

Asia Harvest



Swing the Sickle for the Harvest is Ripe! (Joel 3:13)

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Heilongjiang -

The Ice is Beginning to Thaw!

From the Front Lines

with Paul & Joy Hattaway

In this issue of the Asia Harvest newsletter we examine the state of the Church in Heilongjiang Province, in the extreme northeast of China, bordering Russian Siberia. The name 'Heilongjiang' is made up of three Chinese words: Hei (Black) Long (Dragon) and Jiang (River). In the past the province was combined with today's Liaoning and Jilin provinces to form Manchuria, which was occupied by the Japanese before and during the Second World War.

With a population today of 45 million people, it is not one of China's largest provinces, and remains one of the least known parts of the country. The first time I went to Heilongjiang it was mid-winter, and the temperature was minus 26 degrees Celcius. Coming from tropical Thailand, that was a shock to the system!

Despite the freezing temperatures, God has started doing a great work in this corner of China! The icy hearts of people have begun to melt as the love of God works its way through the province in tremendous revival power. Startling church growth has been experienced. It is also extremely pleasing to discover that after the Heilongjiang Church experienced revival, they took God's Word to other parts of China. Just one city in Heilongjiang, the city of Daqing, has become an "engine room for revival." The house churches there have sent many teams of evangelists into neighboring Inner Mongolia and other provinces, meeting with tremendous success wherever they have gone.

The believers we have met in Heilongjiang seem to be very fervent for the Lord. This is not an emotional or "hyped-up" fervency, but one that naturally results from their being deeply touched and inwardly changed by Jesus. We have recorded dozens of testimonies from the house churches in Heilongjiang, only a few of which we will be able to include in our newsletters because of lack of space. We'd like to share a brief one here, told to us by a house church leader in Harbin City a few years ago:

When our workers go out to preach the Gospel they have no money and have to ask God to provide their daily bread, often quite literally. But these workers have hearts of fire for the Lord, and a deep passion for the salvation of all who don't know Jesus Christ.

On one occasion during the winter of 1987, in Yabuli in southern Heilongjiang, two sisters knelt down in the snow and prayed so intensely that the heat from their bodies melted the snow around them. Hours passed by as they continued to cry out to the Lord for the salvation of the people in that region.

After one such earnest time of intercession for the churches, both of these sisters found that their knees had frozen and they were unable to walk. Their prayer burden had been so great that they didn't notice the pain in their legs and knees as they prayed.

It took some months for the two sisters to recover the use of their knees again, but they were completely healed.

The majority of this newsletter consists of an interview with Sister Mei, who has worked as an evangelist in Heilongjiang for many years, and has been an eyewitness to the revival that is still under way there.

We once again ask you to pray for the Church in China, not only for revival to continue to all parts of their country, but that the Chinese Church will fulfill their vision to take the Gospel outside their borders into the unreached Muslim, Buddhist and Hindu nations.

We at Asia Harvest have been helping the Chinese house churches in Heilongjiang for several years through projects such as Bible printing, Asian Worker's Fund, and the China Living Martyrs Fund.

We realize that without the prayers, encouragement and support of caring Christians our efforts would be in vain. We don't get many opportunities to speak in churches outside Asia very much, as we believe God wants us to focus on ministering here in Asia and He will provide whatever we need to do His will. Therefore our newsletters are the main way we communicate our vision to Christians around the world, and so we greatly appreciate you taking the time to read them. We thank God for your partnership. **"The share of the man who stayed with the supplies is to be the same as that of him who went down to the battle. All will share alike."** (1 Samuel 30:24)



A man stokes a fire to keep the congregation warm during a winter church meeting in Heilongjiang.

Cover photo: Every winter in Harbin, the capital of China's Heilongjiang Province, hundreds of thousands of tourists flock to see the remarkable 'Ice Festival' where a whole theme park is built out of ice. The building you see in this picture is carved out of massive blocks of ice. This photo is courtesy of the International Mission Board. The IMB kindly also allowed the use of the picture of the house church meeting on this page, and the one on p.9.



