



“Commit your way to the LORD; trust in Him, and He will act.”

-Psalm 37:5-

Remembering Miracles

It has now been just over three years since we returned home from our last visit to the DPRK prior to the abrupt and complete border closure brought on by Covid. Even now, there are still no flights, no passenger trains, no vehicle traffic allowed across the border. Limited cargo train service resumed in late September 2022 for government-sanctioned trade, raising guarded hope that it may eventually expand in time to include humanitarian shipments. As we continue to endure this period of uncertainty and waiting, you encourage us greatly by your faithful prayers, notes, visits and financial support. Reviewing God’s faithful provision in years past also serves to strengthen and encourage us. Below is a true and remarkable story from the Fall of 2004 that we hope will strengthen your faith in our loving and sovereign God.

Eighteen years ago, after months of delays, catastrophic flooding at the CFK office and schedule changes (our head guide telling us upon arrival, *“It is a miracle that this visit was approved!”*), our team of seven people was finally able to visit North Korea for one week. We had planned an ambitious schedule that required the team to split upon arrival, with three members engaged in travel and monitoring activities, and four members engaged in technical installation work at a provincial hospital. The scope of work planned for the technical team included multiple equipment installations including a 30kw generator, x-ray machine, sterilizer, dental operatory (and training), OR light, and lab equipment. Before the week was over, our technical team would face significant challenges, but also witness several miracles.

Months before, in preparation for the technical work, we had sent medical equipment, supplies and tools, a 30 kilowatt generator (about the size and weight of a small car), and a large spool of heavy duty and expensive electrical cable. The copper wire inside the cable was the thickness of a finger and couldn’t be spliced. It would have to be cut on site, as three equal length pieces would be needed to complete the circuit required to connect the generator to the hospital.

The technical team arrived at the hospital and met with the director and other staff to lay out the project. Since electricity supplied by the soon-to-be-installed generator would be needed for the installation and troubleshooting of all the other equipment, the generator needed to be installed first. They walked the site and agreed on the placement for the generator which was moved into the agreed place. Initial measurements were taken and the team noted gratefully that there would be plenty of cable to make the three required runs (positive, negative and ground) to connect the generator to the hospital’s transfer switch. At the end of the day, a first double run of cable was pulled from the spool and cut in preparation for the following day’s work.

The following morning, when our team returned to the hospital, they were utterly dismayed to find the generator had been moved to a completely different location much farther away and this would now require a much longer run of cable.



Now there was real concern about whether they had enough cable at all, and the fact that they had already cut one long length from the spool was a significant concern as completing the connection would require three equal length runs of cable. The cable could not be spliced, so if it was cut too short, there would be no way to complete the installation of the generator without sending new cable – jeopardizing all the work planned for the trip. The remaining cable was unrolled from the spool. Miraculously, there was exactly enough cable on the spool to make the two additional runs needed to the new location, with just inches left over! The piece that had already been cut (for a double run to the old location) was exactly the right length needed for a single run to the new location. The chances of randomly cutting one spool of cable into what would end up being exactly three equal lengths was an unexpected miracle.

Giving thanks for God’s provision, they went back to work mindful that precious time had already been lost and much work remained. They worked long days through the week to install the other equipment, enduring various frustrations as they discovered critical items had gone missing from the shipment, in some cases reappearing unexpectedly later, and in other cases, never to be seen again. Other workarounds had to be found.



Pulling the cable to connect the generator.



Newly installed operating room lights.

On the morning of the last day, the newly installed x-ray machine was still not functioning despite many hours spent trying to find the problem. Our team member overseeing the x-ray installation left for the hospital at 6AM to try to troubleshoot the problem (a miracle itself as schedule changes are almost never allowed). By now the confirming team had arrived in the city and this also being their last working day, they were scheduled to visit another nearby hospital for confirming activities first, and then visit the hospital where the technical team was madly working to try to finish up all the installations. By late morning the confirming team arrived at the hospital where our technical team was working. The plan was for them to visit the various areas of the hospital where all the equipment had been installed, deliver donor plaques for each room, take photos of the completed work, and then both teams were to head back to Pyongyang together. We were under clear instructions from our head guide not to dally.

The trip report notes, “Then we went on an inspection tour of the hospital to see the accomplishments of the technical team and local staff during the week. The guys were still working quickly trying to finish several smaller or larger projects (they had still not yet been able to get the main x-ray machine to work and our technician was working with the local technician to try to find the problem.) We started with the dental area, then we moved on to the x-ray room. I know several of us were praying even as Mark and Mr. K were trying everything to make it all work. It was still not working so we agreed to come back after making our other rounds. We moved on to the generator outside, presented the plaque and took some photos of the fully installed and functioning unit and the operator.”



Presenting a donor plaque for the laboratory.



Newly installed generator.

