

Presbyterian Heritage Discovery in China



A Day to Worship

October 21, 2012

(left) Worship at the Church of the Rock; (center left) we were impressed to see so many young people at this service. 5 weeks young and the church has 1,300 in attendance; (center right) Pastor Hu, left, greets us and explains to us the vision of the Church of the Rock; (right) Kathy Badgley with a resident of a Christian nursing home we visited.

Bless the Lord, O my soul...

...and all that is within me, bless his holy name!” we prayed from Psalm 103, which we read responsively with the congregation of 1,300 worshipers at the Church of the Rock in the university region of Hangzhou. This is an educational mecca for China, with 16 universities and 180,000 students among them. The Church of the Rock is a new congregation established to reach the people in this “university town.” It was started by the Chong-Yi Church, which we visited Thursday (Day 2), and the Hangzhou Provincial Christian Council. “Grace,” a young Christian, interpreted the worship service for us through headsets. It was wonderful to be able to fully participate in this exuberant Christian worship.

Hangzhou (Day Five)

The large congregation of mostly university students began the worship by singing praise choruses accompanied by a band and singers up front, and then transitioned to a more traditional style as robed choir of students processed up and led in hymns and anthems which included, “What A Friend We Have In Jesus,” and “I Love To Tell The Story.” Included in the worship also were the Apostles’ Creed and the Lord’s Prayer.

“Tell the Story” they did and are doing. The Church of the Rock reflects a vibrant expression of China’s rapidly growing Christian community engaging with this economically exploding nation. This Church is intentionally focused on the younger generation and is committed to discipling them into mature followers of Jesus Christ, who after 4 or 7 years will move on from the university town taking the Gospel of Jesus Christ with them. What does Christianity look like in a country where only 40 years, one generation ago, all the churches were closed under the Cultural Revolution and all expressions of faith banned? The Church of the Rock is one incisive window into it.

Two of us had a conversation after worship with Zach, a 21 year-old international business major, who said he had been a Christian since teenage years, though his family is not. In his village he came to faith through the help of young friends. He described the downward course he was traveling, “I had no direction, no hope in my life, I was going the wrong way with the wrong crowd. Now I want to make a difference in the world. I want to make

an impact. My faith in Christ will be the foundation for that.”

Following worship, at which our own Outreach leader Rev. Peter Lim preached in Chinese on Acts 6 and 8 about Unity, Harmony and Freedom, we gathered in the education and training center for lunch and conversation with the Pastor, Rev. Hu. He described the evangelism strategy they are following. In China, although people must move often for work and education, they possess a deep tie to the land of their ancestors. On holidays most people travel back to their family villages and renew their ties. The Church of the Rock seeks to equip these young enthusiastic followers of Jesus Christ to share their faith that has changed them with their family and friends back home and so spread the Gospel throughout China. We experienced this happening Sunday. The congregation was filled with joy and hope, with smiles everywhere and warm welcomes to us.

Our afternoon included a tour of Agape Christian Recovery Hospital, a 20-bed hospital the church has built, together with a home for the elderly. These, like the church campus, were state-of-the-art beautiful, functional structures. The Christian leaders we have met are working out a vibrant vision both in church and in community. We are praying with them how to strengthen our partnership to further God’s Kingdom work in this ancient yet new forward looking country.

This Sunday our team truly experienced in many ways that 103rd Psalm which we prayed responsively in worship, whose last verse concludes, “Bless the Lord all his work, in all places of his dominion. Bless the Lord, O my soul!”