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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 representative members from 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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“All teach, all learn.”

By Patricia Johnston

The SCCG is in the initial stages of an innovative project which will link up staff at Shengjing Hospital in Shenyang and Strathcarron Hospice. This will utilise 'Project ECHO', a system which facilitates online sharing of specific expertise and knowledge.

Project ECHO began nearly 20 years ago, in Albuquerque in the USA, and was inspired by a tragic story. A 43-year-old woman with hepatitis C, who had been ill for eight years, did not have a local doctor with the knowledge to treat her and she couldn't afford to take time off work for the five-hour trip to the city hospital. By the time she was forced by pain to come and see specialist Dr. Sanjeev Arora in Albuquerque, the untreated hepatitis C had caused advanced liver cancer and, sadly, she died six months later.

What stayed with Dr Arora, from this tragic story, was the frustrating fact that the medicine and expertise needed to treat this patient's illness were available - but not in her local community. The right knowledge didn't exist at the right place at the right time and Dr Arora decided this needed to be addressed.

This was the start of Project ECHO, a model of teaching and learning, set up to address an issue in New Mexico, and now a global tool used in many countries to share knowledge and expertise in under-resourced communities.

What makes Project ECHO different from other learning models is Dr Arora's vision of 'all teach, all learn'. The word 'tele-mentoring' is central to the project and it's the means by which there is shared learning.

Dr Wang Yumei, Director of the Palliative Care Ward at Shengjing Hospital, had already asked us to help set up a joint palliative care research project with a Scottish University, but there was little interest from the Scottish universities and a straightforward academic joint project was extremely expensive (more than £100,000!).

However, we had a further conversation with Dr Sally Boa, Head of Palliative Care Education, Research and Practice Development at Strathcarron Hospice and Honorary Senior Research Fellow, University of Stirling. It was this conversation where Sally introduced us to Project ECHO and it quickly became obvious this was, potentially, an amazing new possible collaboration. Strathcarron Hospice had joined the Project ECHO Community in 2018 and they use videoconferencing to enable specialists to share their knowledge and expertise with other health or social care professionals.

Dr Wang in Shenyang is also excited about this project. We have arranged to host an online meeting at the beginning of September between Dr Wang and Sally to discuss how to take all this forward.

While this model of engagement is very cost effective, there is a cost of £878, associated with each Project ECHO tele-mentoring session. We hope to run an initial six sessions and so we will need to raise £5268. We have begun fundraising with applications to trust funds underway. If you have fundraising ideas, or potential sources to suggest, please get in touch with us. Thank you.

Visitor from Nanjing



In June, the Friends of the Church in China (FCC) facilitated a visit to Britain from Lu Yi, who is part of the Amity Foundation's Communication and Advocacy team. We were delighted to host Lu Yi in Scotland for a week and arranged visits with the Scottish Bible Society, The Eric Liddell Community, Christian Aid Scotland, Alzheimer Scotland and The John Muir Trust. Lu Yi has a keen interest in how charities organise communications with their supporters and with the wider public.

ENAP meets



The European Network of Amity Partners (ENAP) met in June in Helsinki, the first in-person meeting since the pandemic. Six senior Amity staff members were there from China, as part of a wider European visit. SCCG Chair, Alan Miller, was able to attend on our behalf. ENAP was founded in 1987 to enable cooperation and collaboration between European churches and agencies supporting Amity's work in China

Scottish Churches China Group

苏格兰教会中国会



NEWSLETTER



Meeting up with Chinese partners in Nanjing in 2019

Celebrating 40!

The SCCG was founded in 1983, an ecumenical organisation, with representatives from the main Scottish churches, committed to working with partners in China in the areas of health and education. We're delighted to still be involved working with partners in China 40 years later!

Some of you reading this Newsletter may have your own memories of working in China through the SCCG - perhaps as an Amity Teacher, a medical specialist, or as a trainer/mentor for nursing staff. Many of you will also have met visitors from China to Scotland, such as this year's visit from Lu Yi in Nanjing (see left). Perhaps you have helped with professional training and the mutual sharing of knowledge and expertise in a specific discipline.

The photo above, gracing our front cover, is from our evaluation visit in 2019 - the last time we were able to visit our friends and partners in China. We are now planning our two-week visit this November to Shenyang and Nanjing. We are currently finalising the itinerary and will be able to apply for visas after that, but we have every hope that we will be able to see our partners soon.