Heilongjiang - a Hub of Revival

Heilongjiang ("Black Dragon River") Province is located in the extreme northeast of China. Home to more than 45 million people, Heilongjiang borders Siberia and is China's coldest Province, with temperatures plummeting to minus 30 degrees in the winter.

Despite the cold, in recent years the Holy Spirit has burned in the hearts of many people in Heilongjiang, bringing a powerful revival among the house churches.

In this issue we interview Sister Mei, who works with a network of more than 5,000 house churches in northeast China. She outlines how the church in Heilongjiang has grown, its future vision, and the challenges facing the church because of the rapid growth.

Sister Mei, please tell us a little about the background of Christianity in Heilongjiang.

The first Protestant missionaries arrived in Heilongjiang in the late 1800s, but while they

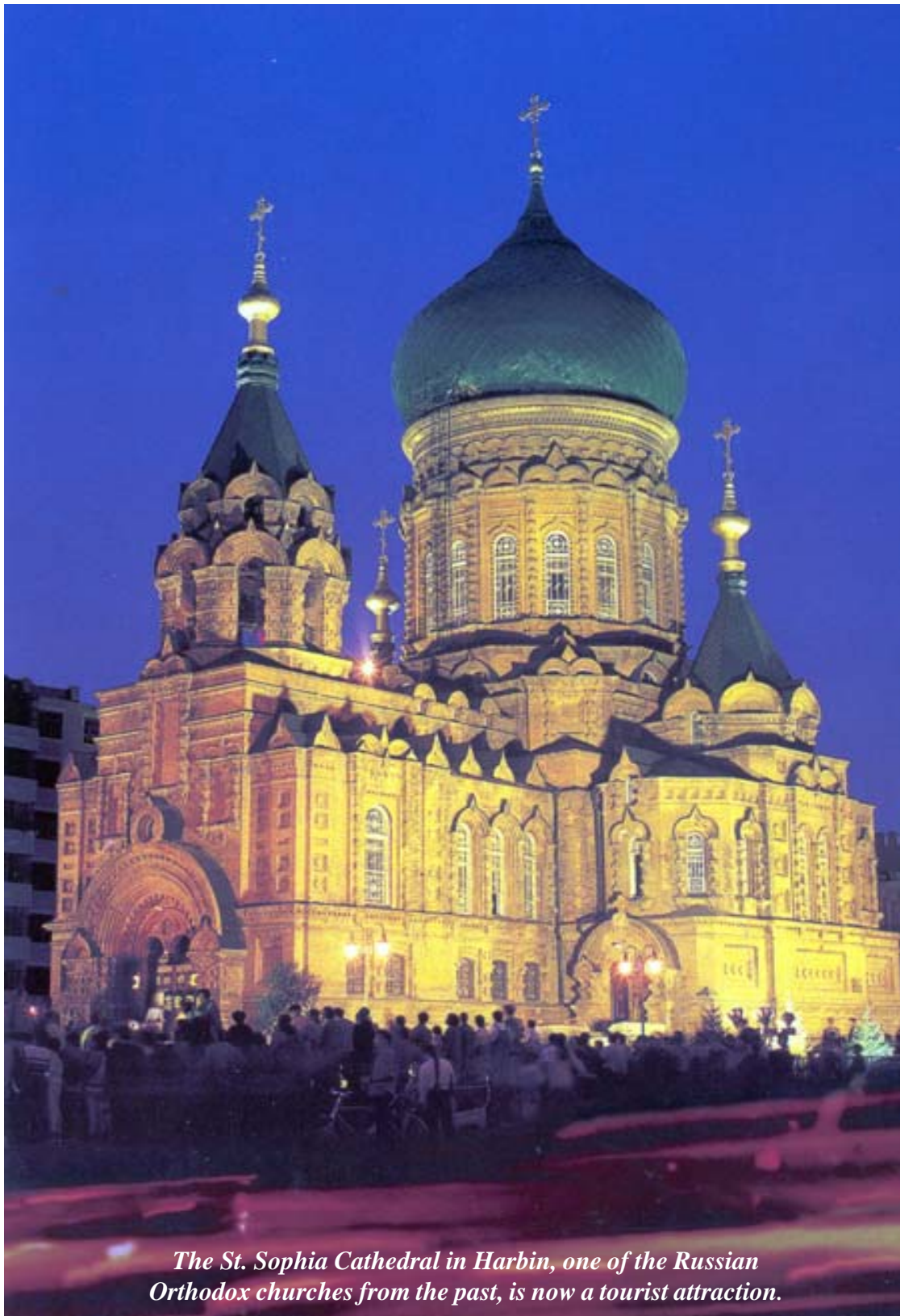
faithfully sowed God's Word, they saw little fruit in their lifetime. The church continued to grow slowly until 1949.

