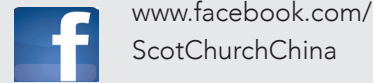


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Website: www.sccg.org.uk

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.

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The Scottish Churches China Group is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation.



More 40th celebrations!

by John Austen, Chair of the Friends of the Church in China



The 40th anniversary of the Friends of the Church in China (FCC) in October 2024 was a wonderful occasion which allowed us to look back with gratitude and also look to the future. Twenty-three members met in person in London, and a further 33 joined us on Zoom – including friends from China who were able to contribute to the meeting. We enjoyed pastries from Borough Market and ended our time together eating noodles from a local shop!

We had an excellent year in 2024 with several members able to travel to China – some for personal visits to friends and others, more officially, to strengthen our links with the China Christian Council, the Amity Foundation and with several Christian seminaries.

Some of our most committed members cannot now travel to China but do want to stay in touch and involved in what is going on. With this in mind, we began a monthly Zoom meeting, inviting people as speakers who could share recent experiences of going to China, or who have particular areas of knowledge.

These meetings have been successful, attracting between 20 and 30 members. Speakers have included Dave Ho Young, part of the 'Tea House' group (which supports and empowers clergy who have Chinese heritage in the Church of England); Mark McLeister, of the University of Edinburgh, who told us about his latest visits to China. Mark, who does anthropological research, highlighted that where church attendances have fallen, post Covid, that can affect churches in various important ways, including a significant reduction in giving.

Sheila McClure shared her book about her great-grandmother who was a missionary in Shandong province with the China Inland Mission. Many FCC members have family missionary connections that go back long before the establishment of the People's Republic of China, and Sheila's grandmother is a reminder to us of the extraordinary courage, commitment and faith of missionaries over a long period in China.

We have continued to build links with Chinese seminaries and, for 2025, we are in discussion with two more scholars who have requested a visit to the British Isles. We will support their visits, which will include attendance at a theological conference in Oxford. Every other year, we also host a member of the staff team from the Amity Foundation in Nanjing, for a month's professional development here in the UK, and we are making arrangements for that to happen again in 2025.

More information online at www.thefcc.org

Bibles for China

We are delighted to welcome Mr Norman Liddle of the Scottish Bible Society (SBS) to our AGM and Plenary in March. The SBS works with partners in Scotland and across the world with an aim for all people to have a copy of the Bible in a language they understand, a form they can access, and at an affordable price.

The outcome is, they say, "to aid genuine encounters with God." One case study they share from China is of a young man called Zhang, who says, "Reading the Bible moved me to repentance. The Word of God has strengthened me to face the challenges of life."



The SBS also work with our friends the Amity Foundation in Nanjing, specifically at the Nanjing Amity Printing Company, which is a joint venture between the Amity Foundation and the United Bible Societies. Their goal is to provide affordable bibles to Christians in China, which they do by working with very thin paper. (They say that they are 'thin paper experts'!)

As we well know at the SCCG with our own work, while China is nominally a 'rich' country, many millions of people there still experience extreme poverty. This makes the support given to believers in China by the Scottish Bible Society a really vital one.

Scottish Churches China Group

苏格兰教会中国会



NEWSLETTER



Keeping Connected

During the global pandemic, it became clear - perhaps to all of us - how important different ways of staying in touch are. We certainly felt the loss of being able to travel to China to meet partners and see projects on the ground. We also could not welcome visitors from China here in Scotland and fulfil any of their plans for training and mutual discussion. But other ways of communicating came to the fore and we appreciated email and Zoom an awful lot!

Some of our newest projects now heavily rely on an online component - for example, the skill-sharing 'Project ECHO' sessions for palliative care and rehabilitation services. The adaption of a brand new professional Chinese Certificate for palliative care staff will also use vital online resources.

However, given the ever-changing political situation, it is hard to beat being able to speak in person. It was a delight to be in China in November and December last year and get first-hand updates about the challenges and opportunities for our partners working in vital areas of medicine and education. The future will be a mixed-media of connections which brings challenges to find funding and support - but exciting opportunities too!

A Not-Very-Retired Pastor

by Mark Mcleister, Lecturer in Chinese Studies, the University of Edinburgh

Pastor Liu* formally retired as a church pastor in Huanghaicheng** at the age of seventy. He led his church community for more than fifty years, with his wife working alongside him. Although not ordained, or salaried, Pastor Liu's wife was popular as a listening ear and was very well respected for sharing her insights and wisdom to those in difficulty. The congregation originally began as a handful of Christians from Pastor Liu's village in the 1970s and over the years developed into Baisong Church with about 400 members. In the early 1980s, Pastor Liu would cycle the 15kms into the city to attend the only formally-opened church so that he could learn from the elderly pastor. As the congregation grew, it became the hub for a network of fellowships across the district. During his time as church leader, Pastor Liu never had a sabbatical and the only time he had away from the daily running of the church was for short-term Bible training in the provincial seminary.

Like many other retirees in Huanghaicheng, Pastor Liu has some responsibility for caring, in his case, for his grandson. However, unlike many other retirees in Huanghaicheng, he doesn't spend his days hanging out in the local parks, shopping on the Chinese online retailer *Pinduoduo*, or travelling. Now a widower (he lost his wife to cancer several years ago), he still spends his days serving the church congregation he established. Much of this service is behind-the-scenes. Pastor Liu was more than happy to hand over the leadership of the church to younger leaders of which there is no shortage. Pastor Liu is well-known for his ability in identifying and training future church leaders. Baisong Church is run by a dedicated team of pastors, elders and volunteers.

