



CHRISTIAN FRIENDS OF KOREA

조선의 그리스도인 벗들

September 2017

"But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us...made us alive together with Christ...For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." - Ephesians 2: 4,7-10

CFK Technical and Treatment Teams Return from August Technical Visit

From August 15-31, Christian Friends of Korea team members continued ongoing humanitarian efforts in the DPRK, including installing our 16th and 17th solar/gravity clean water systems supported by volunteers from our Norwegian partner, Evangelisk Orientmisjon; mentoring activities at the National TB Reference Lab; and holding hepatitis B diagnostic and treatment clinics with our Australian NGO partner, Hepatitis B Free. With tensions in the region at an extremely high level, we were grateful for a productive and normal visit.



The August 2017 CFK technical team colleagues and staff at Haeju TB Rest Home.

We were very warmly received by our counterparts, and at all the facilities where we worked. The rhythms of life continued in Pyongyang, although traffic was perhaps a bit lighter than usual likely owing to persistently high fuel prices. Probably the most noticeable change from prior trips is that our base hotel (in Pyongyang) had far fewer guests coming and going. We usually eat there in a large dining room, with tables often filled by other guests of the hotel. There were several meals this time where our team members were the only guests.

We always face challenges on these visits – and this visit was no different. The rainy season did not subside until the tail end of our visit, making the water projects more challenging (and uncomfortable) to complete while working in driving rain, heat, and standing water in the ditches.



Oystein working cheerfully despite the heavy rain and difficult work

Just after the main projects were completed, several members of our team also came down with GI sickness, including our drivers. So we spent an extra day in Haeju resting, and observed from the windows of our hotel a large youth rally that took place in the square in front of our hotel that afternoon. An estimated 3500 middle-high school students gathered that day, in uniform, standing in formation at attention through a live brass band performance, multiple speeches, and responding in unison to various cues for an hour or more. Much city life – especially on holidays – takes place in front of this hotel that overlooks the main city square where larger-than-life bronze statues of the first two leaders of the DPRK stand on marble pedestals against a dramatic background of evergreens and the mountains that rim Haeju. Activity starts before dawn every day when the steps leading up to the statues are swept clean by successive work or school groups, continuing there throughout the day and into the evening. Music plays from hidden loudspeakers, and spotlights brightly illuminate the statues

all night. Traffic slows as it passes the statues, and those going past on bicycles either get off their bikes and walk them along the street in front of the statues, or they ride a wide circuitous path far into the square on the far side of the statues before continuing on their way. The day we left Haeju, multiple uniformed groups gathered in the square, marched in formation up the steps, saluted and presented flowers before the statues.



Youth Day festivities observed from the hotel overlooking a large square in Haeju.

Water projects bring lasting change to care centers – delivering clean, protected water to many locations throughout the care center and improving the quality of life for staff and patients alike. Working side by side with them, we bring about true transformation—resulting in clean water and many other downstream impacts to each and every one of these health communities where hundreds of patients receive treatment every month. What a privilege it is to offer a cup of cold, clean water every day in Jesus’ name to all who are cared for at these facilities, both now and long into the future.

National TB Reference Lab Mentorship Efforts Continue

While the guys were working in Haeju on the water projects, Dr. Ed Desmond mentored the staff at the National TB Reference Lab. With TB incidence rates in DPRK now among the highest in the world and continuing to rise, it is critical that laboratory capacity strengthening efforts continue at the lab. The staff has come a very long way since the NRL development project began in earnest in 2009, yet TB diagnostics is a very dynamic and exacting field, and ongoing technical assistance is critically necessary.

In his own words: John Crane

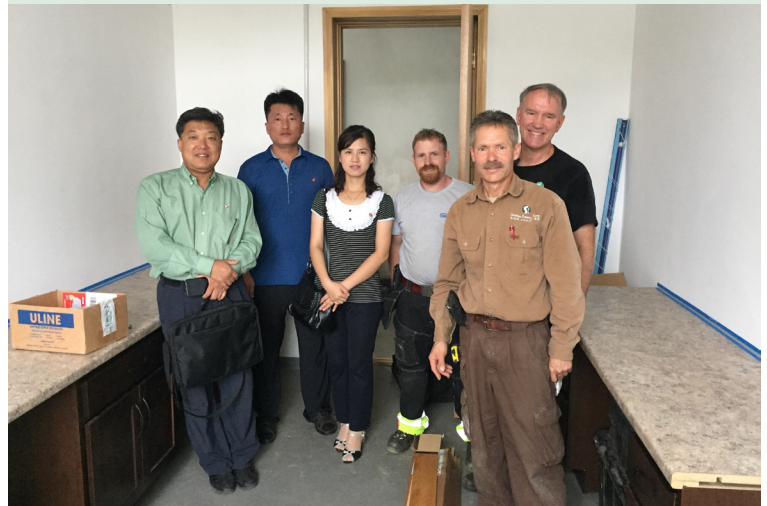
CFK Volunteer

Amidst the bombast and international turmoil of August, 2017, I found myself for 17 days in the DPRK with a small CFK construction team made up of Norwegians (Oystein, Eivind and Gunnar) and Americans (Dave, Rob and Stone). Rob provided overall leadership while we



received great support and help from our DPRK guides and drivers. At each location we worked side by side with local personnel, giving opportunities for points of cooperation and interactions.

