

CHRISTIAN FRIENDS OF KOREA

조선의 그리스도인 벗들

*Bringing Hope and Healing to the People of North Korea in the Name of Christ Since 1995*

FALL 2019

"For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope."

Romans 15:4 (NIV)

## ENDURANCE AND HOPE: A LETTER FROM HEIDI

We are preparing to head back to DPRK this Fall – but we are to go later than what we had initially expected. Before we left DPRK in June, we had discussed and agreed with our counterparts to return in late August with a renovation team and clinical team, and also distribute 3,500 water filter buckets that had arrived earlier this year. But in early July, we received a message asking us to change our visiting dates significantly, and after a lot of back and forth with our international team members and the DPRK side, we received approval to visit from September 27 – October 16. We are now planning to do the above scope of work according to this revised schedule. Due to the schedule change however, we have lost some team members from the delegation who understandably could not accommodate the revised dates in their long-set schedules. (Once we have submitted the initial application - sent in June - it is not possible to add any new participants.) We hope to return in November for our final confirming visit for the year, but that is not confirmed yet.

Besides the unexpected change to our Fall schedule, we continue to face many other challenges in our work. Visits to DPRK are necessary in order to confirm the arrival of goods, deliver training, complete renovation work, and care for patients – yet sometimes even the most careful plans must be revised, and revised again. In this, we pray for patience, for endurance, and for His provision. Nevertheless, in spite of the challenges we continue to face, we thank God for His faithfulness in making a way for the shipment of ten sea containers, and two air shipments so far this year, including medicine, diagnostic instruments and supplies.



CFK's Executive Director, Heidi Linton, with rest home director during a confirming trip.

Our general workload at the CFK office in North Carolina has increased significantly with the extremely high level of detail now required by all aspects of the regulatory / procurement / banking / shipping / customs clearance process for goods, and the travel permissions for team members. We submitted another UN 1718 Sanctions Committee Exemption application (28 pages!) earlier this summer that was approved on August 8, 2019. This exemption is good for six months, and covers thousands of items needed in our projects that we hope to procure and ship over the coming months. Now, however, we spend weeks or months over email and phone, providing photos, technical descriptions, and lengthy explanations to various stakeholders explaining the various items so transactions

can be completed and goods can be shipped and cleared through customs, in addition to the normal logistics and work of organizing shipments. We still face significant banking delays and complex challenges with international transfers. We are incredibly grateful for our shipper and various partners (bankers, lawyers, accountants, commercial suppliers and our inkind donors - you know who you are!) who also must navigate this highly complex context as they work with us. Please remember them in your prayers, and give thanks to God for their willingness to continue working with us despite all the extra time and challenges they face.

We have also watched and waited over the summer for any signs of progress on the diplomatic front; meanwhile, the North Korean people have faced continuing drought this summer, regional flooding, a typhoon, the impact and pressures of sanctions, food shortages, and their daily hardships and burdens of survival. The pressures seem very intense, and opposition feels very strong. It is hard to see purpose in the midst of delay, struggle and suffering. In these moments our faith and endurance are tested - sometimes even to the breaking point. Yet God's Word reminds us to take courage, and promises that he will never leave us nor forsake us (Deuteronomy 31:6) and that we will not be tested beyond what we can bear (1 Corinthians 10:13). Again, and again, we can only lean into Christ, casting our burdens on Him, and trusting that He will give necessary strength and wisdom, and will bring to pass what is pleasing to Him - in our own lives, and in the lives of those around us who put their faith and trust in Him.

For those of us who travel to DPRK, it is both a burden and a blessing to work with the local people, to be present in their context, and to directly see the impact of our work. It is a burden because the suffering runs deep, and we often feel completely overwhelmed by the sheer depth and enormity of it - but it is also a blessing, because each person has been made in the image of God, and it is a privilege to care for our brothers and sisters. Meeting the North Koreans in person and seeing them face-to-face - these experiences make the long, hard days of work more meaningful and precious.



