She waves at me with all her might. Thumbs long gone! Fingers frozen to her useless hand! All she can do is to flap her wrists up and down so that her stubby hands approximate a wave. Her distorted face ekes out a smile.

I feel so honored by her valiant effort. I wave back, self-conscious that I still have fully functional hands.

How quickly I am overwhelmed with a mélange of contradictory feelings! Sorrow for her dreadful plight. Gratitude that I do not face what she faces. Amazement at her cheery demeanor as she struggles to express emotion on her leprosy-ravaged face with sagging lips and unblinking eyes so red and sore (and so typical of leprosy.)

I suddenly feel abundant confusion!

Leprosy no longer exists, I thought! But it does exist! Here in China today, the shock takes my breath away. China has 300,000 lepers, half of whom have lasting disabilities. Fearing the spread of the disease, China has collected lepers into “Leprosy Villages.” Jiangsu Province alone has 39 of these compounds. I’m grateful that Amity and the Huai’an Center for Disease Control allow me access to this bleak situation in an isolated place.

Twenty-eight lepers live here. Some have received medical treatment for their disabilities and remain here for physical therapy. Others are waiting to have parts of their hands and feet amputated. Most have lived in this dreary place for 25 deadening years of suffering. Their doctor, unmarried, has lived among them for these 25 years, which qualifies him for “sainthood” in my book.

Around the compound lie fields of wheat as far as one can see. There’s no variety, except the few trees on the Village’s plot of land. Yet, every day, the lepers stare out at the fields. There’s absolutely nothing else to do, other than talk about how miserable they feel. And this, they already know far too well.
What is Leprosy?  Commonly known as Hanson’s Bacillus, leprosy begins with a white spot on the skin. Unless treated promptly, this spot begins to eat away skin and form growing sores on the body. There are sores on top of sores on top of other sores. Those pictured here have not been treated in time. Leprosy is literally “consuming” its victims.

Why aren’t they treated in time? Leprosy tends to develop in China’s poorest areas. Many poor villagers have no idea what these spots are. Many villages have no doctor. Or, the doctor they have is not qualified to diagnose leprosy.

Yet, medicine to treat leprosy is available, graciously donated by the American Leprosy Mission. But the sad thing is that it goes unused because leprosy is not reported early. Thus, patients do not receive medicine in time.

And what about the government of China? Why can’t they help? Many parts of China are well developed. These are the ones we see in the media. But there is a necessary “pecking order” for expenditures in China, needed because there are very scarce resources at the margins of society. And these lepers are near the bottom of the list. Those are the simple facts of economic life.

So, the conditions in these “Leprosy Villages” are not likely to change any time soon . . . unless you and I help.

Amity and Lepers: Amity has been working with leprosy in Hunan Province for many years. But the “bottleneck” in diagnosing leprosy early has not yet been solved.

There are two large counties in Hunan that need particular help. Large numbers of lepers live in this area. And most of them remain untreated.

China Connection Helps in Hunan: China Connection now seeks to work with Amity in Hunan to train hundreds of village and county doctors to diagnose leprosy and other skin diseases. We combine this approach with distributing giant posters to be seen by all villagers, alerting them to these serious diseases and urging them to seek early treatment from the village doctor.

This $20,000 program should catch leprosy early, when it is easily treated, when people can remain in their own homes and villages. We have submitted this project to Presbyterian Women of the PCUSA.

Meanwhile, China Connection also wants to help the “Leprosy Villages:” Leprosy Villages, like the one in northern Jiangsu, are basically places where lepers go to die. No one says so, but it looks to me to be the case. Remember, this village has been home to many lepers here for 25 years. Lepers just sit around, gazing at the world. What else can they do?

Even if a leper in this Village were to be deemed “clean,” he or she may no longer have a home to return to. They have
China Connection purposes: (a) To promote understanding of China and the Chinese people; (b) To make known the work of China’s Christian-initiated Amity Foundation and the China Christian Council; and (c) To serve as a channel for needed project funds, equipment and personnel as requested by our colleagues in China.

We Love our Donors! After a banner 2005, we settled back into a more normal pattern in 2006. While we were down $43,000 in income, we kept our expenses low and wound up with double last year’s cash surplus. A few larger gifts made up for smaller gifts of donors who are growing older. We are equally grateful for both! We thank Alternative Gifts International for their continued support of our orphan program. We received surprise estate gifts of $22,000 and $24,000 – an enormous help!

What You Made Possible in 2006: Your China Ministry of $311,481 made possible the complete transformation of three poor villages, plus seven pure water systems to seven other villages in very poor areas of Jiangsu and Anhui Provinces.

We continued to care for about 1500 orphans, and for older adults in Ms. Xu’s care. Paying off the mortgage of one very poor church was a delight, while we continued to help other churches as needed.

Other unexpected highlights of 2006 were: (a) providing two deep water well systems for Anhui Province, supported by Anna; (b) helping to construct the new campus Chapel of Nanjing Theological Seminary; (c) teaching ministers to be better pastoral counselors by the (Christian) Zhi-Mian Academy of Psychotherapy; (d) supplying much-needed beds and warm comforters to poor resident school children in Yunnan Province; (e) receiving permission for Kathy Call’s continued preaching in China’s churches where her sermons touch the hearts of the people. See the full 2006 list of China Ministries on the back of this sheet.