Our trip purpose was to glorify God in this place. On my first DPRK trip (in November 2016), I joined a CFK construction team working on the completion of hepatitis labs in Pyongyang and Kaesong. Now, the cool, dry weather of November was a distant memory from the sultry climate of August. Early in the visit while we waited for critical supplies to arrive from China, our team spent the first couple of days installing cabinets and countertops at the Pyongyang #2 Hepatitis Hospital. The hospital lab staff now have a very functional office just a few steps away from their lab benches to do paperwork and other tasks, and our colleagues also have a good space where they can prepare for our visits and oversee ongoing work.



CFK volunteers work to install cabinets and countertops at the Pyongyang #2 Hepatitis Hospital.

Our next project was to complete the solar-powered water system at the Pyongyang TB Hospital Pediatric Ward. This care center is located across the Taedong River in a neighborhood of one story tile roof homes. Our goal here was to take out the existing hand pump from a previously-drilled CFK well and replace it with an electric solar-powered pump, install solar panels, and connect it to the system (installed by the CFK team in May), bringing running water to two outside and seven indoor water hydrants. It looked like an easy one-day job under clear, if hot and humid, weather. We were surprised to find the hand pump installed at a shallow depth with a relatively short distance to the “bottom” of the bore hole. Recollections were stirred that this was a well where the drill bit and shaft were lost at the bottom of the well when the well was drilled. We prepared and ran the electric pump into the well and almost immediately the pump

had sucked the well dry. It was a real disappointment, knowing the facility had been waiting for a long time to be connected. A new, deeper well would have to be drilled, and we will have to come back yet another time to finish this project. We left promising to return the next day to reinstall the hand pump. Sunday, after church, in heavy rain, we put the hand pump back into the well. We hope a productive well can be drilled by October so we can finish this project then.

Meanwhile, our shipment from China finally arrived late on this same rainy Sunday afternoon, and Heidi went to the warehouse with our colleagues to oversee the unloading of the shipment and make sure the right pieces went to the right places for the coming week's work.

Monday morning the construction team headed off to Haeju in South Hwanghae Province. Haeju has strong historical Christian roots - the first TB sanitarium in Korea was located there, as was other Protestant missions. It was in Haeju where Dr. Sherwood Hall also initiated Christmas Seals in Korea. Our first stop was at the S Hwanghae #2 Hepatitis Hospital (HHH in Haeju) - a new location for us. This will be the first expansion site (beyond Pyongyang and Kaesong) for the Hepatitis B treatment project, and in order to prepare for a lab renovation project next year, CFK wanted to get started this year by arranging for well drilling (completed earlier this summer) and installing a solar powered, gravity-fed water system there. This facility is located in a flat agricultural area just southwest of the city of Haeju on the coastal plain and required the construction of a tower to provide necessary elevation for the water tank. We began our work by marking the placement of the water tank tower, solar panels, hydrants, and connections to the future CFK Hepatitis Lab.

Our second stop was at the Haeju TB Rest Home (HTBRH) which is located on a scenic rocky bluff overlooking the bay and near the site of Dr. Hall's TB

hospital. This well was drilled several years ago, and we have been back twice to repair their hand pump, so it was a privilege to finally be able to complete a permanent water system here for this facility. Here we also marked the locations for the water storage tank, water lines, hydrants, and solar panels. Though some digging had begun, it was obvious that the soil conditions here were very rocky (including hard sandstone and weathered granite) and trench digging would be a long, slow, and difficult process. So we decided to get started at the HHH.



The CFK Team and hospital staff stand with the completed water tower.



More than sixty men worked together to dig the trenches for the water system.