CFK team members with staff at a Tuberculosis rest home.

## WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO RETIRING BOARD MEMBER, STEVE ACETO

Nearly 25 years ago, a very special group of five men came together to establish the foundation for Christian Friends of Korea. The man who drafted the original legal documents and filings was Steve Aceto, a lawyer in Asheville, North Carolina, and a deep friend to CFK and the people of the DPRK. There was no way to know then what God had planned for CFK, but Steve helped set CFK on a solid path, and has supported CFK for over two decades with faithful prayer, support and wise counsel at many critical points along the way. Steve is a man of great faith, practicality and hard work, and CFK has benefited greatly from his wise, prayerful and steady guidance, and his wry sense of humor.

Over the years, Steve made seven visits to the DPRK and helped host many delegations of DPRK officials to Western North Carolina, exemplifying a servant heart, and a commitment to sharing Jesus with everyone - even to the very ends of the earth. We thank God for Steve's faith, commitment and his labors of love, and we pray God's rich blessings on him and his family as he retires from the CFK board. We look forward to seeing how God will continue to use Steve and his family for the advancement of His kingdom.



Steve Aceto examines a greenhouse at a TB rest home during a confirming trip.

## MEET SOME OF OUR UNSUNG HEROES

With this issue – while we wait to return to DPRK, we wanted to share just a few stories from many other very special people who make up the Christian Friends of Korea family. This includes those who remain faithful in the calling to pray for and love the North Korean people in their own special way – even if that calling does not include travel to DPRK.

### SENDING WARM WISHES AND LITTLE FRIENDS



Barbara Mankoski

For many years, CFK has received countless hand-crafted items lovingly sewed or hand-knit by various donors. Warm hats, scarves and blankets keep patients and doctors warm during the frigid North Korean winters. Blanket square kits provide rest home patients with recreation as they pursue the road to recovery. We are especially excited to be able to highlight one of our crafters who for years has sent us knitted or hand-stitched items, calling them “warm wishes and little friends.”

Barbara Mankoski has been knitting and sewing since she was a little girl. Growing up, she was no stranger to stories of missionaries and people in foreign lands. She became deeply interested in orphaned children in faraway places, even sponsoring and corresponding with children through Compassion International. Then one day, as she researched online, she came across CFK’s website. She called CFK, curious to know more, and after one memorable phone conversation, she became a very special part of the extended CFK family.

She researched all she could about North Korea—watching videos and reading library books. Her research led her to stories and images of Korean War orphans, including vintage black and white photos of children, so small and thin, standing barefoot in the snow or with shoes that were ragged and full of holes. She recalls, “They just looked so cold, lost and sad.” She began to make more things—beautiful quilts, delicate mittens, warm socks, and charming little dolls that always light up the room with joy. Although she owns a sewing machine, she often sews by hand, taking the extra time to remember the North Korean people. “I think about them... I try to imagine what their lives are like and how having a small doll or a warm quilt might be able to help their life in some way. I want to let them know that there are many people that care for them a great deal and pray for their happiness and well-being.”



A few of the many handmade items from Barbara Mankoski.



A young North Korean child smiles joyfully as she holds one of Barbara's stuffed animals.

Among the many things that Barbara has made over the years, she is well known at CFK for her precious dolls or “little friends.” Most recently, she sent Raggedy Ann dolls made from vintage quilts and fabrics. Her appreciation and love for creating things with vintage fabrics comes from a sense that these materials “offer a warmth that can only come from something that has a history.”

Barbara admits that at times she wonders if what she is doing makes a difference or whether or not those in North Korea need or even want these items. But with that she goes on to say, “Then I will see all the posts, or will receive pictures from Heidi, or have an email conversation with her and hear of the ongoing needs and

it puts me back on track. And I start stuffing another doll or knitting another hat or pair of mittens.”

