

# Amity Newsletter

A Quarterly Bulletin of The Amity Foundation

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## Church-run Projects

A Church in Baotou  
Runs a Nursing Home

A Summercamp for  
Left-behind Children

Children of Prisoners  
Get a Cosier Home



The choir of a Protestant church in Inner Mongolia, greets a group of foreign guests who visit the church's social project.

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The **Amity Foundation** is an independent Chinese voluntary organisation. It was created in 1985 on the initiative of Chinese Christians. It has worked to promote education, social services, health, and rural development in the underdeveloped areas of China.

Amity's work is grounded in the belief that all human beings share the same dignity. Abiding by the principle of mutual respect in faith, Amity builds friendship with both Christians and non-Christians in China and abroad. In this way, Amity contributes to China's social development and openness to the outside world. It makes Christian involvement and participation in meeting the needs of society more widely known to the Chinese people and serves as a channel for people-to-people contact and the ecumenical sharing of resources. Helping to develop civil society in China is one of the key aims of its work.

The Amity Foundation has about 40 full-time staffers at its Nanjing headquarters. Hundreds of volunteers work with Amity all over China. The foundation receives funds from partners abroad as well as in Hong Kong and mainland China.



Church-run Home of the Elderly

# Mr. Di Lives Like in Heaven

by Beate Engelen

A whimsical smile plays on Old Di Guohua's weather-beaten face as he tells the story of how he got here. He is how you picture a perfect grandpa. We are standing in the central courtyard of the Jian'nan Home of the Elderly. The dusty afternoon sunlight of northern China warms our skin.

As a miner in the coal pits of Baotou, a sooty city in Inner Mongolia, Mr. Di was at the front-line of China's struggle to create the heavy industry-driven economy of the Mao era. Unlike today, all the industries at the time were state-owned, guaranteeing workers a respectable livelihood when they reached retirement age.

A pension of CNY 1600 per month has provided 83-year-old Mr. Di with enough money to live comfortably, but he has no one to take care of him. With his wife having passed away years

ago and his five children working for their own living, the old man faces what in China is called the "empty nest" -- a situation dreaded by a lot of people.

About two years ago, Mr. Di got the opportunity to move into the Jian'nan Home of the Elderly, which was founded by a local church in 2001. For CNY 500 a month, he is completely cared for by the nursing home.

## Fate of elder people

Mr. Di belongs to a growing group of people who need attention as they grow old because their children are unable or not willing to look after them. Chinese society faces the daunting prospect of dealing with a swiftly ageing population. Today, 11% of the population are older than 60. This number is projected to rise to 30%



by 2050. Costs will also go up. Estimates say that in the year 2030, 10% of national income will have to be spent on 300 million old people.

Senior citizens with regular retirement pay are a minority in China. Of the 143 million people in their 60s and older, only 38 million (just above a quarter) were covered by old-age payment schemes in 2003, according to the Asian Development Bank. Those living in the countryside depend financially on their children when they grow old.

City residents like Mr. Di, who worked for a state-owned enterprise, receive pensions provided by their former work units. Even though Mr. Di was a blue-collar worker all his life, he belongs to the small privileged group of city dwellers who receive state-funded pensions. Fortunately, these people can pay for their own board and lodging -- if they find a place at one of the few nursing homes.

### A positive atmosphere

Mr. Di was more than happy to trade his life spent in an empty flat for a more joyful existence at the Jian'nan Home of the Elderly. He likes watching TV and chatting with people in the central courtyard, right next to the church building, where clients of the nursing home can gather for a game of chess or Mahjong.

The whole atmosphere of the site breathes tranquility. Trees spread their branches over the benches and walk-ways, providing shadow. Homely single-story buildings, grouped around the central yard, keep out the dry winds blowing into Baotou from the plains of the Gobi desert. Once a month, students from the local Science and Technology University stop by to sing with the elderly and read out the newspaper. For those elderly clients like Mr. Di, who are Christians, the church (picture above) is only a few steps away. "I am happier here than I was at home," says Mr. Di, who has put on 40 pounds of weight since he arrived. And with a touch of

irony he adds: "It's almost like being in heaven."


As the state remains reluctant to come up with comprehensive schemes for elderly care, the role of the church in providing social services is bound to become more important in the future. In Baotou, a local church has already shown that offering such a service can become a success. Since 2004, all the rooms of the Jian'nan Home of the Elderly have been occupied. The waiting list has recently grown to more than 200 names.