Tuesday was a whirl of activity with more than 60 men (including scores of non-uniformed soldiers) digging trenches while the CFK team focused on assembling the tower for the water tank, installing electrical panels, and preparing hydrants. Interestingly, the HHH was built on at least three feet of fill containing cups, plates, fragments of pottery, scraps of metal, and various household refuse. A rusted car jack came out of one of the trenches. An archeologist would have had a field day. Our third day in Haeju began with a deluge of biblical proportions -- rain coming in sheets and blowing sideways. In the afternoon, a truck crane arrived to lift the water tower and set the water storage tank on top. We held our breath as this undersized machine accomplished its task. By lunchtime on day four,

we completed the system at HHH. We were able to return to this site several days after the construction was completed, and they are thrilled with the clean water, its supply to multiple areas in the compound and our planned work together there next year to renovate their laboratory. The director of this facility and his staff worked very closely with our team, taking care of necessary logistics, showing warm hospitality, and diving into all the hard work that was required to make the project a success.

By midday on Friday we had moved back to complete the work at the HTBRH. By the end of the day we had the tank set and run the water lines. At the end of the fifth Haeju day we had completed 99% of the installation of the water system at the HTBRH. Sunday was a day of enforced rest in our hotel due to illness of both members of our team and of our drivers. On Monday we returned to the HTBRH to load our tools, orient the staff on the new system, and after a stop at the HHH to pick up a few leftover supplies, we were off to Pyongyang in what developed into a driving rain.

On Tuesday, we returned to the Pyongyang TB Hospital Pediatric Ward and completed installation of the solar panels and electrical connections. With a new well on the schedule to be drilled prior to CFK's return in October, running water for this facility in the foreseeable future is almost certain. Our last full day included taking inventory of tools and materials, and arranging of supplies in the CFK storage containers, an afternoon of sightseeing, and a farewell dinner.

As we boarded the Air Koryo flight from Pyongyang on August 31 - among the last Americans to leave prior to the US travel ban, I couldn't help but think of the words in Revelations 7:17, ***"For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes"*** and also Rev. 22:20 - ***"Come Lord Jesus!"***

Hepatitis B Program Expands

Meanwhile, we were also preparing for the hepatitis B clinics by collecting blood samples from patients in both Pyongyang and Kaesong for lab analysis, getting the results entered into the database, and printing the results for program physicians who arrived later in the visit to hold clinics in both Kaesong and Pyongyang from August 22 - 26. Our first patients were enrolled in the program and started treatment nearly one year ago, and they came back for their 12-month checkups. It was a true joy to see so many of them again, looking healthier than previous visits, and feeling much better. Our patients come from many different backgrounds, and face tremendous pressures and challenges in their daily lives. It is hard for us to completely understand the hardships they



Pyongyang Hepatitis lab staff mentoring the lab staff at the Kaesong Hepatitis Hospital. .

endure. Many expressed in body language what one person put so well into words, ***"a huge weight has lifted – I am not so afraid anymore."*** Many took time to say thank you – and there were many beautiful smiles, and ***"see you again soon."*** So far in the program we have started 705 onto treatment, and screened over 1400 more – what a privilege to be able to directly impact so many lives with truly life-saving treatment. The families of these patients are also greatly impacted as they gain hope that their loved one can recover from severe illness and possibly live a normal and healthy life with continued treatment.

In our screening for Hepatitis B, our protocol has required that we also test for Hepatitis C. Hepatitis C is also a virus that is transmitted through blood and is the other major cause of chronic liver disease throughout the world. Our program screens for hepatitis C as patients can be infected with both. So far we have found about 50 patients



Terry Smith registers patients for the clinic.

who are either positive for C or co-infected with both B and C; many are very sick with liver failure. We hope soon to be able to add hepatitis C treatment to our program. Hepatitis C can now be treated (cured, in most cases) by hepatitis C specific antiviral medicine taken for 12-24 weeks. The catch is that the medicine is much more expensive, and the treatment protocol requires another diagnostic test which is not currently available in the DPRK. We are working to make this test available, and to source the medicines needed to treat Hep C patients. Please pray for the patients on Hepatitis B medicines, and those waiting to receive Hepatitis C medicine. While we are truly amazed at the progress of this program in such a short time, there are many ongoing challenges within the program, even outside of all the external difficulties we face such as the new travel ban on American citizens.

In her own words – Dr. Alice Unah Lee

It has now been 12 months since we started our first cohort of patients on therapy for hepatitis B. I recall clearly the emotions of that trip last year, the expectant faces and the overwhelming relief and joy as we witnessed a miracle at work. We now have over 700 patients on treatment, and very sadly, we have lost 15 patients to the disease, some as young as 22. When faced with this brutal reality, the sense of urgency to expand our program becomes quite desperate.



HOPE program doctors, David, Alice, and Christine consult on a patient.

