

Christian Friends of Korea

조선의 그리스도인 벗들

June 2010

***“Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?
Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?
For from him and through him and to him are all things.
To him be the glory forever. Amen.” Romans 11:34-36***

CFK Confirms Shipments

It is with amazement, joy and gratitude to God that we return from our most recent visits to the DPRK. Despite extreme tensions on the Korean Peninsula, since March 30, two teams have spent a total of 28 very productive days in DPRK. They confirmed the delivery of multiple shipments sent since last Fall, and completed several technical projects.

A confirming team of seven people visited from March 30 – April 8. (See participant Prof. Don Clark’s reflections on this visit on page 5.) During this visit, we traveled to 17 different health institutions, including TB, hepatitis and pediatric treatment centers. Everywhere we visited we saw appropriate delivery of our recent shipments including food, medicine, health kits, and blankets. We also hand delivered highly coveted doctor’s kits and heard from the directors how beneficial your support is to the care of their patients. Your gifts continue to make a lasting difference in



Confirming team and MoPH guides visiting a rural TB rest home



Easter Communion at Chilgol Church

the lives and health of thousands of patients, and bring hope to so many. A highlight of this visit also included worshipping with local believers at the Chilgol Church on Easter Sunday and sharing in our Lord’s Supper with them.

National TB Reference Laboratory Completed

Then, from April 20 – May 8, a technical team of eleven members completed several projects, including very significant renovations, reconstruction and equipment installations at the National TB Reference Laboratory located at the #3 Preventative (TB) Hospital in Pyongyang. We began these renovations in earnest last November, but were unable to complete them at the time due to unseasonably cold temperatures and the sheer scope of work. The local hospital and lab staff diligently continued the work over the winter months despite very cold temperatures and severe power shortages.



The joint DPRK-US technical renovation team

We were very pleased to see their considerable progress when we returned in April. Nonetheless, much remained to be done, and our team, including skilled volunteers with expertise in plumbing, electrical wiring, cabinetry, carpentry, equipment installation and repair, and water supply, and laboratory/medical professionals, worked side by side with the local hospital staff to bring the project to full completion. Our work scope this time included completion and troubleshooting of the following: all the wiring (in the lab’s 13 rooms); plumbing and full finish work for a two-stall patient bathroom; construction of a vented sputum booth;



Plumbing the patient bathroom

extensive cabinetry and countertop installations; and hook-up of a pressure pump, water tank and gravity-fed water distribution system. We also installed 10 sinks and drains, a new 300kw transformer to support the hospital and the lab, nine heating/air conditioning units, and several critical pieces of lab equipment.



Peanuts and hot roasted sweet potatoes cooked over coals lit on the path behind the hospital

We enjoyed sincere cooperation, flexibility and support from central and local health officials, and worked daily side-by-side with the laboratory staff and many volunteers. In the midst of all the hard work, as the project progressed and various goals were reached, there were many moments of shared accomplishment. People from other parts of the hospital complex and from the Ministry of Public Health came to help out and view the progress. We were often treated to late afternoon snack breaks hosted by other hospital departments. Hot roasted sweet potatoes cooked over coals lit on the path behind the hospital were very welcome on one chilly spring afternoon – other days they shared chestnuts, peanuts or sweet bread. A week into our stay, the lab was honored to receive a visit



National Lab staff in the bio safety room

from Dr. Margaret Chan, Director General of the World Health Organization (WHO). This was her first visit to the DPRK and despite the tight schedule

for her 2.5 day stay, she visited the lab to see its progress. In a meeting with her and other WHO officials the following day, she thanked us for our efforts and commended our success, noting what a special collaboration and achievement this was, especially in light of the current international political tensions.

Two representatives from Stanford University School of Medicine – our partners in this effort – also participated in the visit. Together, we were able to have productive meetings with representatives from UNICEF and the World Health Organization who are working hard to sign a multi-year TB grant from the Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis, and Malaria to support TB eradication efforts in the DPRK. We are hopeful that this grant will provide continuing support for TB medicines and lab supplies. UNICEF and WHO representatives were also very encouraged to learn of the impending completion of the National TB Reference Laboratory, and noted what an important contribution this lab will make in addressing multi-drug resistant TB (MDR-TB) and in building a strong foundation for TB control efforts in the country.