### Worries remain

Still, finances remain a big worry to Zhang Yekai, the director of the institution. The Jian'nan Home of the Elderly cannot turn to the government for subsidies. It has to rely on the contributions of clients like Mr. Di. But not everybody can be asked to pay the full amount. For 38 of the 110 clients, fees are already being waived because they cannot afford them. Missing funds have to be made up for by donations from church members, contributions from the Amity Foundation and other sources.

Another worry is finding capable staff. Specially trained personnel is rare in China. People who work as nurses for the elderly are often non-professionals. Some are migrant workers from the countryside who have worked as peasants all their lives. Others are laid-off workers from the cities who have lost their jobs because, at 40, they are considered unfit for hard physical labor by employers and replaced by younger workers. Looking after old people may seem a good alternative job to some of them -- but nursing is, of course, very different from anything they have done before. This is why Amity has stepped in to make sure that staffers receive further training.

### Close relationships

Working at a big nursing home is not always easy. The age of the clients ranges from 30 to 97 years (the younger clients are disabled). The nurse works every single day of the year and does not even go back home for Spring Festival. She has to find somebody herself to substitute her in case she has to ask for a leave. But, she says, she is happiest when all of her patients are doing well. Good relationships with the clients have a high priority among staff. To nurses like Zhang Xiaolan, a 45-year-old Christian, who has worked at the Jian'nan Home of the Elderly for five years, this is very important: "The longer I serve here," says she, "the more I get the feeling the old people are my grandma and grandpa." That is more good news for Mr. Di. 



A foreign visitor at the Jian'nan Home of the Elderly



At the opening ceremony of the summer camp

## Left-behind Children

# “Do Mom and Dad Still Love Me?”

by Beate Engelen

**Children in rural China are left behind by the millions as their parents migrate to the cities in search of work. Loneliness and a feeling of not being loved is already taking its toll among them. Amity now helps a church in Henan to set up a program for these kids.**

Jinjin grows up waiting for her father to come back home. Not because her parents are divorced. Her father is a migrant worker. He drifts wherever he finds a job in one of the economically stronger regions of China, returning to his home in Henan Province only once a year. This year, he works in Ningbo, a rich seaport more than ten hours away by train. When he comes home for a short vacation, he might bring back a few presents,

Jinjin hopes.

Being separated from their children is the fate of several ten million people in China, men and women, who are unable to find work near home but nonetheless need to feed their families. Many cannot afford to take their children along to the big cities. It is often the extended family or neighbors at home who look after them. Some children even live without a guardian - all by themselves. How many of these there are is unclear. According to official statistics 20 million children had been left behind by their migrant parents in 2007, but some experts say the number is as high as 70 million.

Leaving rural children in the care of others for economic reasons is not a new development in China. Since the 1980s, when farmers were first

allowed to seek jobs in cities eager to attract cheap labor, rural children have been growing up without their parents. But people are only now waking up to the problem since a host of negative effects is beginning to show.

### Ensuing problems

Fear is growing among officials that children with psychological problems caused by separation from their parents could not only hurt those directly involved but society as a whole. Children of migrant workers who are not properly supervised are abducted and trafficked in increasing numbers, yet this is not the only reason to worry. Many of the problems among left-behind children like drug abuse, dropping out of or doing poorly at school, lack of social skills or even membership in criminal gangs start with psy-



chological strains due to neglect.

Children feel rejected because they often do not understand why their parents left, where they are and what they do. "When parents leave for a long time children start asking themselves: Do Mom and Dad still love me?" explains Zhao Fang, a professor of social work at Nanjing Normal University who has volunteered for Amity. Most parents simply do not know how to keep communication with their children alive over a long distance, says Zhao Fang, and guardians at home can be just as helpless. When children feel sad and lonely they are told that things are not so bad after all. Their caretakers just ignore the fact that children need empathy and hugs more than anything at such a moment.

Jinjin feels lucky because her mother is still at home and her father talks with her on the phone, making plans to travel with her to Ningbo. Not all of the children enjoy this kind of affection. Zhang Meng'en, a thirteen-year-old boy, still seems upset because his mother left him ten years ago, when he was only three. She left to become a migrant worker. Meng'en has not seen her since. He now lives with his grandfather because his father has also become a migrant worker.

