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Become a Member

The constitution of the SCCG states that we are a membership organisation, and we're delighted to have members from all the main church denominations and from partner organisations in Scotland. Individuals can also become members. There is no cost, but membership ensures you are kept up-to-date with our work and activities. Contact Patricia Johnston if you'd like to know more (details below).

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Christmas in Chinese churches

by Mark McLeister



Writing at my desk in mid-October in Edinburgh, Christmas seems like a long-way off. In the Three-Self-affiliated churches in 'Huanghaicheng' (I am using a pseudonym) which I have been researching for a decade though, preparations for Christmas began in earnest some weeks ago. Members of the congregations have already registered their performance on a

list which will be whittled down through a series of auditions run by the church leadership. A group of retired 'sisters' will perform a worship dance to the tune of a well-known hymn. Some teenagers will form a band and (loudly) perform a contemporary worship song or two. A group of young professionals will write and perform their own humorous sketch set in the present day about a man who lives a terrible life until he encounters God. Some children from the 'Sunday school' will dress up as elves and sing some carols. The list goes on. Auditions are held several times throughout the autumn and competition is high. Church leaders give their advice on how each performance can be improved.

During the first half of December, a day is spent cleaning the churches. Decorations are put up. Invitations are distributed in their thousands. Vast quantities of snacks are prepared for whoever will come (peanuts, candy, sunflower seeds, and fresh fruit). Gift bags are filled to give to visitors. Celebrating Christmas in these Huanghaicheng churches will last for four or five days, with gatherings taking place on each of the days. Christmastime evening gatherings last for perhaps five hours and if Christmas day falls on a Sunday then the gatherings will last all day, from 8 a.m. until the early evening.

For Christians in Huanghaicheng, Christmas is a church festival. Christian families do not celebrate Christmas in their homes. They do not decorate their houses, or have family round for dinner, or give each other presents. Christian families come together as a church family to serve as hosts together to the wider communities in which they are embedded. The churches are often packed to overflowing but no guest is turned away. They are generous hosts to their guests as uniformed servers distribute an abundance of snacks throughout the gatherings. They are dutiful hosts as they provide bright and colourful performances which help to create a lively and emotionally-charged atmosphere – a key part of any social activity in China. At some point in each of the gatherings, a preacher or pastor will give a short talk inviting people into their church family, and, very often, many respond.



Thanks!!

Grateful thanks to everyone who took part in this year's Kiltwalk to raise money for the Little Sunflowers Project in Liaoning Province run by our partners, the Caritas Social Service Centre. Final figures are still to be confirmed, but the walkers raised well over £1000! Plans are in progress to put together a team for 2020 - you have been warned!



200m Bibles

In November 2019 The Amity Printing Press will produce its 200 millionth Bible! To mark this momentous occasion The Amity Foundation planned a special celebration on Monday 11 November. The SCCG, as a long time partner of The Amity Foundation, was invited to join the celebration. Although we were unable to do so a message of congratulations was sent. Patricia Johnston's planned visit to China in November has been postponed until February 2020 due to a bereavement.

Diary date

The SCCG AGM/Plenary will be held on Tuesday 10 March 2020 at Augustine United Church, George IVth Bridge, Edinburgh EH1 1EL, 10.30am (10am coffee) - 3.30pm. Lunch provided. Afternoon speaker details to be confirmed.

Scottish Churches China Group

苏格兰教会中国会



NEWSLETTER

Further dementia care training

In our last Newsletter we featured an article by Mairi Houldsworth, then Coordinator for Carers in University Hospital Hairmyres in East Kilbride, Scotland and a 'Dementia Champion'. She had travelled to China in November 2018, arranged and funded by the SCCG, to our partner The Amity Foundation, to assess their care of the elderly facilities for 'dementia friendliness' and to devise and deliver a dementia training programme to health and social care staff in Nanjing. This training has now been rolled out by Amity to hundreds more staff. In September this year we arranged for Mairi to return to Nanjing to run further 'Dementia Champion' training for Amity Foundation staff there, building on her sessions last year. As well as working with the staff in Nanjing, Mairi to traveled to Shenyang to spend a week with staff of the Caritas Social Service Centre (CSSC) of Liaoning Diocese. CSSC has only just started developing services for the elderly and jumped at the chance to have such specialist training.

Mairi has provided a report for this Newsletter in photos. The photo featured here on this page shows Mairi with a gathering of Amity students and staff, accepting the gift of a book on sensory challenges in dementia, written by Agnes Houston MBE from Scotland. Agnes has lived with early onset Alzheimer's disease for 13 years now. *See the report and photos from Mairi on page two.*



Dementia Care Training - Update in Photos

by Mairi Houldsworth

My second visit to China at the invitation of Amity (NGO and SCCG partner in China), in September this year, was split between two cities: Nanjing in week one and Shenyang in week two. The visit to Nanjing was a follow-up visit to work with staff from Amity and build on the dementia training they received last year. The visit to Shenyang was a first visit to work with the staff at the Caritas Centre of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Cathedral on their care of the elderly/dementia project.



