

# Christian Friends of Korea

## 조선의 그리스도인 벗들

July 2012

*"Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbors. Then even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, and they will give honor to God when He judges the world."*  
1 Peter 2:12 (NLT)

### CFK Technical and Confirming Team Visits DPRK June 2-23, 2012

As we reflect on three weeks (June 2-23) spent working and traveling in the DPRK with 14 other team members engaged in various activities—ranging from hands-on lab training, to equipment repair and delivery, to water system



*Confirming team and MoPH guides visiting Unyul TB Rest Home*

installations, confirmation of shipments, greenhouse assessments, and site assessments for new water systems - we can't help but be thankful for God's active and abiding presence in our midst.

We shared many moments of joy and warm fellowship - but also moments of heartbreak and urgency from seeing people in a protracted battle against tuberculosis (TB), a deadly but treatable disease threatening the lives of over 100,000 people in North Korea. During this visit our multi-national team (including members from Norway, Scotland, New Zealand, Canada and the US) was able to travel to 23 of our 28 supported health care facilities. What a privilege it was to bring your love and greetings to the directors, staff and patients of these facilities, to tell them of your love for God, and to bring them your tangible and life-affirming expressions of His love and care for them. The visit began with the arrival of our team on



*Our director, Heidi Linton, greeting the National TB Reference Lab director*

the 2nd of June, when we learned that the majority of our seasoned team of North Korean colleagues had been reassigned to new positions, and replaced by four new colleagues.

Over the course of three weeks, we enjoyed working with and getting to know this new team very much, but the abruptness of the transition and the loss of long-time trusted colleagues was admittedly challenging.

We learned during previous trips to form sub-teams to do various kinds of work simultaneously - and due to the limited time and our projected goals, this trip was no exception. For three weeks, one sub-team was engaged in hands-on intensive training and mentoring of staff at the National TB Reference Laboratory. Through our partnership with Stanford University, the Bay Area TB Consortium and other volunteer lab professionals, we are continuing to build technical expertise, skills and experience in the lab so that accurate and reliable culture and drug sensitivity testing can be done within the country - a core foundation piece in the fight against TB. Once this is in place, diagnosis and treatment for multi-drug resistant TB patients can be expanded, and greater measures can be taken to prevent TB. We are grateful for the talented and motivated DPRK lab staff, but please remember them in your prayers as they work hard to study, learn, and gain experience in a highly technical and complex field amidst many ongoing challenges.



*Lab training team with staff of the NTRL*



*A volunteer having blood drawn*



## Clean Water Systems Installed in Kaesong

After attending church together on Sunday, our water sub-team of four people loaded up the vehicle with various equipment, tools and materials and left Pyongyang to complete water projects at two health care facilities in Kaesong.

Tucked into a rocky mountainside on the outskirts of Kaesong City, just below the ancient stone wall that marks the boundary of the capital city of the Koryo dynasty (918-1392 AD), are two adjoining health care facilities - a rest home for recovering TB patients, and a hospital caring for those suffering from acute hepatitis (you can find these places on Google Earth - their coordinates are 37 degrees 59' 14.57"N/126 degrees 32'00.97"E and 37 degrees 59'08.11"N/126 degrees 32'00.55"E, respectively). These facilities have struggled for years to care for over 1,000 inpatients annually without adequate supplies of clean water. The TB rest home would collect water in a small cistern fed by a spring that slowed to a trickle in the dry spring months; the hepatitis hospital used 2 hand-dug shallow wells (7' deep) that also tended to dry up in the spring and were easily contaminated by runoff.

From June 3-9, our team of four Americans worked onsite with our Ministry of Public Health colleagues and scores of local North Koreans, installing two 2,000 gallon water tanks, solar frames and panels, several hundred feet of water lines, 17 frost-free hydrants, and solar-powered pumps into wells (50 meters and 45 meters deep, respectively) that had been drilled recently with equipment donated by Wellspring. What a joyous day it was when the water was turned on at both



*Heidi talks of God's love to the staff and patients of Kaesong TB Rest Home*

places using power produced by solar panels to fill the large tanks quickly! And what a privilege it was at the end of both projects to be able to gather the staff and patients together and tell them of God's love, made evident through the provision of clean water. We shared that this was made possible through the prayers and fundraising efforts of Korean-American teenagers from four Irvine, CA churches who came together for a hunger fast on March 24th and raised funds for



*A new water tank overlooks the Kaesong TB Rest Home while volunteers finish the water system*

several months in support of the project. As a parting gift to each director, we gave them wristbands marked with NK[24] to remind them that young people half a world away love them, for Jesus' sake, and were willing to fast for 24 hours and intercede for them in prayer. What a privilege it is to impact the lives of over a thousand patients who are being cared for there every year! As one county health official said, ***"These are the 3rd and 4th water systems you have installed at hospitals and rest homes here in Kaesong. You have helped the people of Kaesong so much - we will***



*Kaesong TB Rest Home director receives his own NK[24] bracelet*

***never forget it. Thank you, and please thank all of your donors. We are so grateful, and please come back soon!"***



*Clean water is flowing freely for the first time at the Kaesong Hepatitis Hospital thanks to NK[24]*

While we were in Kaesong, we were able to check on the previous water systems we had installed, and noted at the Kaesong TB hospital that large fields lying fallow last year were now planted with thriving crops of potatoes, corn and other vegetables - which the director noted was due to irrigation water that is now available as a result of the water system we installed here last year. Water brings life!