Her words ring true for us all. At times, we may wonder if we are truly making a difference. But then, God will remind us that everything we do in His name does make a difference, and sometimes that reminder comes just from a simple photo of a precious North Korean child, her face lit up with pure joy as she holds onto one of Barbara’s handmade dolls, filled with love.

We extend a sincere and wholehearted “Thank You” to Barbara, and to all of the knitting clubs and prayer groups who have sent us so many handmade gifts over the years. Your gifts are cherished by those who receive them and they are precious in the eyes of God. Thank you so much.

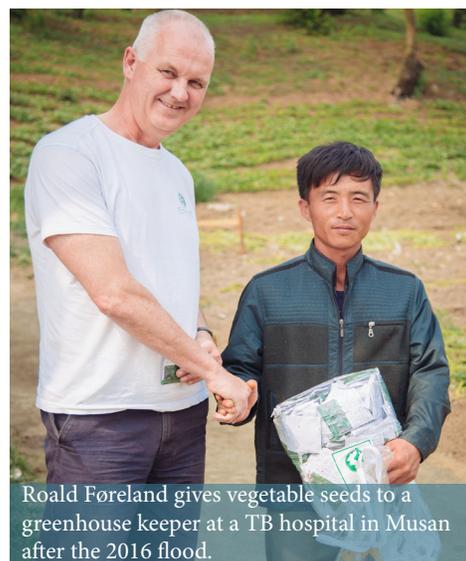
## PARTNER HIGHLIGHT: EVANGELICAL ORIENT MISSION BY ROALD FØRELAND, DIRECTOR OF EOM

### COOPERATION BETWEEN EOM AND CFK

It started in 2011, when one of our EOM boardmembers (Øyvind Dovland) had an idea to start projects in DPRK. Through a good friend of ours in China, we learned about Heidi Linton and CFK. We made contact and Øyvind went on his first trip and participated in setting up a greenhouse at the TB hospital in Pyongyang. We found this very meaningful and our donors and mission friends responded very well to our new project. We started to raise funds for greenhouses and clean drinking water projects, which became our way of contributing to our common effort to help our friends in Korea.

### FOOD PRODUCTION AND WATER

"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink... Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me" (Matt 25: 35, 40) became the biblical foundation and motivation for our projects. We strongly believe that establishing friendship through good deeds is breaking down enemy images, which has been so evident regarding DPRK and the rest of the world.



Roald Føreland gives vegetable seeds to a greenhouse keeper at a TB hospital in Musan after the 2016 flood.

### VEGETABLE SEEDS

Øyvind also came up with the idea of bringing in vegetable seeds. One kilo of seeds can produce more than ten tons of rutabaga. Since 2015, we have brought in several hundred kilos of vegetable seeds. These are high quality seeds produced in Norway, which we get for 90% discount. These are packed in small bags of ten grams by volunteers. The packages give instructions on how to plant and grow the vegetables.

### VOLUNTEERS

Through the years EOM has sent many volunteers from Norway. Some of them have participated in as many as seven work trips. They are all very motivated and blessed by this opportunity to use their skills and experience to serve.



Just a few of the many EOM volunteers who have traveled to North Korea.

## A BIRTHDAY GIFT FOR THE PEOPLE OF NORTH KOREA

Twins, Kalyn and Kamryn Ogle were nine years old when they first heard Dr. Sissel Topple share about her most recent trip to North Korea where she serves many North Korean patients suffering from Hepatitis B. However, this was not the first time that Kalyn and Kamryn had heard of North Korea. They often heard of the country and the politicized conversations within the classroom or in the news. But listening to Dr. Topple share at Riceville Valley Community Church (the church where their family attends) about her experiences and stories about the real people of North Korea and the humanitarian work that has been made possible through Christian Friends of Korea - these powerful testimonies moved Kalyn and Kamryn's young hearts. They wanted to do something more. The girls recall wondering, "How am I supposed to help?"



