

CHINA BIBLE WOMEN MISSION **by Katherine Kim, deaconess**

After extensive training in New York, (Jan. 2006) and 2005 Asia Christian Women's Leadership Program, twelve trained missionaries went to China for the Bible Women Program from March 21 to April 1, 2006: six Korean UMW from the U.S., four W.S.C.S.(Women's Society of Christian Service) from Korea, Rev. Yani Yoo, and Karen Prudente from Women's Division.

This reactivated Bible Women Program has been a part of Women's Division missions for over 100 years. We Korean UMW are the product of the Korean Bible Women Program. We are happy to have the opportunity to pay back what we have received so abundantly. The Korean W.S.C.S. was also a sponsor for part of this trip.

We had training in January 2006 at Alma Matthews in New York with Glory Dharmaraj, Sandra Ruby, Karen Prudente, and Rev. Hea Sun Kim. We learned about the history of the Bible Women. In regard to justice issues, we learned that we need to help women better realize and appreciate their own abilities. They need to be persistent and stand strong for what they believe (Luke 18:1-3). The bent woman story tells us how she suffered for 18 years. It is up to us to see the bent women among us and help them to stand tall again and start new lives (Luke 13:10-17). Our training is based on "Literacy for Social Change" of Laubach Literacy International. In this world, there are approximately 13 million people who live in poverty and 70 percent who are illiterate. Hunger, disease, and unfair social justice issues are deeply connected with illiteracy. In order to learn from this program, women don't need to know the language. By looking at the pictures, they can learn and solve their problems with the FAMA method: (Facts, Association, Meaning, and Action).

Our mission in the 21st century is not just helping people with material needs, but also to empower them to understand the underlying causes of their problems and enable them to help themselves by changing the world around them. In her book, "Concepts of Mission," Dr. Glory Dharmaraj said, "Making Christ at home in a culture is one of the key issues in the gospel-culture discussions." The gospel transforms culture. Getting rid of the dominating and oppressive aspects of culture is as important as the liberating and empowering aspects of culture.

The main purpose of our trip was to help the Korean-Chinese in the Gillim area (northern China), especially the Bugam Church and to train leaders among the Korean-Chinese women. When these women leaders go back to their own communities after the training, they are able to teach leaders there.

Because of restrictions by the Chinese government, we only had the opportunity to teach the Laubach program of Health, Business, and Peace. We had 3 booklets for each subject. The booklets contained many self-explanatory pictures for easy understanding and comprehension.

Although we had planned a ground-breaking ceremony for the Bugam Church. The church had purchased the land, however, the architectural permit for the joint venture with the Women's group had not yet been approved.

The majority of the Korean-Chinese in China are third or fourth generation Manchurians. They moved to China during the first part of the 1900's, due to economic hardship, the Korean Independence movement, or were forced to move by the Japanese government during the Japanese occupation.

Most of them are farmers. Their life in China was not easy, but they worked hard and eventually their land was transformed into one of the most fertile rice producing regions. They also became

patriots for the Chinese Independence movement.

I was told there were many women warriors. The Chinese government rewarded them, giving them citizenship and privately-owned land, just as they did Chinese citizens after Independence. They were recognized as a model minority in China. They worked to keep their own culture and language intact. Most of the participants speak Korean and know how to write Korean, due to their parents' emphasis on higher education.

After the political relationship between China and South Korea normalized in 1990, there was a new movement of workers going to Korea in order to make a better living. They call this Hanrye Yul-Poong. Most young people went to either Korea or a big city to make more money. It was mainly senior citizens and grandchildren who remained at home.

Although families became more affluent, they suffered many problems, such as broken homes, divorce, teenage problems, difficulties with education, etc. Life in Korea as a migrant worker is not easy. Work is so hard that some workers die. Some stay as illegal aliens, similar to the Hispanic workers here who are hired to do lower-paying, physically demanding jobs. I was told that there are many Korean-Chinese migrants working in the Bay Area, Los Angeles, and the New York area doing the same kind of work.

The church we visited is one of those recognized by the Chinese government. The parishioners were sitting on the floor and using Karaoke in the place of piano accompaniment during their services. There were no ordained ministers, and most of the churches we visited were in meager condition. Local missionaries were looking after the churches, and some churches had lay leaders to lead the service. Luckily, the Bugam Church had a very devoted missionary named Kim, J K. He was also in charge of all the churches in the surrounding area.

We taught them **Health, Business, and Peace** according to the FAMA* method. We had books prepared ahead. They eagerly participated in Korean.

In **HEALTH**, we taught them how good health starts at the family level, with a clean environment. Good nutrition is also important for a healthy family,. A healthy family helps one another. These practices make it possible for a family to live harmoniously, by eventually helping the family to prevent disease and promote the overall health of the community.

In **BUSINESS**, our goal was to help enable them to make an independent living. We taught them to ask, what are my assets, what are my goals, and how do I achieve economic well being? They also learned how to earn and manage money. Each group is supposed to provide a business plan, so they can apply for Micro-Credit money from Women's Division. Their business plans are in retail store, gift shop, planting and harvesting corn, soap factories, etc. They participated enthusiastically and were eager to do the work and make money.

In **PEACE**, we studied how to resolve conflicts peacefully. In order to have a peaceful world, we need to work on the conflicts of family, community, and society. We showed them how to lead the session, then we asked them to lead. Everyone did a good job. When we talked about domestic violence, it really captured everyone's attention. Even though this is a communist country, the domestic violence problem exists because of the male superiority emphasized by Confucian culture.

On our last day, we visited JIPAN-SI, which was about a 4 hour drive from our hotel. This is a border town between China and North Korea. We visited APROK-KANG (Yalu River), which is a long river dividing China and North Korea. We were very moved when we finally came to see the land of North Korea. I never expected to see North Korea in my lifetime.

There was a museum in Jipansi where more than 300 items were displayed from the Koguryo Dynasty. This land belonged to Korea a long time ago. They possessed the prosperous

Kingdom of Koguryo in Manchuria. Many tombs and ruins still remain from the golden years of the Koguryo Dynasty.

North Korea lays across the river. The river is not very wide, but it is wide enough for a boat ride. I could see the bare mountains across the river. I was told that Mr. Kim, Il Sung ordered all the trees cut so the land could be used for cultivation, but there have been problems with flooding. There were a few residential homes and an army base where soldiers were getting training. These are the stories I heard about the situation in North Korea. Some North Korean women have been sold for 500 won (about 60 U.S. dollars). Cannibalism goes on. If they are caught, they are shot to death with ten bullets in a public place. I heard that when people are hungry enough, they will eat anything. One Korean woman was rescued by the church, and later she worked hard with her husband and was able to send 2,000 won for the church construction fund.

The \$4,150 I raised from my church and friends was sent to Women's Division and will be used to buy large character Bibles and hymnals. The rest will be used for scholarships for the theology students at the university. They urgently need qualified spiritual leaders.

I feel that we are blessed to live in the U.S. There are many migrant workers all over the World. Please pray for them when you have the opportunity and help them when you are able. God cares about us, wants to help us, and gives us hope. He will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you (Deut. 31:8). "Surely I am with you always to the end of the age" (Mt. 28:20).

God bless you.
Katherine Kim

* Facts, Association, Meaning, and Action