*A field lying fallow at the Kaesong TB Hospital before a new water system was installed in November 2011. Now the field is lush with potato and corn crops!*



## Confirming and Assessments Completed at 23 Places

On the 12th, the water installation team departed, and we were joined on the 14th by 6 new team members, including major donor representatives and greenhouse team members. The purpose of this part of the visit was to travel to our various supported facilities, confirming the arrival of multiple shipments of food, medicine, and greenhouse kits, and completing site assessments for locations in need





*Rick Armstrong bids farewell to the Kaesong TB Rest Home director*

of greenhouses and clean water. Many of these places are end-of-the-road destinations, requiring hours spent in the car jostling along very dusty and rough roads. Each place is unique - often situated in very peaceful, beautiful natural settings, but frequently

lacking even the most basic amenities. While at some places we can see clear progress, the needs far outpace our limited resources and much work remains to be done. At least ten places are really desperate for reliable clean water - especially in June, during the driest time of the year - and we hope to drill more water wells and install solar-powered, gravity-fed water systems as time and funding allow. Meanwhile, in the short term, with the help of a donor group represented on the recent visit, we hope to pilot a project to send ceramic water filters to places where we cannot install systems right away so they can still drink clean, safe, filtered water without first having to boil it. These ceramic filters cost about \$30 each and will last for years with very basic care.



*CFK volunteers pose for a photo with staff and volunteers of the Kaesong Hepatitis Hospital after installing the new clean water system together*

## Observations on the Overall Situation

During our travels, many hospital directors expressed concern that the drier-than-usual spring would impact the harvest this year. The rice planting was nearly finished, and some paddy fields that should have been flooded with water were dry due to the water/irrigation shortage. Meanwhile, corn growth ranged widely in development, from seedlings only a few inches high to well-developed stalks nearly 3' high - sometimes even within the same field (likely due to soil condition, as well as moisture). We saw several "bucket brigades" trying to get needed water to thirsty fields during our travels. From the car windows, we saw the winter wheat and barley crops being harvested, as were potatoes. While these crops usually comprise only 7-10 percent of the

total annual food supply, they are very important since they are harvested during the critical lean season of the year when food is needed to tide people over until the main harvest begins in September.

Food supply is precarious for many and remains a continuing concern, especially for TB and hepatitis care facilities. In general terms, when asked, directors noted that about 50-70 percent of the food supply at most CFK supported facilities comes through the output of our greenhouses, and through shipments of canned meat or dried vegetable soup mix made possible through our partners, Christian Aid Ministries and the Mennonite Central Committee. In most cases, CFK provides at least 50-70 percent of their available protein supply. We are told that patients, on average, gain 2-3 kilograms (12 pounds) total during residential treatment.



*A fully functional passive solar greenhouse*

Nutrition is vital to an active immune system, and our North Korean counterparts shared their appreciation for our well-rounded and comprehensive approach to TB care - which includes clean water, good nutrition, and appropriate medicine and medical care. Even so, many barriers and impediments remain in the system, and it takes prayer, time, persistence and considerable resources to bring lasting change to many facilities and the patients they serve.



*N. Hwanghae TB Hospital staff person holds a cucumber taken from their vibrant greenhouse*

## Hwangju Director Awarded Special Prize

It was a joy to again visit Hwangju TB Rest Home - this time, together with the donor representative who acted so quickly when we expressed a need several years ago for roofing materials - the first step in the complete rebuilding of this rest home. It was a great privilege to introduce the director to the donor, to look around at all the recent changes



*The director shows his provincial prize: A Kim Il Sung watch!*





*A photo of the former Hwangju TB Rest Home hangs in the director's meeting room at the newly renovated building as a constant reminder of the changes they have undergone*

at the facility, and to share stories from our work together over many years. This director was publically recognized in April by being awarded a provincial prize for his exemplary work to improve this facility. The director's humble and sincere appreciation for our help in making this high honor possible was a precious gift to us during this visit. When asked if he was ready to "graduate" from receiving support from CFK, he said, **"We can make it on our own if we continue in this fashion and improve in this way. Then we should be able to manage. We are in a transition time right now, so the support is helpful, but I believe in the near future we should be able to."** Later, as we looked around the facility, we had the opportunity to talk freely with three young men who had been undergoing treatment there for some time. They spoke very frankly, and with radiant smiles, saying to us, **"Without this place, without the care and medicine, we would probably have died. If I hadn't come here, I don't know if I would be alive or not...thank you so much."** What a privilege it is for us to share God's love and hope with patients like this through your tangible expressions of love, care and prayers.