#### A church steps in

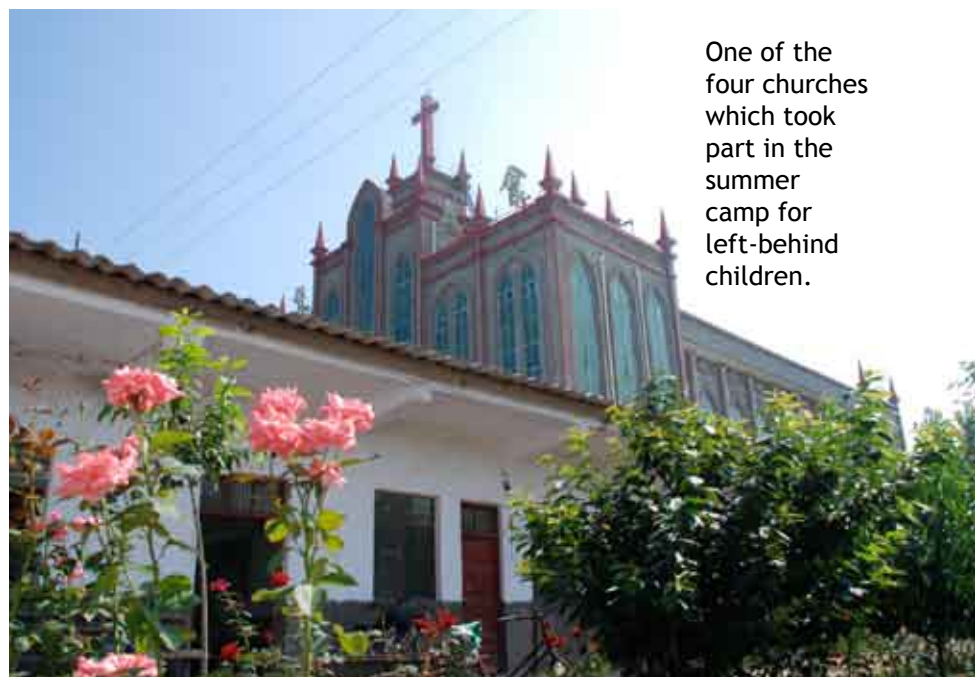
This summer the church in Linying and the Christian Council of Luohe in Henan Province has decided to launch a pilot project which aims at helping the local left-behind children. Problems associated with these children are rising in the area. Linying is a small backwater in the eastern part of

Henan. The land is flat, crisscrossed by the tributaries of the Yellow River. Floods regularly destroy the harvest and kill people. But they also wash in the fertile soil needed for growing crops. Soil quality is not bad. Farmers are able to grow enough to get by - but not more.

Many of those who need to earn a living and want to send their children to school become migrant workers. With many young parents gone off for work, the number of left-behind children is rising. In Linying alone, there are almost 30,000 of them. Most see their parents once a year or less. Now, the church is determined to step in.

A summer camp was held for 100 left-behind children between the age of six and thirteen. They stayed at

four different church buildings for ten days, sleeping on straw mats in large dorms. Pots and pans the size of bathtubs were brought in for the kitchen staff to cook enough noodles, soup and vegetables to feed the hungry crowd (pictures above). Volunteering teachers from the local middle school offered to teach the children math, English, dancing, music, arts, geography and history - a schedule which does not sound like care-free summertime fun. But unlike children in Western countries who look for camping and boating adventures, students in China expect study input during summer camp. For the children of farmers, the activity was a special treat because summer camps are normally a privilege of students from the cities.



One of the four churches which took part in the summer camp for left-behind children.

## Coping With Mental Stress

Psychological counseling to relieve mental stress in children is rarely offered in China. Even when schools make an effort to introduce programs which provide psychological support, the so-called experts are often students themselves who have not received any formal training. After the Sichuan earthquake in May 2008, when it became obvious that traumatized children needed urgent psychological help, first steps were taken to offer sophisticated “psychological first-aid”. But in many parts of China there is still no awareness of the fact that some children need professional help in their development to cope with mental stress, mood swings or even depression.

Amity is trying to raise awareness in this field. Before the summer camp in Linying started, Amity held a one-day training course for summer camp staff, Sunday-school teachers and local middle school teachers. Participants learned about child psychology, special challenges of left-behind children and ways of properly handling problems they might encounter. In addition, volunteering students from a Nanjing university introduced new methods of finding out what goes on in children’s minds even

if they cannot express their feelings in words. The children were encouraged to draw all those people in their family they loved. The result was a surprising mix of people of different generations, farm animals and pets. Some of the children like Jia Lingling omitted absent parents and added their cat (picture below).