Stanford School of Medicine representatives with the lab director and TB researcher in front of the lab

Water Projects and Assessments Completed

Towards the end of our visit, our technical team traveled to Kaesong, Haeju, Sariwon, Unpa and Hwangju to conduct assessments for future water/wind projects, and to address various technical issues from previous visits. Our water team installed solar panels, a pump, a 2100 gallon tank, and supply/distribution lines at the North Hwanghae #3 Preventative (TB)



CFK and Wellspring representatives with the TB hospital director in Sariwon

Hospital in Sariwon, to provide abundant, clean water for patients and staff alike. The pump and solar panels were a donation from Water4 – a new project partner to CFK involved in innovative water well drilling efforts in various parts of the world.

The well at Sariwon was drilled through a joint effort between Wellspring and their North Korean counterparts – the Korea America Private Exchange Society (KAPES) – and it was a special privilege to bring this project to completion on this visit. The hospital director in Sariwon expressed his deep appreciation for the work of the team, and for the provision of abundant, sustainable, clean water. Lack of water has been a great hardship for them, and this change will greatly improve patient care. We were also able to see the new CFK greenhouse, constructed by our joint team at this facility last Fall, and learn more about the success of this new passive-solar building. Tomatoes and cucumbers were already ripening inside the greenhouse— even while nighttime temperatures outside were still dropping into the low 30s and 40s. The staff has been able to produce food there year-round this year – despite an unseasonably cold and snowy winter.



Inside the new greenhouse tomatoes and cucumbers are ripening



At Unpa TB Rest Home a wind assessment tool was installed in preparation for a future power generation project.

Other successes included: providing orientation on the oxygen tank filling machine, installed last Fall at our warehouse facility in Pyongyang, which will regularly resupply our supported hospitals with bottled oxygen; anesthesia equipment orientation at the South Hwanghae #3 Preventative Hospital (in Haeju); installation of reverse-osmosis water systems (to provide IV-grade water) at each of our supported hospitals; replacement of scrub sink faucets at the Kaesong Provincial Pediatric Hospital; repair/orientation on multiple pieces of equipment; and water well drilling/wind/solar power assessments at several of our supported facilities. In the course of our travels, the technical team enjoyed seeing many old friends

again – people with whom they had worked very closely during operating room renovation projects completed in 2007 and 2008 at these facilities.

Following our return to Pyongyang to finish final details on the national TB reference lab project, we met with the national director for TB for the country who said, ***“I want to express, both personally and on behalf of my government, my deepest gratitude to CFK for the successful completion of the National TB Reference Lab project. You have worked with full sincerity and kept all your promises. The lab far exceeds our expectations, and we are very eager to commence operations as soon as possible. We hope that the lab can be fully certified by relevant authorities and begin its real work of TB control in the country. We hope to quickly become so proficient in our work that we can soon serve as a reference laboratory for other countries.”***

While the national lab project has been the most challenging project we have ever attempted, it has been a high honor and privilege to work with our Stanford University/Bay Area TB



“...with cooperation, trust, joy and partnership... together [we] have worked a miracle.”

Consortium colleagues, NTI's Global Health and Security Initiative, and so closely with our North Korean colleagues to bring this to full fruition. The bonds of friendship, trust, and understanding forged through difficulty, hard work, and partnership are not easily broken, and have opened multiple opportunities to demonstrate the love and witness of Christ in practical and substantial ways. We strongly felt your prayers and support each day. Our team met in the common area on the 8th floor of our hotel early each morning for a time of Bible reading, reflection and prayer. During the visit we worked our way through the book of Romans. God graciously gave to us a spirit of unity and peace, joy in our work and service, and special times with our colleagues in these efforts.

Cable and Other Urgent Needs

There remains one final challenge to the full operation of this laboratory. The lab is located across the river (about 4 km) from one of the main power stations, but the existing electrical supply line is not sufficient to support the needs of the hospital or the lab. While our counterparts have been able to secure approval from central authorities for this lab to receive the highest priority for power supply, it has become clear that they cannot supply



the underground-rated cable required to connect the lab to the power station. **The cost of cable delivery is estimated to be \$58,000. We need your help to raise these funds quickly so that the lab can be fully operational as soon as possible.** While we have provided backup generators and an Uninterrupted Power Supply (UPS) unit for specific lab equipment, backup power is neither sustainable over the long term nor sufficient to support full-scale lab activities. We covet your prayers and immediate support for this need.