Because of the large number of Russian refugees who lived in Heilongjiang at the time, many Orthodox churches were built, most of which still stand today.

Despite this Christian history, until ten or twelve years ago most people in Heilongjiang had little exposure to the Gospel and the church was quite weak. But in a short time, the Lord has done great things!

What was your personal involvement in the work in Heilongjiang Province?

In the early 1990s there was serious persecution against my family and the police were hunting for me. I was advised to leave our province for a time until the heat had subsided. I moved to Daqing City in Heilongjiang. This was a time of many tears for me, because I had to leave our young daughter with a friend. I cried many tears on the train. People asked what the problem was, and I told them I had left my daughter but I was praying to God to comfort me.



The St. Sophia Cathedral in Harbin, one of the Russian Orthodox churches from the past, is now a tourist attraction.

The Lord gave me this verse from Psalm 10:14: *“But you, O God, do see trouble and grief; you consider it and take it in hand. The victim commits himself to you; you are the helper of the fatherless.”* This verse gave me great peace that God would take care of my daughter until I saw her again.

You have been working in Daqing now for a number of years. How is the church there?

Daqing has a population of 1.6 million people. In the early 1990s there were very few believers in the city. In fact, our church in 1990 contained just 80 people. We started to train 30 young people to serve the Lord. In 1991 we had already grown to 200 people, but what God was about to do in Daqing was only just beginning!

Our brothers and sisters had such a great joy of the Lord in their lives, and they witnessed everywhere they went. Some of them worked in a local factory. It was a very demanding and tiring job, but whenever the workers had their short 15-minute break the believers would spend it worshipping the Lord together in song and dance. The other factory workers were amazed at the joy and strength they had and many were attracted to the Gospel because of their witness.

Today there are more than 2,500 house churches and at least 200,000 believers in Daqing city! The Lord has been good to us.

God has used Daqing as a huge springboard for the Gospel to many places in the northeast of China. Hundreds of churches have been planted in Jilin, Liaoning, Inner Mongolia and other parts of China as a result of outreach from the believers in Daqing.

It seems miracles are regular occurrences in the ministry of the house churches in Heilongjiang. Can you tell us one or two tes-

timonies of when the Lord moved in miraculous power?

I can tell you one that comes to mind. During one meeting in Daqing we had just finished praying and we all felt the strong presence of the Lord in that place. There was a woman present whose stomach protruded with a large tumor. It hung down so far that she had to have a truss fitted to hold it in place. It was the first time this woman had been able to attend our meeting. The preacher told us that if we were able to believe the Lord, nothing would be impossible. This woman believed in Jesus and immediately the tumor simply disappeared and her stomach reduced to normal size while we watched! She threw the truss away because she had no more need for it!

You need to understand that even though the Lord performs miracles in our midst we do not seek miracles or glorify the experiences. We have learned to be careful to give all glory to God. The Bible says we are not to follow miracles, but that signs and wonders will follow us when we go out and preach the Gospel. This should be a natural occurrence when a Christian preaches the Good News, according to the Scriptures.

