



CHRISTIAN FRIENDS OF KOREA

조선의 그리스도인 벗들



2022 | SUMMER NEWSLETTER

“Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show you compassion. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!”

Isaiah 30:18

A 62-Year Wait

Stories of God’s faithfulness from the past continue to encourage us to be patient and to trust in our Lord despite the continued closure of North Korea’s borders, and ongoing uncertainty.

In 1997, retired lifelong missionary to Korea and former CFK board member, Eileen Moffett, gave an account of one of our team’s earliest visits to North Korea. Mrs. Moffett participated in that visit, together with her husband, Sam, along with several other retired career missionaries to Korea. Eileen wrote: “Going home to Pyongyang (Pyongyang) in what is now North Korea was a 62-year-old desire of Sam’s and a longing of my heart since we were married in 1956.

Korean doors have never opened without stubborn resistance to the outsider. But we remembered another time in recent history, just over 100 years ago, when those isolated northern provinces were opened at great cost and sacrifice by missionary members of our own families and their colleagues. Sam’s father was one of the earliest Protestant missionaries to enter the city of Pyongyang.



Eileen & Sam Moffett, Pyongyang, DPRK

As he entered this forbidden interior city for the first time in 1890, an ominous sight greeted him. Inside the gate hung the anchor chains of the ‘General Sherman,’ an American trading vessel which carried a gentle Welsh missionary, Robert Thomas, with Bibles from China who hoped to bring the light of the Gospel to the people of Korea. But he chose the wrong vessel for his travels. An unwise captain and crew, contemptuous of Korean sensibilities, tried to coerce local officials to open trade with the world outside and it backfired. That was in 1866, and Thomas became the first Protestant missionary to give his life in Korea. He was beheaded while handing a Bible to a Korean on the riverbank, after jumping off the burning ship. Did Moffett (Sam’s father), seeing those chains 24 years later, think he might become the next Protestant martyr in Pyongyang? No, but he was driven out of the city six times in one year. Our minds were full of this history as we landed at the Pyongyang airport in January 1997.” (For a full interview with Eileen Moffett, please visit: www.cfk.org/summer2022)

That visit in 1997, 62 years in the making for Eileen’s husband, Sam, marked the beginning of over two decades of work among ordinary North Koreans by Christian Friends of Korea. The team hand carried TB medicine with them, and it opened a pathway resulting in significant help for patients suffering from tuberculosis, hepatitis, and other diseases. As we look back on this crucial visit, we could not have anticipated what God would bring about through CFK. Yet our Lord has led us, guided us, and provided opportunities to directly impact, every year in the name of Christ, the lives of tens of thousands of people scattered throughout urban and rural areas of North Korea.

As more and more patients were successfully treated, stigma and fear around TB began to retreat. Doors continued to open for us, and in 2015 we were invited to expand our work and initiate modern diagnostics and treatment for hepatitis B and C patients in four provinces and five cities. In four short years, we helped to rebuild and equip labs in Pyongyang and Kaesong, started rebuilding a third lab in Haeju, and screened nearly 3,000 patients and started over 2,000 patients on treatment. Sadly, with borders remaining virtually closed to engagement since January 2020 due to the Covid outbreak, it is impossible to know the current circumstances inside.

Update on the Current Situation

For over two years, the North Korea government claimed their strict border policies had kept Covid out. But on May 12, 2022, the North Korean government reported an outbreak of “fever” cases (presumably Covid) that had begun in late April in the DPRK. High daily case counts were initially reported in mid-May, but they have abated steadily since then, with zero new cases reported as of early August. North Korea declared “victory” over Covid, reporting that 73 people had died of “fever,” and 4.8 million people, about 18.5% of the population, were infected and recovered.



Rice Planting Season

Meanwhile, trade between DPRK and China remains severely restricted, continuing to hugely impact the daily lives of North Koreans. The outbreak of fever, lockdown and quarantines took place during the peak of the rice planting season, and it is unclear if there was enough manpower to plant all the fields in time. A long spring drought was broken early by the onset of the rainy season, and there have been reports of flooding in some areas, although so far the flooding does not appear to be as severe as in past years. But at least two typhoons have been forecast to affect the Korean Peninsula, so the danger remains.

“For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do. And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”

Hebrews 6:10-12

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AS WE LOOK BACK ON THIS CRUCIAL VISIT, WE COULD NOT HAVE ANTICIPATED WHAT GOD WOULD BRING ABOUT THROUGH CFK. YET OUR LORD HAS LED US, GUIDED US, AND PROVIDED OPPORTUNITIES TO DIRECTLY IMPACT, EVERY YEAR IN THE NAME OF CHRIST, THE LIVES OF TENS OF THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE.



Here at our Black Mountain office, we’ve received a number of visitors and are working to maintain readiness to re-engage whenever borders reopen. While anything is possible, with continuing quarantines of cities in China due to outbreaks, we don’t see an easy or early path to reopening of the borders. We may be in a holding pattern for some time yet. We are grateful to all of you who continue to pray for the North Korean people, and for CFK. Thank you for continuing to support this work through volunteer efforts and giving. You encourage us greatly in this lean season. We cannot begin to understand God’s purposes in all this, yet we know that He is good, and sovereign, and we choose to trust Him in this time of waiting and uncertainty.



Visitors to our Black Mountain Office