### High expectations

The camp was the first of its kind and therefore caused a few headaches among organizers. Some lessons were learned the hard way when, all of a sudden, it turned out that no activities had been planned for the children between dinner and bed-time. Or, when teachers tried to give psychological support to alienated children by explaining to them that their parents were “doing something valuable for the development of China”, it became clear that counseling methods can still be improved.

But even though members of the congregations still lacked psychological knowledge and experience with organizing a camp, those who were mobilized were keen on making a difference. They played with the kids, provided psychological counseling

as best they could, arranged to teach courses or prepared meals, strengthening their own communal spirit at the same time.

Even before it started, the program had already become very popular among local families, who very much wanted their children to attend. Children like Jinjin and Meng'en were lucky to join: many more applied than could be taken on.

Because expectations were so high, everyone worked to make the camp a success. The efforts eventually paid off. After ten days at the camp most of the children were happy and “no-one ran away”, says Amity staff Tian Meimei, who supervised the activities.

### More dominant role for churches

This program, supported by Germa-

ny's United Evangelical Mission, is brand new but it is not the first project the four congregations of Linying have carried out. The local church has been a fairly strong social factor for some time now. 20% of local people are Christians - a big number compared to the national average, which is often quoted as 4%. For many years, the church has been active in small-scale poverty alleviation efforts, distribution of free medicine, AIDS prevention and psychological counseling for church members. It is therefore in a good position to provide help for the children as well. “The church enjoys widespread trust among the people,” says a report written by Niu Xiaolu and Zhang Yang, two Amity volunteers who took part in the program. “Family members feel comfortable leaving their children in the care

of church people”.

One reason for this could be that the church has a broader vision of the personal development of left-behind children than the local schools. The church provided a one-day training for volunteering teachers and church workers to make them understand the fragile nature of the children’s mental health and learn the basics of child psychology. “The schools don’t provide psychological training for teachers,” explains one of the pastors, “because they only worry about the students’ grades.” Zhang Jumin, a teacher at a local middle school and member of the church, goes even further than this. He says he is discouraged by his school from offering mental guidance to students with psychological problems: “So, I do it privately at church.”

Other church members, too, believe that the church should be involved in helping left-behind children: “As Christians, we are responsible that children don’t turn bad and end up in prison. We need to show them our love as Jesus did,” says Li Guiju, a 46-year-old Christian.

#### New social awareness

Her attitude and call for action is part of a larger shift in Chinese churches. In many places, the church wants to become a beacon of socially responsible conduct. This is not an entirely new development but it has become stronger after Chinese President Hu Jintao endorsed church involvement for the sake of social stability in the fall of 2007.

In Linying, a multi-storied church that is being built and will open around Christmas, has already included an extra floor for youth activities. “For us,” says Pastor Zang from Luohe’s Christian Council, “it is an opportunity to show society as a whole that the church is good for China.”

(Amity staff Tian Meimei and Wang Baocheng have contributed to this article.)

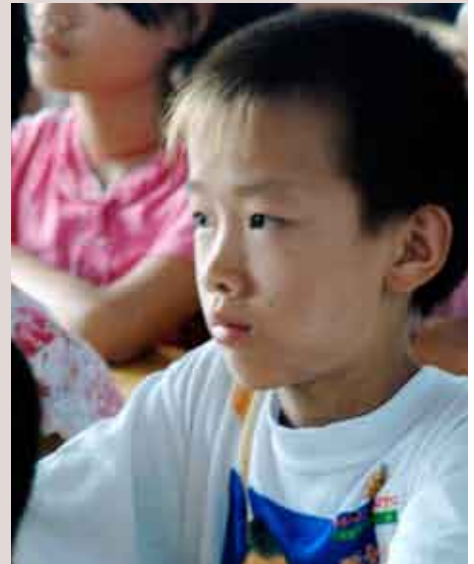


Zhao Jinjin, almost 12 years

Her father spends most of his time in the cities of the east to support the family. Fortunately, her mother is at home taking care of her and her two siblings. Both of her parents are Christians. Jinjin’s favorite school subject is music. She wants to become a professional singer when she grows up. For the time being she supports her mother, who has to work in the fields, by helping with household chores like washing clothes.