If you don't see any miracles the question should be asked, how much preaching of the Gospel do you do? I don't mean preaching and teaching inside church meetings, I mean proclaiming the Good News to sinners who have never believed in Jesus. When this happens we have seen the Holy Spirit never fails to confirm His Word with signs and wonders, because the miracles testify to the truth of Jesus Christ and glorify God the Father. Miracles take place when the Kingdom of Light clashes head on with the Kingdom of darkness.

God never intended miracles to be for Christians to enjoy inside their church buildings. They are not for Christians' entertainment and pleasure! Miracles are to help release bound and oppressed people, and to point sinners towards the Cross and the victory Jesus won for all those who will believe in Him.

Can you tell us about your training and discipleship methods?

For about three years the house churches were busy developing disciples in Daqing. Our idea was that we should train first-generation Christians to reach second-generation people, with the hope that the third-generation would be strong and ready to take the Gospel all over China. But even the brand new believers were going out for the Lord and seeing great miracles happen in their ministries!

In 1995-96 we launched what later came

to be called the 'Gospel Month.' During the time between Christmas and the Chinese Lunar New Year, a special emphasis is placed on evangelism. Every believer is encouraged and trained to win at least three of their relatives and friends to the Lord; while every leader is required to win a minimum of five people to the Lord during that time. This plan was not only implemented by our group in northeast China, but by all 20 regions across China that are part of our church network. Of course many zealous believers led far more than just three people to faith in the Lord.

Everyone got involved! Young and old were out sharing the Gospel; old ladies, young students, farmers, factory workers – all were busy winning souls during that time.

There is one particularly marvelous testimony from this time that I would like to share with you. There were three 80-year-old sisters who lived in one large apartment



complex in the city. They took the responsibility to preach the Gospel to the whole building. In the complex were six different stairwells; each containing six floors. They therefore set out to evangelize the people on all 36 floors of the building! They prayed as they went and shared the Gospel with the occupants of every single apartment in the building. Many people refused to believe and told the old sisters to go away, but there were others who believed.

One evening they arrived at the lower levels of the building, where all the retired people lived. These apartments were full of 70 and 80-year-olds. One of the old sisters slipped, fell down the stairs and completely twisted her ankle. She was screaming and in incredible pain. Her foot was sticking out of her leg at the wrong angle. One of the other old ladies had strong faith. She said, "If we pray, God will take care of this!" The three ladies prayed to the Lord and said, "In the Name of Jesus, turn around!" Her foot immediately turned straight! The old sisters continued on their way and the one who had been injured felt no more pain at all! This was the kind of miracle that occurred all over the place.

During that first 'Gospel month' only about 1,300 people came to the Lord in our city. We were a little disappointed with the results because in other places many more people came to Jesus.

In Qing'an County there were 12 particular meeting places that participated in the 'Gospel Month' in 1995. They took the Gospel to the 18 different districts within Qing'an County. The workers packed their bags with whatever they could easily carry and spread out all over the county. They were willing to do whatever they needed in order to share the Gospel – even if that meant they would

go hungry and have to sleep outside in the snow. During that month, in the one county alone, they started 236 churches!

The following year these new believers took their turn to share the Gospel. The whole of Qing'an was saturated with "Jesus fever." During the Gospel Month of 1996 the house churches in each of the 18 districts of Qing'an formed into two teams for each district – therefore 36 evangelism teams were created. Because everyone in Qing'an had already heard the Gospel, they looked for further fields to evangelize.

Two teams traveled on the train to Inner Mongolia. In the years since then, the work in Inner Mongolia has grown tremendously. One of the leaders was hung upside down from a tree and beaten to death by the Public Security Bureau a few years ago, but all this did was make the Christians bolder and more willing to serve God with all their hearts. In fact I would say that in all of China the revival fire of God is burning more hotly in Inner Mongolia at the moment than anywhere else. This is especially true in eastern Inner Mongolia, while central and western part of that vast region are still yet to experience the salvation power of God to a similar extent.