We know by our visits to rural hospitals and rest homes that TB incidence rates continue to rise, and there are growing numbers of drug resistant cases as well. A fully operational national lab will be critical to bringing this disease under control, in identifying drug resistant cases, and to finding effective treatments to save patient lives. This effort is long-past due – and we pray that the funding for the cable can be



CFK representatives with recovering TB patients

quickly found so that this important new lab can immediately begin full operation.

In the coming months, we will support regular technical exchange and collaboration at the lab in partnership with TB experts from Stanford/Bay Area TB Consortium. Transportation remains a serious challenge in DPRK, and **we need to send a new vehicle to support this effort** and more frequent visits by CFK confirming and technical delegations to remote areas of the countryside. There is an urgent need to **send more greenhouses and tractors** – particularly to facilities recently added to our portfolio – including several hepatitis hospitals and care centers. **Many places are in need of water remediation, and several also need practical inputs such as windows and doors** so that patients can receive better care – particularly in the wintertime. We have been asked to help with a **new operating room renovation project** that we hope to address as time and resources permit. Meanwhile,



our **supplemental food and medicine shipments continue to be greatly needed** in the face of an unseasonably cold spring that has delayed the growth of winter barley and wheat crops so much so that they will need to be plowed under before ripening so that regular summer crops can be planted on schedule. This means there will be extra unanticipated food shortages during

the critical spring/early summer lean season. **Now, more than ever, we need your faithful prayer and generous financial support in order to be able to respond to the needs that we have been asked to meet.**

We are amazed at the doors God is opening to love and serve the people of Korea openly in His name. The lab project in all its complexity stretched us far beyond our usual comfort zones and natural abilities – and consequently allowed the witness of Christ to shine ever more brightly. As one of our North Korean counterparts put it so well, ***“In spite of the fact that we (the US and DPRK) are technically in conflict and relations are extremely difficult, we were able to work together, and as a result, a miracle happened. We have rebuilt the National TB Reference Laboratory which will be of great benefit to our people. We worked with cooperation, trust, joy and partnership, and together have worked a miracle.”***

With thanksgiving to God for his abundant mercy and provision, we reflect on Romans 15:13 in the context of Christian Friends of Korea’s ongoing work in the DPRK: ***“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”***

TB Medicine Needs and Uncertainties

As we go to press with this newsletter, the Global Fund for TB is in the final days of negotiation prior to signing, hopefully, by early June. If this grant indeed comes through for the DPRK, then it is expected to cover the bulk of the TB medicine kits and basic lab supplies needed for the next two years, with a 3 year extension possible if goals and benchmarks are met. The grant will also support capacity-building measures for UNICEF and WHO, and provide some limited support for training and critical equipment. The grant, however, will only provide very limited support for pediatric TB, Multi-Drug Resistant TB, and capacity-building at the National TB Reference Laboratory. We have been asked by WHO, UNICEF and the Ministry of Public Health to supplement the areas that are lacking as much as possible.

In the event the grant is not signed, however, we will be immediately thrust into a true emergency. Existing TB medicine stocks will be completely exhausted by the mid-Fall of this year, leaving tens of thousands of patients without the medicine needed to save their lives and prevent the further spread of TB. Because of the continuing uncertainty and delays, the length of time it takes to order and ship medicines (3-6 months) and the known need for these life-saving medicines, **we urge your continued and generous support for life-saving TB medicine kits (\$20 - \$50 each).** Together with our colleagues at Stanford University, we are monitoring developments with the Global Fund very closely, and will continue to update you regularly.

Thoughts on a Second Visit to the DPRK in 2010

Donald N. Clark, Trinity University, San Antonio, Texas



In late March and early April 2010 I had the privilege of accompanying Director Heidi Linton and a delegation of Christian Friends of Korea (CFK) on a “confirming trip” to North Korea, traveling in and around Pyongyang and out into the provinces of North and South Hwanghae.

Until recently I had no idea what a “National TB Reference Laboratory” is or how serious the lack of such a lab is in the DPRK when it comes to finding and treating Multiple Drug Resistant (MDR) cases of TB, and national disease control efforts. Last winter’s edition of the CFK newsletter presented the importance of this project for the people of Korea and for CFK. In traveling with CFK and visiting the lab in March, I could see why the project was so essential. MDR tuberculosis is a serious problem in North Korea requiring complicated and expensive treatment that can’t start until patients are properly diagnosed. Until now, this diagnosis could not be made in North Korea, nor could an individualized patient treatment plan be determined without a functioning National TB Reference Laboratory. Delays in diagnosis, and lack of drugs for treatment of MDR TB have already cost many lives.