Zhang Meng’en, 13 years

He lives with his grandfather. When he was only 3 years old, his mother left the family and never came back. His father works as a migrant worker but Meng’en is not too sad about this because his father did not treat him well, he says. He helps his grandfather with the housework, doing the dishes. On Sundays, they go to church together. At school, he likes math best. When he grows up, he wants to become an astronaut like Yang Liwei.



Yao Jingyang, 10 years

Jingyang was being treated with Chinese medicine when we interviewed her. Both of her parents are migrant workers, far away, Jingyang says. Her father is a house painter and her mother is a cook. They are not Christians, but Jingyang’s grandparents are. She lives with them and her younger brother when her parents are gone. She would like to spend more time with her parents but that is not possible at the moment. When she grows up she wants to become a teacher because this would give her an opportunity to learn a lot herself.

Reflections and Outlook

Theresa Carino has retired from her position as the coordinator of the Amity Hong Kong Office. In this essay, she explains why it was important to her to work with Amity and how she sees the future of the organization.

# Reflections on Amity

by Theresa Carino

As a Chinese organization, Amity is unique -- it has a faith background and is very closely associated with the Chinese Protestant churches; it has developed an enviable reputation in China for its accountability and professionalism; it has established an extensive international network of friends and supporters that is difficult to match.

The vision and courage of Amity's founding leaders, namely Bishop K. H. Ting and the late Dr. Han Wen-zao, in setting up Amity is something we are always thankful for. They undertook a bold experiment to expand the social and political space for the church in China. At that time, Christianity was seen as opiate of the people, viewed with suspicion and, in some official and intellectual quarters, even with hostility. The church was considered conservative, anti-modern, anti-intellectual -- not the most likely to contribute to China's openness and modernization.

Yet in 20 years of hard work and sacrifice, Amity has become an organization recognized as one of the major home-grown NGOs in China, and possibly the largest.

**Thinking globally, acting locally**

Through constant interaction with partners in Hong Kong and overseas, who share funds, ideas, expertise and personnel, Amity has for 20 years been engaged with the global community but has acted in a local context. This has enabled Amity to engage in what is regarded as cutting-edge projects in China by taking global ideas and adapting them to local

conditions. Examples include community-based rehabilitation for the visually impaired; bilingual education for the hearing impaired; a participatory approach to rural development; pioneering in HIV/AIDS education work, and supporting people living with AIDS, etc. In this sense, Amity has always been several steps ahead of other Chinese NGOs in terms of openness and the ability to face new challenges.



Theresa Carino during a visit with members of the Beijing Christian Council

**Church and social service**

In a speech delivered in 1994 on "Christianity and Modernization in China", Prof. Chen Zemin raised the question whether a church that is "young and conservative, foreign, small and backward, in danger of falling apart, not self-supporting, and lacking a theology to gird and equip

herself to bear witness to the Christian gospel in a modernized China" can have the ability to relate Christianity with modernization. Amity has demonstrated that Christians and Christian organizations can make positive contributions to Chinese society by bringing together Christians and non-Christians, Chinese and non-Chinese, officials, intellectuals and common people.

Churches in China have changed tremendously in the last 20 years. Not only has their membership grown exponentially, the Chinese church in the last 10 years has moved considerably from being an inward-looking faith community towards a more outward-looking one, making advances in relating faith with social practice. With the establishment of the Social Service Department of the CCC/TSPM, Christian leaders have actively encouraged churches to become directly involved in social service. Christian leaders have expressed concern about the widening rich-poor gap in China and want affluent congregations in eastern coastal cities to contribute to

poor rural communities. There will be an increasing concern for "justice" issues as churches work with migrant workers and on peace-related issues.

With its experience and scope, Amity provides a broad platform for Chinese Christians to express their faith and willingness to help. I hope that Amity can intensify its involve-

ment with churches, providing viable models for churches that wish to become socially engaged.

**Quality, not size**

As Amity begins to mature as an organization, it has to redefine its niche in Chinese society. It began as one of the first few NGOs in China but Chinese NGOs have mushroomed since. Many are small but highly specialized. Additionally, more international NGOs are operating in China today. Amity finds itself having to compete for funds, local partners, personnel, among others. It has to demonstrate that it is still an organization that really “makes a difference” in people’s lives, and that it operates with a high degree of professionalism

tion. Social unrest and environmental degradation can undo the economic gains chalked up through decades. Relief work and the alleviation of suffering is important. But we also need to address the issues that contribute to disasters before they happen.