Other teams went to other counties in Heilongjiang who had not yet received such a witness of the Gospel. Other teams went to the northern part of Jilin Province, and many other such places.

The Lord was truly with us and confirmed his Word with countless signs and wonders. Today there are more than 800 different house churches that have been planted because of the brothers and sisters from Qing'an.

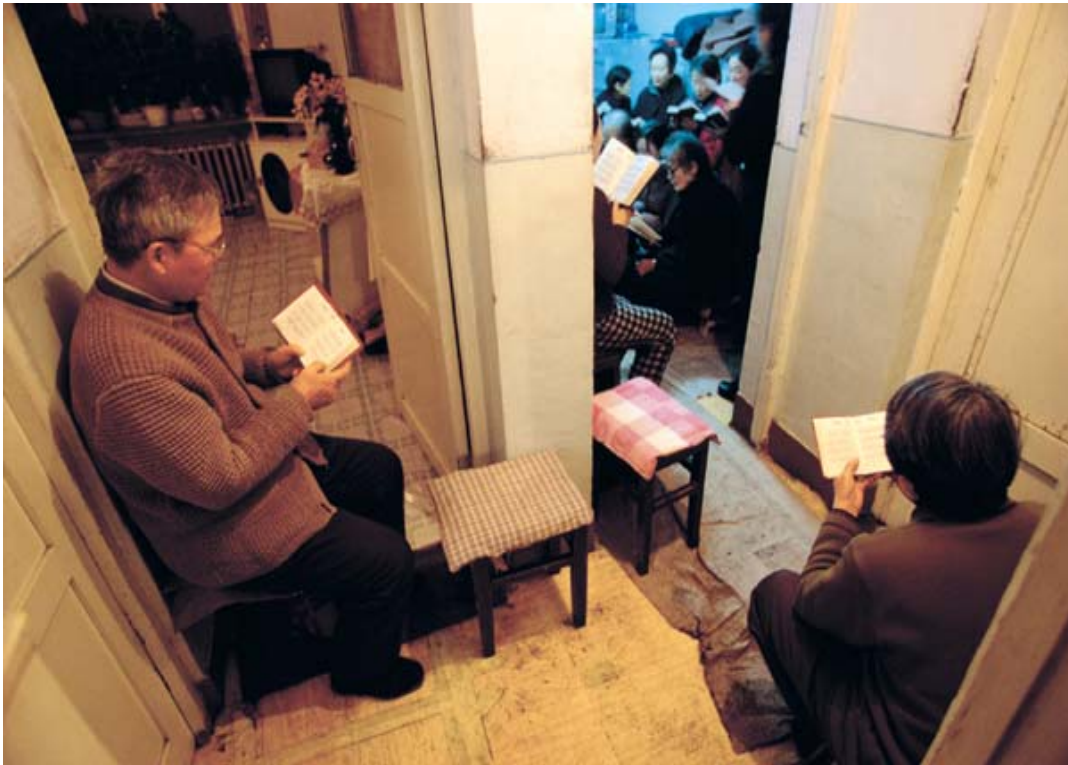
Is the Gospel evenly spread throughout Heilongjiang or are some areas much stronger than others?

The fastest growth has happened in Daqing. The earliest work occurred in places like Qiqihar and Jiamusi. In those places where the work started earliest the church is the most conservative and quiet today. The believers are overly cautious and not very aggressive in spreading the Gospel.

Our work is concentrated in western

Sometimes when many people get converted quickly, their spiritual foundation is shallow and they never mature into being fully committed disciples of Jesus. Especially in the revival of 1992-93, many people had only a surface understanding of the Gospel. Their knowledge of truth and of God's power to help them live holy and victorious lives was minimal.

One of the problems we have is that there are some strong Christian areas in



Heilongjiang. The work has spread with great sacrifice. Some evangelists have walked 20 miles through the snow in minus 30-degree winter weather just to attend meetings in places like Jiamusi near the Russian border.