Due to recent government policy changes, namely the Measures of the Administration of Religious Personnel which came into effect in 2021, Pastor Liu is no longer officially permitted to preach because he has retired and therefore does not hold the necessary paperwork. However, this does not stop him from visiting people in their homes or the hospital, or paying visits to the fellowships and small groups which are dotted throughout the city district and into the countryside to pastor and "encourage" the Christians.

I had the privilege of accompanying Pastor Liu for a day over the Christmas period of 2023, when he visited a number of fellowships deep in the countryside. The day began early in the morning and didn't finish until nearly 10pm. At each gathering, Pastor Liu joined in the Christmas celebrations as the believers sang Christmas carols for several hours, retold the Christmas story and prayed together. Of course, there was never a shortage of food at the gatherings! At the end of each meeting, people were reluctant to let Pastor Liu leave, and kept asking him to stay a little longer, a reflection of the care which Pastor Liu himself modelled over many years.

* We met Pastor Liu in a previous article – see SCCG Newsletter, Spring 2023

** A pseudonym



Huanghaicheng Christians celebrate Christmas with worship ... and food!



SCEN update

Simon Macaulay is Chair of the Scotland China Education Network

Despite challenges in the current situation in Scottish schools, SCEN is committed to try and ensure that an increasing number of young Scots have the opportunity to learn about China today – as well as at least some knowledge of Mandarin.

In 2025, we are planning a number of events, including the SCEN Lecture in March and a Youth Summit event in Edinburgh on 6 June which will bring together young people from schools across Scotland celebrating their learning of Mandarin.

Building on past developments, a number of schools are embarking on Mandarin learning for the first time, with more teachers becoming fully qualified to teach the language. The Confucius Institute for Scotland's Schools (CISS) is also identifying innovative ways of teaching the language, especially in remoter areas of Scotland, working with qualified teachers based in Glasgow.

Positive too is that, year-on-year, the number of young people with Scottish (SQA) qualifications in Chinese continues to rise.

However, there are challenges to be faced. Some schools are giving up providing Mandarin as a subject option – usually citing financial pressures and other priorities. The reality is that only a minority of young people in Scotland have the opportunity to learn about China and gain some knowledge of the language.

As China grows in importance in the world – especially for young people now in school – the challenge is great.

Palliative Care: Crossing Cultures

by Patricia Johnston, Advisor SCCG



In 2017, the SCCG enabled two specialist palliative care Macmillan Nurses to go and work with staff in the Shengjing Hospital palliative care ward. Part of the feedback we got from the nurses was there was a big cultural gap between how we, in Scotland, speak with a patient who is receiving palliative care, and their family, and how it is done in China. Most of the time in China, it is considered 'cruel' to tell a patient and their family that the diagnosis is terminal, whereas we would want there to be as much openness about the medical situation as the patient has indicated they would like.

Conversations with Chinese partners, during my recent visit in November 2024, showed that this cultural difference still exists.

Why, you might ask, is that an issue? Well, in many ways, it isn't. It is not up to us to impose our cultural understanding of palliative care on our Chinese partners. But the reason I've raised it is because of an exciting step forward, which has been the result of several months work responding to requests from Chinese partners to help palliative care become a medically-recognised speciality, which currently it is not.

The breakthrough has come with regard to staff training based on the 'European Certificate in Essential Palliative Care in China', and the possible development of a definitive Chinese Certificate.

We've been updating you on the progress of this project for a number of months now. The partnership is between Shengjing Hospital Palliative Care Ward, Beijing United Hospice and Palliative Cultural Center, the Princess Alice Hospice in Surrey and the SCCG. We have had a close working relationship with the palliative care ward at Shengjing Hospital for more than 25 years, and it has been a privilege to see Dr Wang Yumei, who heads that up, become a prominent and recognised, palliative care expert in North East China.



Dr Wang Yumei at Shengjing Hospital in 2023

Over the summer last year, there was a lot of activity and amendments, regarding the wording of a Memorandum of Understanding to develop a Chinese Certificate for palliative care. This, I'm pleased to say, came to fruition with the signing of the document in November (left). It was a really special occasion as this is the first time any kind of formal palliative care training has been introduced to China. A real milestone.

So, what happens now? Well, the basic timetable is that medical students in China will translate the material, senior doctors will proof read it, a website will need to be set up and course assessors appointed. It is then hoped that the first cohort of 'students' will take the course in the middle of 2025.

With regard to different cultural approaches to palliative care, here's where the European Certificate template is so helpful. The Certificate has already been adapted and rolled out elsewhere, for example, in India. The author of the European Certificate, Prof Max Watson, wants countries that don't have formal palliative care training to have access to it, but he also wants it to be culturally relevant. So, as part of the translation and proof reading stages, the traditions and culture of that country are woven into it.

So, while it introduces medical practices, treatments and insights, that might be new to a country, it does so within the context of the culture, traditions and practices of that country. For example, there is no point in keeping a section on the use of syringe drivers (for pain relief) if syringe drivers aren't used in those hospitals. Similarly, a section on discussing, with a patient, end of life care, in a culture where that isn't done, is replaced by practices that Chinese medical and nursing staff, patients and their families are comfortable with. These practices may change over time but they will change as and when our Chinese colleagues and friends see them as being relevant and there is an openness to accept them.