Through its projects, Amity has planted the seeds of local democracy, contributed to the development of women’s leadership at the grassroots, promoted gender equality and worked towards environmental preservation through alternative energy projects. These achievements should be expanded. Best practices need to be recorded and shared so that they can have a policy impact. This requires research that can provide a sharper analysis of Amity’s work and

network in Chinese society through its fundraising efforts. After all, fundraising is really friend-raising and consciousness-raising. More youth, especially, have to be exposed to the poverty in the countryside and some of the socio-economic challenges faced by Chinese people.

**The role of Hong Kong**

The Amity Hong Kong Office remains an important asset to Amity’s work precisely because Hong Kong itself retains both Chinese and international characteristics and has developed its own unique blend of East and West. Despite the financial downturn, Hong Kong retains formidable human, technological and financial resources from which the mainland can benefit. In terms of ideas and perspectives, Hong Kong can be a vital training ground in capacity building for Amity and its local partners. To do this, the Amity Hong Kong Office has to strengthen its ties with churches, NGOs and schools in Hong Kong, not only with churches and partners overseas.

As it gets more difficult for overseas partners to provide funding and personnel for Amity’s publicity work, it will have to rely on technology. The role of information technology and the web has to be more fully explored for Amity’s outreach to the global community.

Having worked in the Philippines to promote south-south exchange with China for more than a decade in the 1980s and 90s, I still believe in the positive value of this for Amity. Personally, I hope that Amity can share its experiences and also learn from NGOs in other parts of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

At the personal level, I have enjoyed working with Amity and gained many friends in China and internationally. Visits to grassroots churches and communities have always been a high point for me, providing spiritual strength and inspiration. Working with Christian leaders, local officials and Amity colleagues has been a privilege. I may sound like a broken record, but being part of Amity has meant being part of a family whose bonds keep you eternally connected and from which it is difficult to tear away!



Amity staff Liu Ying discussing a drinking water project with villagers in Gansu. Close cooperation with people at the grassroots level helps to make sure that donations are used properly.

and accountability.

In my view, scaling up for Amity should not simply be a matter of size but -- more important -- an issue of quality. Amity has to deal with the serious question of developmental sustainability. China’s phenomenal economic growth has been achieved at enormous cost to the environment, especially in the countryside. People face critical water and air pollution and this year has seen “unnatural” disasters that have shattered the lives of millions. Its development paradigm has also spawned a host of socio-economic problems, among them the widening gap between rich and poor and problems of rural-urban migra-

place it in a national and global context. Through this process, Amity can better share its experiences at a global level and add its voice to the development debate.

There is much more awareness of rights rather than just obligations in present-day China. Amity has quietly championed the rights of the disabled and the less privileged through its work. These rights have to be more clearly and explicitly articulated if Amity is to make contributions to the development of civil society in China.

As conditions ripen for philanthropy in China, Amity has to grow a constituency and a reliable support



Children of Prisoners

## A Cosier Home

by Beate Engelen

**Supported by the local Christian Council and Amity, a shelter for children of prisoners tries to reduce the impact of social stigma.**

It was the experience of his own detention during the Cultural Revolution that motivated Guo Jianhua to help imprisoned families in his hometown Dongzhou. When, in 1996, he came across a report on women in jail, he wondered about what happened to their children during detention. Knowing about the stigma of children with convicted moms and dads, Mr. Guo decided to found the Dongzhou Children's Home (东周儿童村), a shelter for children of prisoners. Dongzhou is not far from Xi'an, the capital of Shaanxi Province.

### Guilt by association

Even though children are one of the hottest topics in China, there is an odd silence surrounding the children of the country's estimated 1.5 million prisoners. Few people have publicly reported on their fate, but there are a few exceptions. The Dongzhou Children's Home has recently received some attention from outside. In the spring of 2008, several visiting groups came to express their sympathy with the children and donate clothes and books. But such a commitment is still an exception. Most of the several hundred thousand children of prisoners in China get no attention at all. As relatives of convicts, these children are outcasts, condemned to a life on the streets.

Guilt by association is a legal concept that traces its origins to pre-imperial times, when whole families were declared guilty of a crime committed by one member. Even though this


legal concept does not apply any more, the repercussions of this tradition are still felt today. Children of prisoners carry a social taint because of their parents' misconduct.

