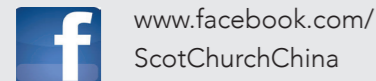


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We also provide a short news update about our work by email using MailChimp. This goes out roughly five times a year and has links to the latest news from our partners in China and Scotland. Sign up on our website: www.sccg.org.uk

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A Cure for Insomnia?

Dr Du's Audio Bible Player

by Mark McLeister

Preferring a simple life, Dr Du doesn't really like modern technology, but she says that she would struggle to do without her audio Bible player. Dr Du faithfully listens to her audio Bible player every evening before going to sleep. She particularly likes the testimonies, and re-tells me excitedly some of the stories of miraculous healing, saved marriages, and restored relationships all attributed to God.

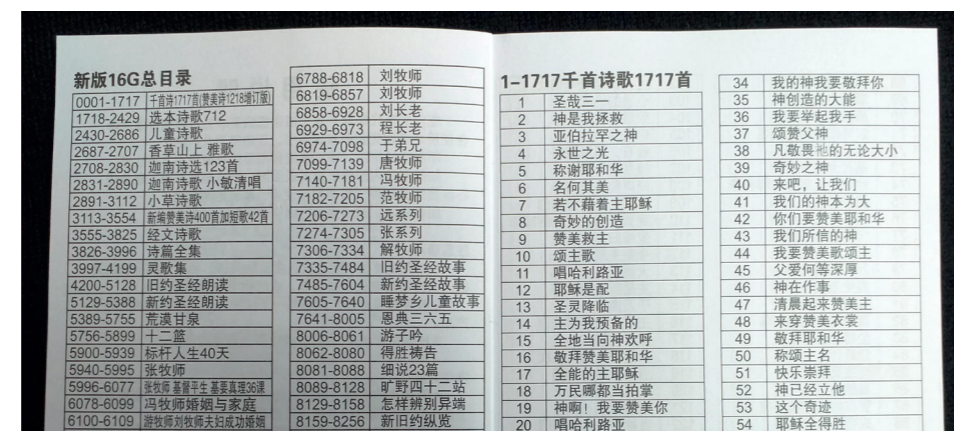


An audio Bible player decorated with a red cross (southern China, June 2021; Photo: anonymous, used with permission)

Audio Bible players (shengjing bofangqi) are mp3 devices which come pre-loaded not only with an audio Bible, but sermons, testimonies, prayers, hymns and worship songs. They became quite popular amongst Chinese Christians from around 2011 and were sold in church bookrooms and independent Christian bookstores in many parts of China. With the rise in popularity in smartphones and changes to legislation, production of audio Bible players was significantly reduced and they became virtually impossible to purchase in 2019.

Dr Du's parents were both Christians, but became government cadres after the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949. As cadres, they had to practice their faith in secret. When she was a child, Dr Du would sometimes read her parents' Bible, even during the upheavals of the Cultural Revolution when possessing a Bible could land you in serious trouble. After retiring as a pharmacist, Dr Du learned Tai Chi and became a Christian through one of her Tai Chi friends. She got baptised and shortly after this purchased her first audio Bible player. Dr Du used it for many years, and she claims that after she starting listening to the Bible and the other content, her insomnia was cured.

The audio Bible player became especially important to her at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic when she was forced to stop attending her small church due to Covid-related restrictions. Then, her church dissolved after the elderly leader passed away. Unable to find a suitable church close to where she lives, Dr Du relied on her audio Bible player as an important lifeline to her faith. However, one day her Audio Bible player stopped working and, unable to get it repaired, she felt quite lost without it. Then one day, a package arrived for Dr Du, and to her surprise, it was a new audio Bible player! A friend of a close relative had managed to locate one and sent it to her. Dr Du explained how important the new audio Bible player was to her: "I can have peace listening to God's word every evening."



An audio Bible player catalogue showing the range of content on the device - nearly 900 items are available (northern China, December 2019; Photo: Mark McLeister).

