

SEP Final Report Xingtang Team, Hebei Province 2006

Rema, Ruth and I have spent 3 weeks teaching English on the Summer English Programme organized by Amity Foundation, a Chinese Christian NGO. We were based in Long Zhou Zhen Town, a rural town, in Xingtang County, Hebei Province in the north of China. 100 Chinese Teachers, mainly High School Teachers of English, were registered for this Intensive English Speaking Programme, giving up 3 weeks of their holiday period in order to attend the course. Our accommodation was in a local Hotel and the Teaching Site was the very large campus of the local Senior High School. We were supported by two members of the Education Bureau who acted as translators for us and who dealt with the administrative details of the course. Our Chinese hosts provided for our needs in every detail.

At the Opening Ceremony when we first met the group of Teachers, they were very nervous, apprehensive and very lacking in self confidence. The majority of them had never met a foreigner before and had certainly never before spoken with a native English speaker. What a transformation after only three short weeks! Their English speaking and listening skills had improved significantly, they had developed a warm and trusting relationship with us, becoming our friends and fellow professionals. There were lots of opportunities to talk in small groups, in pairs and to make short presentations to the class groups. Their commitment to the English Course was impressive. There were also times when we could relax and have fun together-the rounders matches, the ping pong tournaments, the silk painting, games and workshops.

At the Closing Ceremony at the end of our teaching time it was a very different group of Teachers that we were seeing. The mood and atmosphere in the Hall was one of warmth, friendship and links that would continue even when the foreign teachers had returned home.

Being able to share in worship with Chinese Christians at the local church, even when the whole service was in Chinese, was a great privilege. 1000 people gathered in the self built church in this small rural town is a significant witness to what God is doing in China. It was amazing to see so many bicycles and people moving away from the church at the close of the services. At the Grace Church in Shanghai, with its membership of 11,000, we met a senior elder who had lived through the Cultural Revolution, and who had experienced forced labour and hardship. He told us how the Christians had continued to meet together and to read the Bible. He said that in the dark days "Jesus never left China". The Church is growing rapidly now. This one church has 300 baptisms each year.

Our three weeks of teaching was truly fantastic! The last day was absolutely amazing! We definitely went out on a high note! We wanted to go out with a bang and we certainly did just that. We had our final lesson with our classes-mostly taking photographs and sharing out our many resources. We then had a wow of a party with all 100 teachers together-games, their performances, songs and the inevitable balloon battle, Hokey-cokey and Auld lang Syne!. It was a really amazing time. Then there was the closing ceremony. We had been treated with great respect throughout the whole time. We were regarded as the foreign experts! We were given 2 beautiful certificates and then we presented certificates to the Teachers. We have never been photographed so much!. In the early evening we had the closing formal banquet. We exchanged gifts with our two close translators/helpers who had become our good friends. Then we hit the town! The five of us went to join our Chinese neighbours in line dancing and ballroom dancing in front of the main local supermarket next to our

Hotel. A big crowd of folk gather as-it is the main entertainment in the town. We gathered a real crowd around us! The whole town now knew that 3 foreign teachers had been here.

It was a wonderful end to a fantastic 3 weeks of teaching.

Our time in China has been perfect! Everything has gone so well. Even the weather was perfect for us. It was so much cooler than the normal temperatures of 35-40 C! It has been a fantastic opportunity. I am already looking forward to China 2007.

Jane Coates 2006