### Reducing discrimination

To counterbalance their misfortune, the 45 children who currently stay at the Dongzhou Children's Home have been exempted from any fees but receive care and an education nevertheless. More than 200 children from ten different provinces have been supported this way since the Home was founded.

It costs RMB 160 (around US\$ 23) to cover the living expenses for one child per month. This looks like a small amount but it causes Mr. Guo a constant headache. No state funds are designated to support the children. Mr. Guo, who also works as a local government official, relies completely on donations to run his institution. Part of the funding is provided by the church. Several years ago a pastor from the Shaanxi Christian Council decided to support Mr. Guo's enterprise and introduced the Dongzhou Children's Home to the Amity Foundation. Since then, Amity has provided scholarships, books and funding for new bathrooms.

With donations from home and abroad coming in, living conditions for the children are kept on an acceptable level. But the children are expected to lend a hand themselves whenever necessary. Since fuel was scarce during an unusual cold spell last winter and the price of coal was rising steadily, the children had go out regularly to collect firewood. So Amity provided the Home with money to buy 30 tons of coal, warm clothes and bedding to keep the children warm and cozy. With the surplus amount of money the Children's Home was able to buy its first color TV, a washing machine and a refrigerator.

So far, Mr. Guo has managed to make ends meet, but the future is far from certain. If donations dry up, the children of prisoners will be back on the street. 

# News



## Earthquake Reconstruction

# Temporary Church Built

When the Sichuan earthquake on May 12 shook the old Protestant church of Mianzhu, with parts of the roof and the facade falling off, Pastor Gu probably did not imagine that the congregation would grow fivefold in the following seven months. But it did. Since May, the number of people attending Sunday services has grown from around 180 to up to 1000 worshippers in December 2008.

Gu Yumei, a woman in her late twenties and a graduate of Nanjing's theological seminary, was already enrolled in a master's program to complete her theological education when the earthquake happened. She headed back to Sichuan to take care of the congregation.

All of the church members in Mianzhu have gone through a time of uncertainty and hardship. During the first few months after the disaster, worshippers gathered under a tarpaulin outside the old church building. People were barely protected from the heavy summer rains.

The situation has improved a lot since then. By now, several temporary buildings have been erected with the help of Amity and other donors -- based both in China and overseas. One of the buildings is a church which can hold 1000 people at a time. Some church benches have been replaced by stools so that the church can react flexibly to changing numbers of wor-

shippers in the midst of rapid church growth.

To keep things running, Pastor Gu relies on volunteers. She has to because she cannot be everywhere at the same time. A few technology-savvy young men have helped her put up and maintain the temporary buildings. Others are in charge of the services at the three new preaching points of the congregation.

Pastor Gu has even more plans. She imagines a church which will provide medical help to everyone in need because, as she explains, almost everybody in Mianzhu needs medical attention of some kind or another. A small clinic is already up and running on the church grounds.

Part of her social commitment could be offering psychological counseling for earthquake victims. However, counseling activities outside of the church grounds are seen by some people as a possible means to proselytize. This is why, so far, the church can offer counseling to members of the congregation only. But other social services can be offered. The church stores and hands out warm clothes and quilts for everybody, believers as well as nonbelievers. Pastor Gu hopes that in the near future, she can do even more with Amity's help. Two of the temporary rooms in the church complex have already been designated to become Amity offices.

## Foreign Expert Award

# Congratulations!

Connie Wieck, one of Amity's long-term foreign teachers, has received the Sichuan Jinding Award. This award is presented by the Sichuan Provincial Administration of Foreign Experts Affairs. It honors experts from overseas with an outstanding record of training Chinese personnel in Sichuan. On her blog, Connie says that it "is truly a great honor, not only for myself but for the Amity Foundation, the United Methodist Board and my small Luzhou college." Connie has spent nine years as a foreign teacher in China and is currently working at the Luzhou Vocational and Technical College in Luzhou, a small town on the banks of the Yangtse river.



## Award

# Qiu Zhonghui Honored

Qiu Zhonghui, the secretary general of the Amity Foundation, has been awarded the honor of "National Outstanding Charity Worker" by the General Assembly of Charities in Beijing, which is sponsored by the Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs. The General Assembly met in Beijing on 5 December to announce the winners of the 2008 China Charity Awards.