What’s New for 2007?

- Christine Gaw, our super Executive Assistant, will free up Kathy Call to concentrate more on special China projects, including preaching and writing.

- Besides our other projects we will concentrate on helping China’s 300,000 lepers. We seek your help in spreading this news wherever you can.

- Because some funding patterns have changed, we will seek urgently to find support for “Free Bibles for the Poor” and care for 1500 orphans.

- China is now translating for print 20 of Kathy Call’s China sermons.

All checks should be made out to “China Connection” for a U.S. tax deductible receipt. We reserve the right to use 5% of designated funds to maintain our viability as a service organization. 2006 audit available.

China Connection Board of Directors: Dr. Gilbert Ashor; Dr. G. Thompson Brown (Chairman); Ms. Kathy Call (Founder / Director); Mr. Merlin W. Call; Rev. Chan-Young Choi; Mrs. Sarah (Sally) V. Morrison.

China Connection Consultant: Dr. Philip Wickeri, former Overseas Director of the Amity Foundation.

China Connection Board of Reference: Dr. Gary W. Demarest; Dr. Arthur F. Glasser; Mrs. Ruth Bell Graham; Dr. Vernon Grounds; Dr. Paul G. Hiebert; Dr. Samuel H. Moffett; Dr. David K. Winter.
HERE IS WHAT OUR 2006 DONORS MADE POSSIBLE IN THROUGH CHINA CONNECTION:

Through China’s Christian-initiated Amity Foundation:

Rural Development: $111,371
Transforming three rural villages (primary school, clean water piped to each home, medical clinic and children’s lending library.)
Da Xiao Village, Zhangtan Village, Ping Dun Village
Bringing the first clean, running water to seven villages:
Dakou Qiao, Yichang, Dazhou, Shengen, Zhangwan, Hongjian, and 2 in Anhui’s 12-village Administrative village of Zhuha.
Paying off the mortgage on poor Yichang Village church
Sponsoring the school fees of school-less children in Jiangsu

Social Welfare and Medicine: $88,760
Caring for 1500 orphans in 15 orphanages
Providing four children’s libraries to four orphanages:
Hefei, Nanjing, Wuhan and Nanchang
Caring for the elderly in Huai’an, Jiangsu Province
Care for lepers in Huai’an “Leprosy Village”

Through China Christian Councils: $33,742
Nanjing Seminary Graduate Program Scholarships
Nanjing New Campus Chapel Construction
Other Theological Scholarship Support,
Sponsoring Free Bibles for the Poor
Helping rescue a very poor school in Yunnan Province
Helping/Rebuilding/Preaching in China’s Churches

Other China Ministry: $77,608
Zhii-mian Pastoral Counseling Training Program
Publications
Gao You Water Conservancy Project
Staff Support for China Ministry, 90 percent
Other China Ministry

Total Ministry for 2006: $313,481

Sources of 2006 Donations:
Individuals 33.5 percent
Churches/Public Orgs. 20 percent
Foundations 46.5 percent

CHINA MINISTRY TO DATE: $4,034,365
not been in contact with their family members in 25 years. Families move. Family members die. Floods destroy homes. Lepers usually are forgotten by their families and friends, by all.

How Do These Dear People Live? Very poorly! The woman pictured on the front lives in one room of an old brick building. She has a slab bed with straw mattress. Windows are generally missing, letting in the cold. Doors do not keep out the driving rain, so her dirt floor turns to mud. There are few lights. (She couldn’t turn them on anyway.) To make matters worse, she cannot use her hands and thus cannot keep her place neat and clean. She needs help in managing her own existence.

The dear man pictured above is awaiting surgery. The doctor boldly suggested that he show me his leg and foot. Shyly the man refused. He found such a request embarrassing. So, I smiled my understanding and walked on to greet others nearby.

When I returned, he caught my eye and motioned for me to come over. He took off his shoe, then his blue sock. And he showed me his leprous foot with the horrible sores on the side of it, and his lower leg so blackened with disease that it needs to be amputated.

As I looked at them, I told him: “Thank you for showing me. This is the way I learn. I am so very sorry! I am so sorry! I can’t possibly feel what you must be going through. I am just pondering how my friends and I can help make life better for you. I will continue to think more after I leave. I will not forget you!”

He smiled. He seemed glad that he had shown me his sores.

Before I left that day I made a point of touching two of the lepers to encourage them – the woman on the front page and this man. The CDC officials commented at lunch that they were surprised and very pleased that I chose to do so.

The Money Shortfall: The lepers’ food and medicine and clothing are supposed to come from a monthly government allowance of $12.50 per person. Although food prices are cheap in China, this is not nearly enough for a balanced diet. Unless nearby farmers give the group extra grain and vegetables, their diet probably lacks them, along with valuable fruit. As you see on the back page photo, there is only a meager stove where the doctor cooks their food.