Resourcing Wuhan Seminary

We were delighted recently to be able to contribute £1000 to work being undertaken by the FCC (Friends of the Church in China). This is to upgrade and enlarge the library at the Zhong Nan Theological Seminary in Wuhan. This Seminary is one of China's 21 legal Protestant education establishments, and the library was opened in 2019.

GIVE40

As we reported in our last Newsletter, the SCCG celebrated its 40th anniversary at the end of last year. 40 years of working with Chinese partners in the areas of health and education has been a privilege.

We have a fundraising initiative to mark this milestone and to support new and continuing work. Can you 'GIVE 40'? You can support us regularly (e.g. £4 a month) or in a one-off donation. *Full details are on our website here: <https://www.sccg.org.uk/give40/>*



Our anniversary cake - delicious!

Scottish Churches China Group

苏格兰教会中国会



NEWSLETTER



A seated exercise class for elderly residents of Nanjing, November 2023

NEW CHALLENGES

In this issue, we are featuring a couple of highlights from our recent visit to China, including inspiring work in Nanjing with orphaned children with life-limiting illnesses. We were encouraged by seeing all our partners in person for the first time in four years, and by the depth of conversation and discussion. Vital work is continuing, and it was especially good to see the medical care provided in Shenyang and the fantastic elderly and dementia services delivered by our partner The Amity Foundation in Nanjing. It was a very positive visit and there is much to follow up. Ms She Hongyu, Associate General Secretary of the Amity Foundation, who we visited, got in touch with us recently and said, "We truly look forward to close cooperation with SCCG. You are such a wonderful asset and support to us!"

But we cannot pretend that the current Chinese context is an easy one. Many people are now working under difficulty. One partner in Shenyang is now no longer able to work in hospitals as he and other church volunteers were previously able to do. They helped provide spiritual care to patients and to work with other palliative care volunteers and support staff. One medical person we met explained that, since she is a Christian, she is not allowed to hold her own passport and so travelling abroad is almost impossible. We also heard of specialisms being sidelined due to financial constraints as well.

Chinese society is undergoing huge changes just now, putting pressure on young people especially, and there are job shortages. We appreciated the openness and honesty from the people we met, as well as their very warm hospitality. We ask for your prayers to support our friends and partners.

A Place of Hope: Nanjing Rainbow

by Patricia Johnston

"I was just a mum who wanted to give them a cuddle but came to realise they deserved more than that." Linda Huang, Nanjing

Last November, I had probably the most moving visit I've ever made in China. It was to the Nanjing Rainbow Care Centre for critically ill children and a meeting with Linda Huang, the Centre's director.

The Centre occupies two floors of an orphanage on the outskirts of Nanjing. It's a really bright, airy place and specialises in caring for children who have been abandoned, primarily because they have life-limiting illnesses.

It may seem cruel that any parent would abandon their child because they have a life-limiting illness but that doesn't take into account the difficulty of many families' circumstances in China. It is not well-understood that there is a private healthcare system in China which is only affordable for some people.

Also, so much of the Chinese healthcare system is focussed on cure, which is all well and good, but not everything can be cured. If the patient has a chronic condition, then medical insurance will only pay for certain costs or not pay out at all.



For the children at the Rainbow Centre with life-limiting illness, even if their families could afford medical insurance, it is unlikely that would meet any of the treatment costs. Faced with that harsh reality, giving your child up to an organisation that will look after them and provide them with symptom-relieving medical support may be the most loving thing a parent can do.

The dedication of Linda and her staff is inspiring. She told us, 'I was just a Mum who wanted to give them a cuddle but came to realise they deserved more than that.' A poster in the corridor, outlines the ethos of the charity – no matter how short the child's life may be, that child is loved, valued and entitled to as rich and fulfilling a life as is possible to give them.

Children are cared for by a small, dedicated team of staff which includes care givers ('Care Mommas'), a social worker, a doctor

and two teachers. The charity is also developing a 'Family Centre' where foster parents (five are registered so far) come to spend time with some of the children. At the moment, this is the only way the staff feel the children can have some experience of family life as they are too ill to go to the foster parents' home.