*The fully renovated Hwangju TB Rest Home*

## Major impressions:

1) Training continues to be a very significant need across multiple sectors in the DPRK, and we hope very much to begin construction of a new training center at the National TB Reference Hospital in early 2013, to provide meeting space for expanded training. So far we have raised \$46,620 towards our goal of \$115,000 for construction of this

facility. In the meantime, we expect to continue intensive hands-on training at the National TB Reference Lab, building skills and developing systems towards international accreditation.



*A man tests out the newly installed frost-free hydrant*

3) In addition to ongoing shipments of food and medicine, many places also need roofing materials, doors/windows, and tile to improve shelter for sick patients, and cushioned floor matting to improve patient rest and comfort.



*Donated food, blankets and plastic*

4) Finally, we hope to send more greenhouse kits, as they continue to prove very beneficial in providing greater food security, especially during the winter and early spring, to many remote facilities. We ask for your prayers and help as this work continues.



*The inside of a working greenhouse*

## A Full, Yet Heavy Heart...

We return from our travels with very mixed emotions, to be sure. Pyongyang continues to develop at a more rapid pace - with large new apartment and other buildings nearing completion, a more active commercial sector, and much more lighting at night and traffic by day than ever before. Yet the pervasive hand of the government and the transition to new leadership is clearly evident in newly-finished slogans and signs all across the country -



*Future training center to be built on top of the bottom level storage facility featured here*

2) We hope to drill water wells in partnership with Wellspring and the DPRK's Office of Groundwater Management Planning at multiple needy facilities in the coming months, installing hand pumps until full solar/gravity systems can be provided at a later date.



in even the most remote places. It can take months for greatly-needed goods to reach their final destinations, but the rolling out of political mandates is highly efficient in comparison. And while we give thanks for the real trust and mutual respect that enable us to work together to bring real change to many very rural places - we also experience frustration and dismay that the pace of such change lags significantly behind what is needed to save the lives of many people. In many areas there are wide and often visible disconnects, and we pray for wisdom as we work to bridge these chasms in productive ways.



*High rise apartments and hotels in Pyongyang*



*Some of the CFK team with one of our MoPH colleagues*

We are deeply thankful for your faithful prayers and ongoing support that make our efforts possible. This continues to be difficult work with many challenges. Yet, during our visits, we often hear words of sincere gratitude from staff and patients alike. And even those in greater authority, after watching our teams work, are often moved from a place of skepticism and distance to one of genuine appreciation and closer cooperation. We were encouraged by one county health official who said to us after visiting several places with us, ***"I know you come a long way, and work very hard to help those here. Thank you for keeping your promises, and please don't delay to take great effort to help with the current needs. I am very hopeful for the future, and what***



*The Unryul TB Rest Home director is given the donor list and told of the love that makes CFK's work possible.*

***we have done together. I know there are great differences in development in all the facilities (in the counties in this province), and I will try to see that they improve where they are lacking..."*** This is truly the work of God in our midst - building bridges and planting seeds that will someday yield a harvest if we don't give up. Thank you for your partnership and prayers, and may God bless our joint efforts to His glory.



## Construction Campaign 2012



*The new CFK Warehouse*

### CFK Warehouse:

We are very grateful to report that our new warehouse in North Carolina is progressing well. We have raised and spent approximately \$86,000 bringing

us to the level of completion shown in the photos. We estimate the remaining funds needed to complete construction to be approximately **\$43,000**. Yet to be completed is foundation-protection landscaping and

beautification of the grounds, installation of the loading dock plates and bumpers, indoor plumbing and electric/heating work, and furnishing the warehouse with a forklift truck,



*Volunteers work to construct the bathroom frame*

inventory control system, pallet racks and related equipment. We welcome in-kind donations towards the needed items mentioned above and have a list of much needed plants if there are those interested in donating plants towards our landscaping needs! The new warehouse will not only enable us to work more efficiently, but will help us process more shipments and receive more in-kind goods.

### Future Training Center in DPRK:



*The very early stages of construction*

Pre-construction began on the training center at the National TB Reference Hospital in DPRK in June. We lack nearly **\$69,000** in order to see the project to completion. We look to you for support!

Thank you!





CHRISTIAN FRIENDS OF KOREA  
조선의 그리스도인 벗들

P.O. Box 936 • Black Mountain, NC 28711

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*Two staff members of the Unryul TB Rest Home pose for a picture*



*“Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.” Luke 6:38 (NIV)*



*Pictured above is a panoramic shot of the Kaesong TB Rest Home as the new clean water system was being installed in June 2012*

CHRISTIAN FRIENDS OF KOREA

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Christian Friends of Korea  
P O Box 936  
Black Mountain, NC 28711



Website: [www.cfk.org](http://www.cfk.org)  
Email: [cfk@cfk.org](mailto:cfk@cfk.org)  
Tel: (828) 669-2355 • Fax: (828) 669-2357

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