Kalyn and Kamryn opening gifts at their 10th birthday party.



Kalyn and Kamryn presenting their birthday money to Dr. Sissel Topple at Riceville Valley Community Church.

As their 10th birthday approached, Kalyn and Kamryn made a special decision. A decision they made all on their own. For their birthday, instead of receiving birthday gifts from friends and family members, they decided to ask for donations to go towards CFK's work in North Korea. Why would two sisters together decide to give all of their birthday money to people in North Korea whom they did not know and have never met? There were excited reactions from grandparents and surprised reactions from friends.

And soon after their birthday party gathering, they found themselves once again at church. But this time, they stood in front of their church to present a donation of over \$600 to Dr. Sissel Topple to help the people of North Korea. These two young

girls gave not only their birthday money but are an inspiration and an encouragement to all generations to pursue the heart of God and to obey His call.

## A HEART FOR TRANSLATION

Having recently graduated from college, Yumin planned to attend medical school in South Korea. Applications had been submitted and plans to travel to South Korea for an interview were all lined up. However, it seemed God had different plans for her. Those plans brought her instead to Black Mountain, North Carolina in January of 2016 where she began an internship with Christian Friends of Korea.

Although she had felt God's leading to spend a season at CFK, she admits that a lingering attachment to attend grad school still remained. So she prayed that if God provided her with the following things - a place to stay, a means of transportation, and money for living expenses--then she would give up everything else to intern at CFK.

He did provide all of these things and Yumin spent several months interning at CFK. As an intern, her primary job included the translation of CFK publications into Korean. She worked on prayer calendars, newsletters, and informational brochures, among many other things. Her work was invaluable to CFK, but she recalls that at times she felt it was trivial work perhaps compared to other tasks. However, when she imagined people in North Korea reading her translation of the water filter bucket instructions or the Hepatitis B informational brochures, her heart felt full.



Around the same time that Yumin started her internship, CFK was preparing to launch a new Hepatitis B program in North Korea. As an intern, she was introduced to the world of medicine in a way she did not expect. She was intrigued by all that she saw and learned - the development of a program which would include training by CFK doctors and staff of North Korean medical professionals and equipment for North Korean hospitals to diagnose and treat Hep B patients. But even with all of this exposure, Yumin did not expect what was to come.

Yumin standing at an overlook of Black Mountain during a hike with CFK staff.

After her internship, during a period of prayer and searching, she followed God's leading and His voice. Fast forward to today - Yumin is in her third year as a PhD student at Seoul National University in South Korea studying Hepatitis B. "God's plans are always amazing and unpredictable," she says. Her research is focused on the development of several peptide drugs or vaccine adjuvants, certain DNA mutants related to HCC (the most common form of liver cancer), pathway studies in the development of severe liver diseases, and the co-infection of Hepatitis B / C virus.

The past few years of study and research have been incredibly challenging for her, both physically and mentally, and in many other respects. However, even in the midst of her challenges she has offered up her time to continue translation work for CFK. She explains, "In all the hardships, translation work for CFK is my joy and pleasure, and it gives me strong motivation to stand once again. Every single time, I cannot do the translation without shedding tears. I truly thank God that He allowed me to be a part of CFK."



Yumin with her friends and labmates at Seoul National University.

She admits that at times she envies those who travel to North Korea and who work directly with the North Koreans. She often feels that her research does not compare to being able to actually go. "But each time," she says, "God gives me a heart to trust in His promise and will."

There is no doubt that God uses each of us in special ways. Yumin's gift of translation is a tremendous blessing to CFK, but more than that it is her heart and love for the people of North Korea, her desire to prepare for future service, and her faithfulness to God's calling that blesses and encourages us.

"May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Romans 15:5-6 (NIV)



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Christian Friends of Korea is a tax-exempt, non-profit organization founded in 1995 to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ through humanitarian, educational, and religious programs. Contributions to CFK are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. CFK also accepts stock or in-kind donations.

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