What are the major problems and challenges facing the house churches in Heilongjiang?

Heilongjiang while believers in other areas seem to be bound with legalism and conservatism. It has been difficult trying to get these legalistic believers mobilized to go and reach those unreached places with the Gospel. They seem to be bound with immobilizing conservatism, more interested in obeying rules than in rescuing drowning souls.

Have the house churches in Heilongjiang encountered much persecution from the authorities?

No! There have been isolated incidents of persecution, but overall believers have faced nothing of the kind of attacks that occur in provinces like Henan, Anhui and Zhejiang further south, where house church believers are customarily beaten, fined, imprisoned, tortured, and even killed.

Why do you think this is?

We are not sure why, but we just accept it as a blessing from the Lord. The whole north-east area seems to encounter little persecution compared to other parts of China.

The Daqing Christians are very bold. So bold that on some occasions the authorities have changed their mind about persecuting us! Once, in a big worship meeting in Daqing that was attended by more than 2,000 people, the police suddenly showed up with the intention of arresting me and the other leaders. The police said, "What do you think you are doing?" We boldly replied, "What are we doing? Look at all these people. Crippled people came to the meeting but now they are walking and jumping; God has healed them! Sowhy are you criticizing us? What's your problem?"

They didn't know what to say or do, so they just left us alone!

Some Christians think the church only grows during times of persecution, but here the church seems to have grown without the pressure of persecution. What do you think?

It doesn't matter if there is persecution or not. What matters is that the Spirit of God is truly moving, that He is doing His work.

Everything is the work of the Everything

is the work of the Holy Spirit. The revival in Heilongjiang has been a fresh wave of God moving among people who had previously never had the chance to hear the Gospel. God has moved new believers so that they immediately share their faith with unbelievers. In this way the revival has burned rapidly.

How many Christians are there in Heilongjiang today?

In the past few years some brothers have conducted thorough research to ascertain the extent of the Church in Heilongjiang. They have traveled to every city and county in the province, and various house church networks have shared their figures so that we can get a good overall picture. Between all the different house church networks we count a minimum of 1.6 million and a maximum of 2.5 million house church believers in Heilongjiang.

The churches are growing so fast that these numbers are sure to change quickly. Just ten years ago there were no more than a few hundred thousand house church Christians in the whole province. In addition, the government-approved Three-Self Movement claims to have 600,000 members in Heilongjiang. Including a small number of Catholics etc., that would mean a total of approximately 2.5 to 3 million people who profess Christ.

However, when you consider there are more than 45 million people in Heilongjiang, you can see we have a lot more work to do! Instead of overly rejoicing for the three million Christians, we prefer to focus on reaching out to the 42 million inhabitants of Heilongjiang who are going to hell.



What prayer requests do the Heilongjiang house churches have? How would you like Christians around the world to pray for you?

1. Pray God's work will continue to be pure and strong among us. In all areas pray God's Spirit would continue to operate in our hearts and worldly temptations would not distract us.
2. Pray the Christians in Heilongjiang would understand the teaching of the Word of God more deeply. Pray we would have true unity between us. Pray our evangelists and coworkers would be strong in the truth, so that God's glory would be among us as we walk in the truth of Jesus' life and way.
3. Pray the pastors and shepherds will have the love and knowledge of God deep within them, otherwise what will they have to feed the sheep? Pray the fire and passion of God will continue to be stirred up within us, with love and desire and passion for Him.

Our leaders have not had a problem with mishandling finances or sexual immorality or such sins, but we have grown so quickly that I am afraid those who have not allowed the Word of God to take deep root in their hearts will be vulnerable to such temptations in the future.

Finally, we want the whole world to understand that the revival in Heilongjiang has been the work of Almighty God, NOT the work of people. Heilongjiang means 'Black Dragon River,' but the dragon is being defeated and the light of Jesus Christ is shining like a beacon all over the province! Praise the Lord!