One of the most touching moments came when we were being shown around the various rooms at the Centre. In one of the bright play areas a young boy lay on a mat, their head on a pillow. He appeared to be asleep but we were told by Linda that he was 'end of life' and it wouldn't be long. On the basis that the sense of hearing is thought to be the last to go, the staff wanted the child to be able to hear what was going on around them and to know that, as their life came to an end, they were safe, not alone, and surrounded by other children and staff who loved him.

The final moments and death of a child is something that the staff face repeatedly, and Linda spoke to us of the toll this takes on all of them. We were privileged when she shared with us three occasions she was near to giving up because she felt she had let a child down and what she was offering just wasn't enough. Even in our short visit, it was obvious how devoted the staff are to the children in their care. Please uphold them in prayer.

I was delighted to be able to give Linda the sum of £2,342.50, funds raised by the 2022 Photo Competition of the Global Focus Working Group of the United Free Church in Scotland, and the sale of the 2023 calendar based on the photos. Linda was extremely touched that Christians in Scotland had raised this money for them. The Centre has plans for further development so, hopefully, that will go a little way towards them being realised.

In January 2024, Nanjing Rainbow celebrated its 10th anniversary. Linda told us they started with six



beds and now have 36 in Nanjing and 24 in Xiamen (in south east China). There are also three 'end of life' beds in a Nanjing paediatric hospital. Given that the city has a population greater than Scotland, that is not nearly enough.

The SCCG will now build up our relationship with the Nanjing Rainbow Centre. We hope to link them up with organisations in Scotland that may offer further insights and mutual support. Linda has heard of CHAS (Children's Hospices Across Scotland) and their facilities at Rachel House in Kinross and Robin House in Balloch. She was interested in a potential visit to Scotland to visit them, and this is certainly something the SCCG would be keen to support and arrange if we can fund it.

Scottish Missionaries Remembered



Archive material collected in Shenyang, November 2023

Many of you will be aware that in the 19th and early 20th centuries Scottish missionaries were actively involved in establishing schools and hospitals in China. They played an important role in the development of education and healthcare systems, contributing to the modernisation of Chinese society. It was moving that this legacy was mentioned often to us by our Chinese partners when we met with them last year.

While in Shenyang, we met with two women who, independently, are keeping alive the memory of the Scots missionaries who came to North East China in the 1800 and 1900's. One lady is a lecturer in the local seminary and has built, and continues to build, an exhibition that focuses on all the Scots missionaries who came to the area. This includes all types of missionary - whether they came to share the Gospel through peaching and building churches or by establishing hospitals and medical schools. Dugald Christie and Shengjing Hospital feature in this exhibition but her real passion and expertise is the work and witness of the Scottish missionary, Dr John Ross. One of the things she really admires about him is his vision to train indigenous clergy to build the church in their home area.

The other lady is a Christian medical doctor whose focus is on preserving some of the original Shengjing hospital buildings and establishing a permanent museum to all the medical missionaries, many of them Scots, who came to Liaoning Province. She has been inspired to do this as her great grandfather studied under Dr Christie and Dr Frank Garven. (One of Dr Garven's daughters, who was born in Shenyang, was a faithful supporter of the work of the SCCG until her death in 2012.)

Like John Ross, Dr Christie and his colleagues were determined to train indigenous medics who would be able to replace the 'foreigners' in due course and build their own medical services and college. As we went round the various campuses of Shengjing Hospital and saw the work that is being done in so many different fields of medicine and research, how amazed and proud Dr Christie and Dr Garven would be at the way their vision has offered so much to so many in China.

Any history of Shengjing Hospital will always include the story of Dr Arthur Jackson. When he arrived, by train, in Shenyang there was a plague threatening to engulf the city. Dr Jackson bravely decided to remain at the station and treat people as they came off the trains in the hope of stopping at least some of those infected from going into the city. His dedication was greatly appreciated but, sadly, it cost him his life as he died, of the plague, just six weeks later. Some years ago, I was privileged to be in correspondence with Dr Jackson's great niece as she collated all of the letters he sent home before his death.



Tricia Johnston and Linda Huang in the entrance to the Nanjing Rainbow Centre, November 2023