In our suffering world there are many things that should not be. In the 21st century, people with MDR tuberculosis should not be condemned to miserable illnesses and deaths for lack of a lab to provide timely diagnoses. This is why I believe in the National Lab project and why I am so thankful that CFK, working with world experts from Stanford University, the Bay Area TB Consortium, and the DPRK Ministry of Public Health, have managed to build and equip a National TB Reference Laboratory for the DPRK in just over a year. I am also glad to contribute in a small way towards the final needed item: the special electrical cable needed to bring continuous power from the power supply station across the Potong River to the facility itself.

I support CFK because I understand how important relationships are in Korea and why, after fifteen years, CFK, is known and trusted by the North Korean authorities. This track record of experience, promise-keeping, genuine Christian concern, and “Confucian sincerity” matters in North Korea, and it has created striking possibilities for extensive and important engagement such as the National TB Reference Laboratory project.

In March and April as I traveled with our CFK group through rarely-seen areas of the DPRK, witnessing the situation with agriculture, small-scale marketing, electric power, and transportation, I was struck by how much North Korea needs basic infrastructure. Though I thought I detected signs of better agriculture and potential food supply for the current year (when compared with my last visit in April 2007), I saw little improvement in electric power, safe water supply, fuel, or public transportation, even in Pyongyang. In other

words, North Korea is always just barely making it, mobilizing the fierce loyalty of the people through relentless slogans, references to external threats, and visions of a better future to which there seems to be no clear path.

Having lived in the South off and on since the 1950s in places that used to look a lot like North Korea does today, I know what it took to bring South Korea out a State of poverty, intermittent electricity, scarce fuel, rampant diseases, and the grossest injustices. North Korea has tremendous human potential. The people are well educated, disciplined, know how to work hard and sacrifice, and are willing to be mobilized for higher purposes. They deserve better than they get, and my hope and prayer is that somehow, in the next decade or two, a way can be found for them to move from the present to a brighter future.

CFK has always been a leading humanitarian organization in support of the people of the DPRK. In tuberculosis work it found a niche, and in the creation of the National TB Reference Laboratory it played a unique and leading role. In some ways we have to regard North Korea—for example in food sufficiency—as an ongoing “emergency” requiring continuing shipments of food and medicine. CFK is also branching out into hepatitis support, to begin addressing another significant medical need. But I think CFK’s real strengths lie in lasting infrastructural investments that bring long-term change—things like passive solar greenhouses, clean water, technical training, and installations like the National TB Reference Laboratory.

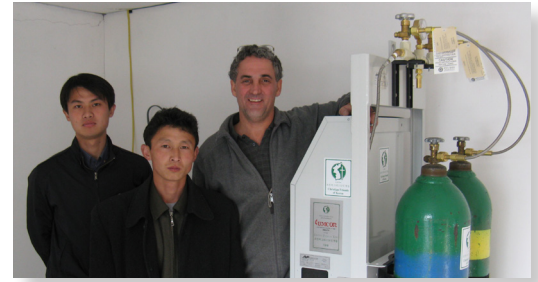
On our trip I was struck not only by the intelligence and dedication of the people we met and the strong potential for the North Koreans to build their own better life, but also by the physical beauty of the countryside—the lakes and streams, the increasing number of trees, and the setting of the city of Pyongyang on the majestic Taedong River. My parents used to tell me about visiting “Peony Point” for Pyeng Yang Foreign School picnics, looking out at the river from the top-most pavilion, called Ulmildae. One brilliant April morning, when the cherry blossoms were just starting to show, a few of us went up to Ulmildae on “Peony Point” (Moranbong, in Korean). The city shimmered in the distance—the stadiums where they have the Mass Games, the apartments that often don’t have electricity for elevators, the great monuments. All of it was new—not there when my family called Pyongyang home. My mind was full of tumbled thoughts, but even so, the beauty of the place took my breath away. I realized that I was seeing something of an illusion; but still I harbor faith that in God’s own time the illusion can give way to reality.



Peony Point

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Orientation on the oxygen tank filling machine installed last fall

"I tell you the truth, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me." John 13:20

CHRISTIAN FRIENDS OF KOREA

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If you are interested in supporting the work of CFK or to request information or materials, please contact us.

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Technical exchange and collaboration at the National Lab



The National TB Reference Lab lights up the first floor of the #3 Preventative Hospital.



Finished construction of a two stall patient bathroom

***"Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil, cling to what is good.
Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.
Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."***

Romans 12: 9,12,21