Several lepers are waiting for funds to amputate a leg or foot, but there are no funds. And who gets priority? If they wait too long, the leprosy will kill them. But how does a leper living on $12.50 a month save enough money to amass enough yuan for an expensive operation? Their plight is nearly hopeless, as you can see.

I thought later about the whole issue of cleanliness. There is no clean water in this village. Alas, lepers cannot bathe themselves. Who does this? There is one outdoor latrine that all the lepers must use. But the lepers cannot use their hands. I wonder how they manage this all alone.

And certainly the doctor cannot help 28 patients with all this. He desperately needs to hire an assistant to help him, even to give him a brief time off. But who wants to come? And how can they get here from town a ways off? Might this new person need a motorized bike or motor scooter to facilitate this? These are just some bedrock issues here.

I talked about all this with the people at the Center for Disease Control. After I commented on the various needs I saw in the Village, I talked about “quality of life” issues. “If I were one of these lepers,” I said, “I would surely like to watch color television or listen to some inspiring music. This would give them something to look forward to.”

They warmed to my suggestions. “Yes, we must do this,” they agreed. But how to do this on the patients’ $12.50 a month? Can you possibly help us?” they asked.

continued on page 6
Welcome to the Chinese New “Year of the Pig!”

China’s Adoption Rules Tighten: Beginning May 1, 2007, adoption of Chinese children will be limited to adults who are married, under age 50, who are not obese, and who meet a specified standard of household income. Only four children per household may be adopted, according to the China Center of Adoptions Affairs. (NY Times)

Color China Green: China’s government will expend 1.5 percent of the country’s total gross domestic product in environmental protection from 2006-2010.

Diving Underwater: The first of its kind in China, an undersea auto traffic tunnel in Xiamen, Fujian Province, is going well and is about to start the underwater phrase.

China’s ‘Little Woman’: China’s Wu Xiaoli stands a mere 1.12 meters tall, but she thinks “taller” than she stands. She has founded a “Love Workshop” as a platform of communication for tiny people like herself.

Higher Price for the Yuan: Since the government agreed to allow the yuan to float against the dollar, the exchange rate has risen from 8.28 yuan per U. S. dollar in July 2005 to a present rate of 7.8394. This means that we travelers pay more in China for our hotels, food and purchases.

What Worries Chinese People Most? A recent poll in China showed that, similar to the United States, Chinese people’s top concerns today are housing prices, social security, and employment.

“Low-Cal Mooncakes:” For the Mid-Autumn Festival Day in 2006, a specialty store in Guangdong Province offered low-calorie mooncakes which were soon “gobbled up.” (If you’ve ever eaten regular calorie-rich mooncakes, you will applaud this helpful trend.)

Yangtze River to Produce Nuclear Power: Pending approval from the National Development and Reform Commission, China will begin its first nuclear plant along China’s famous river. Output of the four power units is expected to total 4 million KW. Construction begins in 2008, with full operation by 2012.

Playing “musical chairs” to obtain jobs: This year, 25 million Chinese search for only 10 million jobs. Even the 10 million college graduates this year will be vying for blue-collar jobs because of the scarcity of work.

“Immortal” Dies in China: In mid-January, the last of the “Eight Immortals” of China’s Communist Party, Bo Yibo, died at the age of 98 in Beijing. Joining the Party at age 17, Bo had a checkered political history: member of the Politboro, an opponent of Mao’s Great Leap Forward, a close colleague of Liu Shaoqi, and member of the NPC.

During the Cultural Revolution, he was imprisoned in dilapidated quarters by Jiang Qing, Mao’s wife. His children were similarly treated. Bo rose to power again after urging the crackdown at Tiananmen Square. His son, Bo Xilai, is presently China’s Minister of Commerce.

China Connection has sent $15,000 to help them remedy the problems in this one “Leprosy Village.” We will discuss with them in March which priorities come first. Hiring a helpful Assistant? A color television set? Fixing windows and doors? Perhaps rebuilding one of the housing units? Funding the life-saving surgeries needed by the patients? Purchasing more vegetables and fruit? All of these are good possibilities. But they add up.

Developing Links between Christians and Lepers: I feel strongly that we must also involve Christians in this process. We will challenge local churches to send people once in a while with fresh fruits and vegetables. We want them to get to know the lepers and become friends with whom they can talk freely. This will help both groups. China’s Christians love God, but they find it far less holy to love their neighbors as themselves. Here’s a wonderful way to remedy this lack, to the glory of God.

Why should you and I care? Because they are our fellow human beings who are suffering! Because when we help them, Jesus says we do this to him, too! Because Jesus cared about lepers! Jesus healed them. And we can bring joy and comfort -- and the grace and love of God – to them with our compassion. And who knows what kind of conversations may follow from all of this!

I am touched by that ancient leper who comes to Jesus, challenging him, “If you want to, you can make me clean!”

Jesus replies in compassion: “I am willing!” And he does!

That’s the question, isn’t it? Are we willing? Are we willing to help the lepers? It’s just as urgent today!

How about you?

I urge you to open your heart to these dear lepers. And please give generously, as unto our Lord. Pray with us that God will bless abundantly this ministry with China’s lepers.

China Connection News Exchange
Taken from the Beijing Review unless otherwise noted