972. From there he went to Taipei, desiring to do post graduate studies at the Taipei Theological Seminary where he studied for 2 years. During this time, his only pastoring duties were for a small group of Japanese Christians on Sunday afternoons. For the next 10 years he was an assistant professor of Japanese language in a Christian college in Taiwan. The Katos returned to Japan in 1984 and have worked with local parishes there until 1996 when Minoru finally was given the opportunity to teach in China and to follow Yohane Shimamura at Hefei Union University.

Revisiting the past

Being in China has brought great satisfaction to the Katos. Minoru enjoys teaching and finds great joy in his students whom he and his wife find “innocent and lovely”. They have also taken on a new mission to try and heal the wounds created by the Sino-Japanese War of the 1930s and 40s.

At the end of May this year, Minoru visited the Nanjing Massacre Memorial. He had also visited an exhibition on the Nanjing Massacre at the Hefei Museum. At the site of the memorial, he found a book of testimonies by more than 600 survivors of the massacre. It moved him deeply. He decided to translate the book into Japanese so that ordinary Japanese people will not only acknowledge and understand what happened but “will know the events as well as the ordinary Chinese person does.” Minoru feels that very little is said in Japan about this event, either in history books or as part of general knowledge. Some Japanese even deny that the event ever occurred. Minoru wants to change this and has already obtained permission from Nanjing University Press to publish his translation in Japan. By July, he had already translated more than half of the book and hopes to complete the translation during this school year.

On September 27th, he revisited the Memorial site, this time with a group of 10 other Japanese people. This was followed by a visit to Hefei Union University where the group met Minoru’s students, who, after having had one year of Japanese study, were all very eager to practice their newly acquired skills with his Japanese friends. A reception was prepared for the group and the Japanese visitors reciprocated by inviting the students out to lunch. There was much conversation and exchange in the midst of which one of the visitors, a pastor, apologized for Japanese atrocities during the war. It was a touching moment and moved one of the students to tears.

Building a bridge across cultures, healing wounds caused by war—have all been part of being an Amity teacher for Minoru Kato. Impressions with the students’ enthusiasm and ability in Japanese, Minoru’s friend has likened him to a tree and his students to the fresh leaves sprouting from its trunk.

(Based on an interview by Mary Kelly)

Bridging Cultures: Minoru and Rei Kato in China
Why I Am Here:
Reflections of an Amity teacher

"Why did you come to be with us? Why didn't you go to a good college or university in Shanghai or Beijing? "This is just a poor teachers' college. Why didn't you go to a more developed country in Asia? Why did you come here to be with us?"

These questions from the first year students come about the second or third month each year. As a teacher in China, I believe them to be the most important questions I am asked. If there is any sense of purpose at all in my work, it must come out in the answer. The students all look at me. They want to know. Why am I here? I want to tell them that this question is too big it frightens me to attempt an answer.

Strangers at first

For five years I have stood as a foreign teacher at the front of a classroom in China. The setting has not changed much. The Chairman Mao posters have been replaced by the flag of the People's Republic of China. The tired worn desks are still there as is the dirty cement floor. The walls receive a cursory white-wash in September still faded by October's end.

How many students have I had? I dare not begin to count. Some remain in my thoughts, the odd letter arrives and now with China's development, a telephone call. Most students of the past are simply shadows of memory.

In this, it is much like teaching anywhere. Students are with you for a while. Then, with your blessing, they go off into the world. The teacher remains behind receiving the new lot in bigger numbers than even the year before.

In Canada, I was a teacher of English as a Second Language. I designed programs for immigrants, refugees and foreign students. On arrival in China I had every confidence as a teacher. I could do well. The language, the food and other aspects of culture would maybe present difficulties but not the pacing.

On my first day I stood before a class of thirty-one students. I am embarrassed to say that, to my eyes they did all look alike. I was suddenly lost. Tossing my carefully crafted lesson plan aside, I realized that I had no idea what to do. Who were these strangers? What was their level of English? How did they get to enter this college? Not knowing what else to do, I asked them to tell me their names and where they were from. One by one they stood, stated their names and mumbled something about their hometowns or villages. Nothing could have had less meaning to me on that day. Back in my flat I began to ask myself in a cursing tone why I had come to China. The following weeks were not much better. The whole adventure of being in the exotic orient quickly began to shatter around me. As a teacher I was failing. I wanted to go home.