Attending a carers group in a day care centre, Nanjing. The carers shared conversation and snacks and enjoyed a craft session before a presentation from me on becoming a carer. This was followed by a Q&A session for carers to discuss their concerns.

This photo shows the delivery of a 'Class in a bag' session to Amity staff. The kit contains everything required to teach a basic class on dementia, some of its challenges and some ways to help. The kit was gifted to Amity by SCCG.



An Amity staff member experiencing some of the sensory challenges facing a person living with dementia. This links the 'Class in a bag' with the effects of dementia on all of the senses.



Lunch for elderly people at the caritas centre in Shenyang Cathedral is preceded by hand exercises. I was invited to give a short talk to the group to inform them of the basic facts about dementia.



I was also invited to present to the HIV/AIDS group about HIV related dementia, a significant but largely preventable risk if appropriate care is being delivered.



Finally, discussing end of life dementia care with caritas centre staff and palliative care staff from a local hospital.

Spiritual Care

In May, we funded Paul Graham, Head of Spiritual Care and Well Being, NHS Lanarkshire, to speak about Spiritual Care in a Palliative setting at a national conference in Hangzhou. Our long-time partner Dr Wang Yumei, of Shengjing Hospital Palliative Care Ward, was also a speaker at the conference. (It was through Dr Wang that the SCCG was approached to provide a speaker from Scotland.) Afterwards, Dr Wang wrote to us to say: "The Hangzhou Conference was very successful. Paul's speech was very exciting, and he had in-depth communication with religious professionals, medical staff, social workers, psychological counsellors and other professionals. His sharing and explanations have benefited us a lot. Thank you very much and the generous help of SCCG. I gave a speech in the morning on 12 May [which] mainly introduced how we carry out hospice care work in a team way in clinical work. My sharing was well received and recognized by the participants. 14 years ago, with the help of you and SCCG, I started to study Palliative care. Nowadays, our professional ability and team have been fully developed, standing at the forefront of China's Palliative care, this is the result of our joint efforts."



Eco-visit

We were very pleased to host Xie Jie earlier this year in a visit to Scotland from China. She is a member of staff at the Amity Foundation and was in the UK as part of a longer visit hosted by Friends of the Church in China (FCC). With her main areas of interest being environmental protection, recycling and climate change, we arranged trips with the John Muir Trust (photo above), Earthship Fife, Eco Congregation Scotland and the Viridor Recycling Plant (photo below).



November partner visit

As we went to print with this Newsletter, we were delighted to welcome Father Joseph Zhang, Director of the Caritas Social Service Centre (CSSC) of Liaoning Diocese, and staff member Li Zhaohui (Linda) in a visit to Scotland, hosted by the SCCG. Here between 2-15 November, the initial purpose of their visit was to see a range of community based Spiritual Care and support services for adults and children. Following Mairi's visit to CSSC in September (see facing page) the focus changed and was divided between faith-based organisations who provide community support services to the most vulnerable in society and residential/day care services for people living with dementia. A full programme of visits includes meetings with Glasgow Street Pastors, The Gate Charity, Glasgow City Mission, Craigilea Residential Home and East Kilbride Dementia Carers. They also plan to join a special 'Time to Dance' drop-in session at St Andrew's Church, Carlisle. 'Time to Dance' is an initiative of Scottish Ballet when dancers from the company lead dance/movement sessions for people living with dementia.

Treasurer role

Since 2016 Kenny Roy has served as Treasurer for the SCCG. Kenny continued in the fashion set by his predecessor, Freda Wilson, setting out Financial Statements very clearly for the benefit of the Trustees. Kenny has now decided to step aside from this role as the demands of his full-time business increases. The Management Committee would like to thank Kenny for his commitment to the SCCG. Even when he couldn't personally attend meetings, Kenny always ensured we had a full Financial Statement enabling the charity to make informed decisions. Kenny, we will miss your quiet presence and financial expertise. We hope you will keep in touch with the SCCG and wish you every blessing in your future work. His input at meetings was always appreciated too.

With Kenny's departure at the end of the year, the SCCG is now looking for a new Treasurer. Do you have the financial skills to take on this role or do you know someone else who may be interested? Please give some thought to this and contact Tricia Johnston (SCCG Advisor) if you would like to discuss the role of Treasurer further.

New Trust Funding

We are delighted to have received £4,000 from the Souter Foundation towards SCCG core costs. This award is very encouraging and we're grateful for their support for our work. It is vital to get money for core costs as this is something that charities often struggle to do. This funding will allow us to plan ahead. Most of the partner visits to and from partners in China remains funded through the generosity of the Barbour Trust. We're extremely grateful for their continuing financial support which allows us to do this.