When we visited back in 2019, little did we know that there would be so many difficulties for so long due to the pandemic. But we're proud that we have kept links alive in the meantime - and even made some new ones. The optimism and vision for work with Chinese partners continues.

Improving Access for All



There is encouraging progress with the Integrated Education initiative that we're helping support in Nanjing. This is the integration of students with autism and other conditions into mainstream primary schools. Ma Xiaobo works at the Amity Foundation's Children's Development Centre in Nanjing, and she has had online support from Jasmine Miller which we have funded. Jasmine has worked with us over a number of years and has extensive experience of developing inclusive education programmes in Scotland and abroad.



The mainstream integration started last September, and Jasmine and Ma Xiaobo sent a report to us in May. This is available in full on our website in both English and Chinese.

Ma Xiaobo has worked extremely hard to improve her English language level and she recently passed her IELTS for international English. As a result, she has now been offered an unconditional place to study for a Masters in Inclusion and Special Educational Needs at Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh. This is great news and has the potential to benefit the work in Nanjing tremendously. The online course, which we are funding, begins on 4 September.

We wish Ma Xiaobo well with her studies, and especially with the continuing work in Nanjing.

Update from Jasmine Miller, August 2023:

Since writing our report in May, Ma Xiaobo and I have reflected on the developments across the academic year.

Ma Xiaobo discussed creating a survey to explore ways that her team can further support the staff in the mainstream class with their understanding about inclusion. We considered the following questions that could be asked to explore this further:

- * What is one thing that you know now that you didn't know before about Autism?
- * Do you know what kinds of difference individual children have?
- * What are some of the barriers that you face in educating these children?
- * What would help you to support a child with special needs in your class?
- * What do you understand about what is meant by inclusive education?
- * Where do you think children with special needs can learn best?

Ma Xiaobo and I restart our sessions in September 2023 at the beginning of the new kindergarten year and will reflect on responses from this survey.

We are looking forward to seeing where our conversations and thinking time takes this project to next.

Jasmine Miller is an educator, coach, and Academic Director at the Al Karamah Training Centre

"It was just me."

By Fr Joseph Zhang



Fr Joseph Zhang is based in Shenyang with the Caritas Social Services Centre (CSSC) run by Liaoning Diocese.

According to the seventh national population census data in 2020, Liaoning's population aged 60 and above accounted for 25.72%, while the population aged 65 and above accounted for 17.2%, ranking first in the country and moving towards a super-aging society.

Due to the economic downturn, insufficient industrial development, and reduced employment opportunities, the population of Northeast China has continued to outflow in recent years, mainly consisting of young people and working people. This has led to elderly people living alone, long-term lack of communication and care, lack of social network support, and many difficulties.

The country and government have successively introduced many policies related to elderly care and elderly services. However, in terms of practical application, it is still in the initial stage of exploration, and there are problems such as limited experience, insufficient personnel, and insufficient funds.

Therefore, there is still a significant gap in care services for elderly people in society. As a faith organisation, we are trying to respond according to our mission and ability. We are focusing on the following activities:

1. Elderly group gatherings

The center holds elderly group activities every Wednesday, and most who participate in the activities are solitary elderly. Our activities help elderly people who live alone build a platform for communication and exchange. During the activities, the elderly engage in handicrafts and communicate with their peers.

2. Following up by telephones

On no event day, employees conducted phone follow-up visits to understand the physical and mental health of the elderly, solve their loneliness problems, and provide spiritual support.

3. Home Visits

Staff visit 2-3 elderly people's homes every month, and elderly people living alone are particularly eager to communicate with others, so when we arrive at home, the elderly people are particularly happy. Speak and chat with the elderly to alleviate their loneliness of living alone.

A Case Study/Story

Auntie Li is 86 years old and suffers from various illnesses. She lives alone and her son is also in poor health, so cannot come to see her frequently. Auntie Li has severe rheumatoid arthritis and her hands are weak, making her almost unable to cook.

At first, Aunt Li refused us to visit her house. After spending more than a year together in our center, she finally agreed to let us visit her home and was afraid that we wouldn't find her, so she came downstairs to pick us up. We found that many things in the room were lying on the ground without any space to rest, including milk, books, and some garbage. Aunt Li said she couldn't tidy them up and didn't have enough energy.

During a phone follow-up visit, Aunt Li told us, "I always look forward to talking to other elderly people every day. To be honest, when you called me today, it was the first time in a week that someone had spoken to me... It was just me."