Shared hopes, dreams, failures

Attempting to find myself in all of this I turned to the academic world of research. Hours were spent after class asking students about their hometowns, their families, their life in middle school. The information grew. I became a student, filling reams of paper.

Just when I thought I knew what I was doing, life itself interfered. Invited to students' homes I spent weekends in remote villages. The homes, the families, the schools my students came from became realities. One day, I even found myself in the fields cutting rice. A new and wondrous world available to few western people opened around me.

I began to understand where I was. And little remained hidden. Together with joy there appeared the frustration of human suffering. The corruption from many in positions of power at every level became horribly visible all too soon. Yet always to be found was the salt of human kindness and love from those around me. In all of this I began to see what a teacher was and what a teacher could do.

Now I know what I can do. Certainly I must prepare my lessons well. I must teach to the best of my ability. But that is not all. I still visit students' homes, we climb mountains together and we sit under trees to look at the sky. Shared hopes, dreams, failure and life are all there. This is real teaching which goes far beyond the classroom walls.

Here, with nothing more than a slate blackboard and crumbling chalk I have become the teacher I never could have been in Canada. In an open trust students have taken me into their lives. And in this I have found more of my own life.

Being the people

The community in which I live has also opened its doors. A year of language study in China allows me to chat with anyone I meet. In China you can do that. Government officials and peasant farmers will talk to you on a daily basis. In the midst of my shopping I sit to drink tea with a shopkeeper while he tells of his hopes and fears in his first attempt at business in modern China. Even when you want to you cannot travel on a train or bus in China and be a stranger.

Two years ago, I celebrated with the local Christian congregation in the opening of their new church. On Sunday mornings together with new converts I have learned to sing hymns in Mandarin Chinese. I have made friends with the monks and studied in a Buddhist monastery. I cannot count how many times I have been a guest to dinner sometimes with people I have simply met on the street that day.

And so the question is still asked. Why did you come to be with us? I can honestly say that the answer is
Creating Equal Opportunity: Summer English Program for Middle School Teachers

One student told me that the day she first talked to a foreign teacher was the most important day of her life. (From a summer 1997 SEP teacher.)

I was recently invited to a meeting held by Jiangsu province educational authorities to get feedback on Amity's Summer English Program (SEP) and discuss its possible future directions. The meeting was attended by SEP trainees, hosting institutions, and local and provincial education authorities, and sentiments of the following nature echoed throughout the meeting: It was unanimously felt that through the 4-week program the trainees’ listening and speaking skills had greatly improved; that they had learned quite a number of teaching methods which could be applied to their teaching work; and that they had become better acquainted with Western -- especially American -- culture (all SEP teachers to date have been from North America).

Before the mid-eighties, foreign language teaching in China was always lopsided. When I myself started learning English in a junior middle school, we only had two periods of English lessons a week. Most attention was given to reading, grammar, and translation, while speaking and listening skills were largely neglected, not to mention Western culture. Chinese middle school English teachers and students, especially those from rural areas, seldom had any opportunity to practice their speaking and listening skills apart from reading texts aloud in class, and certainly never had a chance to practice English with an English speaker. Chinese middle school English teachers' speaking and listening skills thus lagged far behind their reading skills and knowledge of grammar and vocabulary.

New pedagogy

Most middle school English teachers were ill-prepared when a new series of English language textbooks placing greater emphasis on students' communicative ability was introduced into Chinese junior and senior middle schools in the early nineties. Because of the tradition of neglecting communicative skills, most teachers lacked the ability and confidence to deal with this new curriculum. The SEP meets this challenge head on by providing these teachers with an opportunity to improve their speaking and listening skills and, as a result, helps them teach the new curriculum in the middle schools.