Of course, these are extraordinary times, with uncertainty about this trip right until a few days prior to our departure; the option of not travelling really not being an option at all. The hepatitis team included Heidi, Terry and Stone who readied the patients for our doctors, David, Christine and myself. Heading into the country, we all wondered if any of us were in our right minds, and whether we were doing the right thing. Of course, there was really no need for this as this trip was just like any other. Whether being greeted by the familiar faces at the North Korean embassy in Beijing, or the smiles that transformed the faces of immigration officers in Pyongyang, patients as they recognized the familiar returning team, the sense of business as usual and of welcome that waited for us was even sweeter than usual.

There is now a quiet rhythm to the program, broken by bursts of energy when faced with technical challenges or with moments of happy joy. The clinics now seemed to hum along, the smiles across patients' faces, the contentment of the local physicians now familiar with the program as they finally have a little empowerment to help the ailing patients. Witnessing the physical, emotional and spiritual change is something that is hard to describe; many are unrecognizable, a little shy about sharing how they feel, they too find it hard to explain what it is like not to be constantly suffering, to dare to hope, to be well and to expect a different ending. At the same time, there is complete acceptance of whatever fate one is given; the calm way a diagnosis of liver cancer is received, or when all we can do is say how sorry we are that we have nothing we can offer. I am constantly humbled by their grace and bravery. It inspires me that we can and must do more; treat more patients, care for them no matter how complex and daunting the task may initially be, to continue to push forward adding to the program in every way possible, with more love, and ensure that we tell their stories.



Newly arrived shipment of Tenofovir; enough for 941 patients for a year!

The delights are real: receiving our second shipment of medicines and seeing it in the store rooms, the smiles of the patients as they came to say hi, that they are feeling better, and the many new patients having heard what we are about tentatively exploring whether they too might trust us, familiar nods from waiting patients passed in the corridors of the hospitals, doctors with a sense of purpose - so many tasks to attend to. Rain and more rain, detours with streets flooded, doctors in their singlets and pants rolled up clearing the debris from the flood, I wondered if there was anything that the staff would not do.

We learn from each other always, the hunger for knowledge never quite satisfied. Patients and doctors alike, eyes wide for more. Local books old and tattered with years of page turning, stained, thin pages filled with facts likely outdated but precious as ever. Wishing that we had more time, that the days were longer so we could

do more, share more, learn and teach more. Reality has now set back in as I write this from the comforts of life in Australia, wondering if it were all but a distant dream. But the faces are real and they are waiting for us to return, with the promise of ongoing love and commitment to them.

Travel Ban Effective September 1 Opens Greater Uncertainty for CFK's Ongoing Humanitarian Efforts

With the US travel ban taking effect on September 1, we now face greater uncertainty for US passport holders involved in CFK's ongoing work. Now, in addition to getting DPRK visa approval, each US passport holder will have to get a special US passport in order to legally visit the DPRK in connection with humanitarian activities. We have already applied for special approval from the US government for our fourth 2017 visit to the DPRK planned for mid-October—a trip that has been in the works now for many months and that has already been preliminarily approved by the DPRK side. Please pray that the US review/approval process will go smoothly, and that our work will be able to continue without interruption. In addition to confirming the arrival/distribution of 11 shipments sent in recent months to many TB and hepatitis care centers, we will also need to do follow up exams on over 500 Hepatitis B patients, and assess new patients for treatment. We also need to continue mentoring activities at the National TB Reference Lab and the hepatitis labs, and make some repairs. A solid foundation of work has been built up over many years, with strong relationships established and a great deal of mutual trust. We pray that this will not be lost in the buffeting winds of the overall political and security context. The DPRK's Ministry of Public Health and our various DPRK colleagues are eager for us to return and continue ongoing lifesaving work. We pray also that the US government will allow this work to continue unhindered.

Our teams spent time studying 1 Corinthians and also Ephesians during our devotional time each morning.

Our time in the Word, worship and prayer together each day continually reminds us of our Lord's faithfulness, His sovereignty, and our need for grace, and encourages us in the daily challenges and issues that arise. We pray that His love will be evident in all that we do and say, and we see His hand in countless ways, both big and small. While we were very mindful and clear eyed about the current context and external environment, God granted His peace in and through our circumstances, sufficient for each day. Thank you for your faithful prayers and support that undergird these efforts and make it possible for this work to continue despite daunting challenges and extreme tensions. As we departed for home this time, various local people expressed wistfulness at the current situation and said they hoped we could come back again very soon. As one official put it, *"our government's policy is a 'people oriented' policy. Christian Friends of Korea is among the forefront NGOs providing real help to the peoples' lives. We are happy to invite groups truly helping our people. We hope you will be able to continue your work which all people recognize as being a great help to the people of our country."*



Patients smile with gratitude after receiving their medication.



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