

SEP Final Report for Luzhou Team, Sichuan Province 2005

Language Learning, Love and Line Dancing in Luzhou

Fran Rhys, Diane Allen, Simon Brown, Gill Wotton and Jane Coates travelled to Luzhou in the Sichuan Province of South West China to take part in a short teaching programme with Amity Foundation, an independent Chinese Christian Organisation. The Team, two of whom are qualified teachers with TEFL qualifications and experience, were selected by BMS and the Friends of the Church in China (FCC) together with Amity, to teach on Amity's Summer English Programme (SEP). This is an intensive language course for Chinese teachers who are selected by their schools and Education Departments. The UK team joined forty other volunteers and teams were sent to nine centres in China. The UK team was based at Luzhou Teacher Training and Technical College. Luzhou itself is situated in a very beautiful part of China on the Yangtze River and is an important commercial centre for the area.

Leeds to Luzhou: some personal reflections

I have made a journey of thousands of miles and in six different stages using train, plane and minibus to travel from Leeds to London to Vienna to Beijing to Nanjing and finally to Sichuan Province in South West China. All of this, to teach on Amity's Summer English Programme (SEP) for a short intensive period of time. Was it worth it? It most certainly was!

It was worth it for the Chinese teachers who had begun the course feeling nervous, apprehensive and inadequate about their skill levels in English but who left feeling self confident, positive and speaking English more fluently. The 'foreign teachers' had become their friends. There was a genuine sharing of experiences and cultures and a real love and warmth between us. There was fun, joy and laughter, then tears at the leaving ceremony.

It was worth it for Amity who had placed teachers and volunteers in nine strategic locations in China at the invitation of these colleges and universities. As volunteers we gained the respect of the College's English Department and staff through teaching and serving well. These relationships, based on trust and service, will continue to be developed by Amity.

It was worth it for the team. The team members supported and resourced each other, depended on one another and on God who had placed us together in these far away places.

It was worth it for me personally. In leaving behind the comfort zones of family, friends, Church, professional commitments and routines I was placed in a new context, culture and country and challenged to think and serve in fresh new ways. My skills were expanded and developed. I made new friends in China and I dispelled misconceptions about the Chinese way of life and the Church in China in particular.

It was worth it to squeeze in to the programme some 'tourist time' to visit the beautiful Bamboo Sea area in Sichuan, the Great Wall, Tiananmen Square and the Forbidden City in Beijing. It has been a fabulous experience.

Jane Coates 2005