This program has also revolutionized the pedagogical theory of middle school teachers. Trained in a traditional milieu, these teachers, consciously or unconsciously, shape the next generation according to their old model; that is, they lay greater emphasis on grammar and translation while communication skills are rarely attended to. The SEP teachers bring with them an assortment of active and practical teaching methods which suit the new textbooks well and help develop students' communicative ability. The new textbooks, plus the new methods learned during the program, can bring changes to the teaching ideology of those teachers. A couple of the teachers I met at the meeting used to teach Junior Three students in their schools, a prestigious position usually assigned only to well-qualified and experienced teachers. (Junior Three is the last year of China's middle school, and the year in which the senior middle school entrance examinations are taken.) After attending the program, however, they gave up that envied position and offered to teach Junior One students with a view to trying out the new teaching methods they learned during the summer. "The communicative method has to start from the very beginning," said one of them.

Speaking with confidence

One reason the SEP promotes the teaching of English language is because English is the subject that most affects the educational and cultural development of rural communities. Children from those communities are handicapped by the importance of English on standardized senior middle school and national college entrance examinations, and English thus plays a role in preventing them from gaining...
access to higher education. They are usually outperformed in examinations by their city counterparts, in part because city students are better prepared in the subject of English. This denial of access to higher education in rural communities undermines the confidence of middle school teachers and students and ultimately perpetuates poverty.

The SEP sends native English-speaking teachers to relatively poor and remote areas where there is normally a slim chance to have foreign teachers. The fact that Chinese English teachers have a chance to talk with a native speaker is important in itself, and the presence of these foreign teachers sends out a clear message to the middle school teachers that they are equally deserving of educational opportunity. The program also boosts the morale of these Chinese English teachers enormously. As one SEP teacher put it: “When we first met our students, most were afraid to speak and very nervous. Many were unable to speak clearly enough to be understood. At the end of the program, they had confidence and showed definite improvement in listening and speaking. I think the program has improved the self-esteem of all.”

Additionally the SEP helps reassure middle school English teachers that a teaching career is a worthy cause. In the heat of the summers since 1988, more than 300 teachers have volunteered to come to China and serve in this program. They work long hours every day with great enthusiasm, regardless of the scorching weather and various other inconveniences which they would not normally encounter in their home country. The program started small in the summer of the year 1988 with only 10 Southern Baptist teachers at two different teaching locations in Jiangsu and Jiangxi provinces. At that time, the conditions were very difficult. 4 foreign teachers lived in one room while 10 trainees crowded into one room. Very often, water and electricity were cut off, and air-conditioning was a luxury. Both foreign teachers and students had to use buckets to carry water to their rooms. There was one occasion on which a foreign teacher was in the middle of a shower covered with soap when the water supply was suddenly cut off. Another time the fire brigade was called by the mayor of Shangrao to the Shangrao Institute of Education to pump water into the water tanks of the school. It was not even uncommon for teachers and students to suffer from sun stroke during the program, but the dedication and enthusiasm demonstrated by foreign teachers under these conditions have taught the Chinese teachers a good lesson with a moral dimension.

When we look back at the past ten or so years since the Summer English Program came into existence, the effectiveness and social impact of the Summer English Program cannot be overestimated.

Zhang Liwei

South-South Exchanges

Learning from Hong Kong

Ms. Wu An’an, director of the Social Welfare Division of Amity visited Hong Kong, October 15-21, as head of a delegation which included Mr. Zhang Fu Shih, Deputy Director of the Hope Center in Pi County, Jiangsu, Mr. Wu Dong, Manager of the Amity Children’s Polio Rehabilitation Project in Tan Cheng County, Shandong and Ms. Zhu Guang Xiu of the Jiangsu Chinese Overseas Friendship Association.

facilitated by the Haven of Hope Christian Service, the visit, according to Ms. Wu, was very valuable in promoting the concept of professionalism in work with disabled children and in giving ideas about the range of services that can be provided for them. The delegation visited the Caritas Lok Kan School (for the severely mentally retarded), the John F. Kennedy Center for work with children with cerebral palsy and the Caritas Magdalene School (for the deaf). At the Rotary Disabled Children’s Aid Resource Center the delegation absorbed new ideas on how to develop aids and resources (such as crutches, wheelchairs, prosthetics, etc.) for disabled children in China. There was also a visit to projects run by the Yang Memorial Methodist Social Service which provides vocational training for mentally retarded young adults.