From there we went to the operating room where the team had done a wonderful job of upgrading and transforming this room. The local staff was very proud of the newly hung operating room light, and they turned it on and showed us how it could be moved around, etc. A plaque was presented to the director and staff. From there we went to the laboratory, again presenting a plaque to the staff after we looked over the new/refurbished equipment that had been provided. We saw the new wiring that the team had installed contributing greatly to many permanent power and safety improvements made to this place during the visit. We then went to the storage room and the pharmacy to check on the supplies we had sent for the hospital. We were being rushed along as our guides wanted us to finish up and move out. Finally, we stopped back by the x-ray room. Mark and Mr. K tried "one more thing" and were finally successful in taking an x-ray, confirming that they had found and fixed the vexing problem with the x-ray machine! There was a moment of unbridled joy as Mark and Mr. K spontaneously hugged each other and we were all very relieved (and grateful!) for the success. Answered prayer and providential timing is always so amazing!"

The generator, x-ray and other equipment would continue to support the activities of the hospital for many years thereafter, impacting the lives of thousands of patients every year. To God be the glory.



Donor Creativity Sustains CFK

You, our prayer partners and donors, continue to deeply encourage us with your faithfulness in these hard times. Some have given faithfully for years, during their lives and even after their deaths, showing their continuing commitment to the North Korean people by including us in their estate planning, or by their families directing memorial contributions to CFK. Since the onset of Covid, we are deeply grateful to the following for collections and bequests generously directed to CFK. In addition, thank you to all those who have given gifts in memory or honor of loved ones.

Big Creek Presbyterian Church in memory of Rev. Elmer T. Boyer

The Estate of Ms. Marie Melrose

The Estate of Kathleen Lin

Others, like Quentin Small, have found creative ways to support CFK. He wrote to us recently: *"In one of your communications, years ago, I remembered how a board member used soda bottle deposits to send the money to Christian Friends of Korea. That idea was so simple I never forgot it. In late 2014, living on a golf course, I got the idea how I could salvage aluminum cans and accomplish two objectives: 1) ecology – aid the environment, and 2) support special Christian work. Here's my update: Since 2014, over 193,000 aluminum cans never made it to the*

landfill and about \$2,900+ has supported sending 138 water filter bucket sets to supply clean water to TB patients in North Korea. (33 empty cans equals one pound of aluminum scrap.) I thank God for the opportunity provided by Christian Friends of Korea. It is a privilege to receive your prayer information and I pray regularly for you and Christian Friends of Korea.”



Water filter buckets supply safe drinking water to pharmacies, labs, patient room, homes and communities.

Update on the Current Situation

We remain in a difficult holding pattern with respect to shipments and visits. While the rail border reopened on September 26 to high level trade (following a “fever” and presumed Covid outbreak in DPRK among approximately 20% of the population from May-August), general trade and humanitarian shipments from NGOs are still not permitted, and the border remains completely closed to travelers. A few UN shipments have been delivered this year after lengthy transit and quarantine delays, including a shipment of first line TB medicines, some diagnostic supplies, and other medical goods – but this is only a small fraction of the support that was going in prior to Covid.

Tensions have increased significantly in 2022 with the resumption of joint defensive military exercises on the Korean peninsula and North Korea’s testing of over 40 missiles and other weapons so far this year, including an intermediate range ballistic missile that overflew Japan. While the US and South Korea have offered diplomatic talks, North Korea’s leader stated in a speech delivered on September 8, “If our nuclear policy is to be changed now, the world has to be changed, and so should the political and military environment on the Korean peninsula...there will be no longer any bargaining over them.” Meanwhile, in the same speech, the North Korean leader admitted “the economic difficulties facing us now are severe” and “what is most urgent in stabilizing and improving the people’s living is to solve the problems of food and consumer goods.”

The fall harvest is still being gathered in the DPRK, but multiple challenges have likely affected it. North Korea experienced a drought earlier this year, and then the rice planting season coincided with the outbreak of Covid and the immediate imposition of internal quarantines and severe travel restrictions on the population. Manpower shortages at the critical planting time may have prevented timely seed planting. Although the damage from flooding and typhoons was not as severe as prior years, it is clear from official reports that the food situation remains deeply challenging for significant portions of the population. The persistent border closures have very likely affected the supply chain of critical spare parts for tractors and vehicles, plastic for greenhouses, fertilizer, and many other needed goods. Yet, high inflation and reports of widespread shortages of critical goods is likely impacting the lives of the people and care centers where we usually work. We are deeply concerned for the patients and staff at these facilities, and for the population at large.

We have continued producing our prayer initiative series in 2022, including video, photos, narrative and prayer points released every few weeks. If you would like to receive this or our monthly prayer calendars, please email us at cfk@cfk.org. We have taken cost cutting measures to reduce overhead as much as possible without losing key staff, but we seek to maintain readiness to be able to resume shipping and travel as soon as it becomes possible. Please continue to pray for God’s will to be done among the North Korean people, in the diplomatic context, and with respect to our work in the DPRK. Your faithful prayers, support and encouragement inspires and strengthens us – thank you!