In the next issue of Asia Harvest we will complete our look at the house churches of Heilongjiang, with interviews and testimonies from other house church leaders.



From our Mailbox

Dear Asia Harvest,

We are sending you this little gift instead of paying for my wife's parents' gravestone to be preserved for another ten years. We thought, as they are in heaven, they would rather it went to the "living martyrs" in China. Sincerely in Jesus,

Tony S., Ireland

Thanks for sending me recent copies of Asia Harvest. The information in them is very interesting and challenging. Since 1999 I have been praying specifically for China. Someone gave me a large map of China which I've put right beside my bed, so now I'm praying daily for the 31 provinces of China. Be assured that I, a brother in Christ and an intercessor, am lifting up the work of Asia Harvest each day before the throne of God.

Eferemo R., Fiji

Are you people insane? Why should Tibetan Buddhists want or need to be converted to some decadent western religion that lost all truth and meaning centuries ago when the bible was rewritten and lost the truth? Christianity is dead. Please leave the world alone and stop messing up peoples' lives. Perhaps you could go do some proselytizing in the USA where you may be needed.

June Seow, received by email

Let me just take a minute and tell you about how much we appreciate being part of the Asia Harvest team. You and your organization have blessed us greatly by serving the body of Christ in the core functions of evangelism, compassion and stewardship. Your publications are both convicting and inspiring. We are humbled and challenged by our brother's and sisters in China and you are the means by which we are connected. This summer we had the privilege to host a Chinese exchange student for a home stay program. These students are in desperate need of the gospel. It was exciting as our boys could really "relate" due to the fact that they understand both some of the obvious and subtle things regarding China from your newsletters. Thanks again for being a laborer in the harvest.

Rick R., Oregon, USA

Asia Harvest News and Updates

You may remember last year 34 leaders of the China Gospel Fellowship were kidnapped by members of a cult called the Eastern Lightning. We sent out urgent prayer requests and wrote an 18 page article on the devious teachings and wicked practices of the Eastern Lightning. Looking back, we have to say the fact that all of the leaders were safely released by the cult was nothing short of a great miracle. God certainly answered the prayers of millions of Christians around the world, and at the same time many were warned about the dangers of this cult and how to avoid it. At the request of house church leaders we launched a fund to raise prayer and finances for a book one Chinese Christian had already written before this kidnapping, to help believers in China avoid the Eastern Lightning. Since that time Asia Harvest has received enough finances to print 31,124 books. Other ministries have joined us in this project so that the number of books in the hands of the Chinese believers is many thousands more than just what was given through Asia Harvest. This is an on-going need so if you would like to give to this project, it would be much appreciated. It is one of the projects listed on the yellow Response form in this newsletter.

Many people have asked us how the house church leaders are now, after their kidnapping ordeal. The latest news we have received is that one lady who was kidnapped has converted to the cult, and has even moved away to join them. This lady was not one of the church leaders, but a normal believer who happened to be visiting one of the meetings where the kidnapping took place. Please pray for her. After their release the other leaders all returned to their home churches and in a very short time reported they had recovered and were continuing their ministries. This was good news but as most of them were kidnapped, brainwashed, drugged and indoctrinated day and night for one to two months duration, we had the feeling that it might take some time for the evil fruit of these attacks to work its way out of their system, after the initial euphoria of their release wore off. This has proved to be the case, and recently many of the leaders have found themselves struggling emotionally, spiritually and mentally from the filthy attacks of last year. These leaders are all fully committed to Jesus Christ and trusting Him to heal them and help them fully recover in every area. Please lift them up in prayer.

You may have noticed that some of the donation amounts for Asia Harvest projects have increased slightly. This is due to increased costs. For example, the cost for each Project Smile gift has been increased to \$60, after being at \$50 for more than three years, while the cost of our China Bible fund has also increased from \$ 2.00 to \$ 2.25 per Bible. This price includes both the printing and distribution costs, and we don't envisage needing to increase this project for years to come.