Nanjing doctors train acupuncturists in the Philippines

Three doctors from the Nanjing University of Traditional Chinese Medicine lectured on advanced acupuncture and tuina to acupuncturists in the Philippines, June 19-24, at a seminar organized by the Philippine-China Development Resource Center. The PDRC started its acupuncture program in 1992 with the help of Amity Foundation which organized a training program in Nanjing for 14 doctors and health workers from the Philippines. Since then, these Nanjing graduates have served in remote communities, especially in areas with little or no access to basic medical services. The annual acupuncture seminars conducted by experts from China help to upgrade acupuncture services provided by NGOs in these areas and to expand the pool of practitioners.

Christians from Laos visit Amity

For the first time since its establishment almost a century ago, the Lao Church established official contact with the China Christian Council and the Amity Foundation through the visit of Rev. Dr. Khamphone Kounthabanya, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches in Laos and Rev. Polo Heuanglith to China in September (10 to 18) this year. The delegates were given an orientation by Overseas Coordinator, Philip Wickeri, in Hong Kong and were warmly received by Dr. Han Wenzao, General Secretary of the Amity Foundation, in Nanjing. They expressed great satisfaction and excitement over the visit and were grateful for the insights they have gained on the work of Amity. Future exchanges are being planned.
Farewell And Welcome

Amity says farewell

The founding Overseas Coordinator of the Amity Hong Kong Office, the Rev. Dr. Philip Wickeri leaves Hong Kong on January 8th 1998 to take up his appointment as Professor of Evangelism and Mission at the San Francisco Theological Seminary. Dr. Wickeri has lived and worked in Taiwan, Nanjing and Hong Kong for more than twenty years. He was appointed Overseas Coordinator of the Amity Foundation at its inception in 1985 and has since made significant contributions to its work and development. Author of one of the best accounts of Protestant Christianity in China, Seeking the Common Ground, Dr. Wickeri also holds the distinction of being the first foreigner to have been ordained in China since the founding of the People’s Republic of China. He was ordained in Nanjing in 1991.

Welcoming the new Overseas Coordinator

The Rev. Ewing W. Carroll, Jr. arrived in Hong Kong on December 5th, 1997 to assume his position as the new Overseas Coordinator of the Amity Foundation Hong Kong Office. He brings with him more than thirty years of experience in China-related work. Between 1966 and 1986, Rev. “Bud” Carroll served as a United Methodist missionary in Hong Kong and Taiwan. In Hong Kong, Rev. Carroll was a clergy member of the Methodist Church and served as China Liaison for the United Methodist China Program. He has visited China more than fifty times since 1979 and has led numerous study tours, which included extensive discussions with Muslim, Buddhist, Catholic, Protestant and government leaders. Prior to his present appointment, Rev. Carroll served eleven years as Director of The United Methodist China Program and Area Secretary for Indochina and China Related Areas.

China Passages: an Amity Teachers Anthology
edited by Lois Cole

This is a rich collection of essays, short stories, poems and anecdotal musings by Amity’s foreign language teachers. Covering a ten-year span, the earliest writings date back to 1985 when the Amity Foundation first launched its Teachers Project, recruiting foreign language teachers from around the world.

The collection not only shares the personal dramas of the teachers, providing an interesting study in cultural adaptation, but the drama of a country undergoing the tumultuous changes of rapid modernization. The personal accounts of relationships with their schools, students, communities and churches, as well as their perceptions of Chinese society, also reveal an intimate understanding of China and its people.

The book (paperback, 140 pages) is available from the Amity Hong Kong Office
Price: HK$40 (for pick up) or US$5 (including airmail postage)
Please make checks payable to The Amity Foundation, Hong Kong, Ltd.

Order from: The Amity Foundation, 4 Jordan Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong
Phone: (852)2723-8011 Fax: (852)2366-2769 e-mail: amityhk@hk.super.net