

A letter from China



The Qing Ling Mountain Range

China, a land of powerful mighty rivers and seasonal tumbling streams, vast fertile plains and lush deep gorges, towering mountain peaks and freezing glaciated plateaus, searing hot deserts and scrub dry hills, steamy tropical forests and palmed golden beaches, thousands of small, poor villages and many huge metropolises.

Some of these places pour out health and beauty, space and relaxation; some pour out gushing smoke, filth, litter, and decay. And sometimes they are right next to each other, almost hand in hand. It's a place where the beauty and the ugly, the rich and the poor, the modern and the traditional co-exist in what seems a real mass of organised confusion. China



My city in Summer

I live in the midst of all of this, in a city in the south of Gansu Province. My city is nestled just west of the Qing Ling Mountain Range, just south of the semi desert region of Gansu, just north of the humid and lush Sichuan Province. It's a large city, in the midst of mass development and growth. The people are mainly

is certainly a land of extremes, yet one that traditionally believes in always taking the middle road.

Han Chinese, but there are also large populations of Hui, along with some Man, Tibetan, Dongxiang, and others here and there.

It is now the Chinese Spring Festival, and so all educational institutions have closed. Lessons have stopped, exams have been graded, and teachers and students alike are now at home, awaiting the 'big day' - Chinese New Year - this year falling on February 14th, and as tradition dictates many of the family will get together and eat Chinese dumplings (similar to ravioli), and other wonderful foods. They will basically do what many of us do in the west at Christmas; eat too much, watch too much TV, visit too many relatives, and finally sleep too much. We are more alike in many ways than we initially think!

We foreigners are at a bit of a loss sometimes at this time of year; a bit like Chinese in the UK when Christmas comes around. Something big is happening, and it has little relation to us, nor do we really appreciate all the cultural things that are happening, and we don't understand some of the rituals that our friends are doing.

Also, much of China is on the move at this time, buses, trains, and now even planes being crammed full, to nearly overflowing. Getting tickets can be a real problem, so, I plan on not doing too much travel, but will hopefully have a few people come to visit us here instead.

I did go up to the city where I used to teach for a few days; I stayed just over a week, and must have caught up with about 50 or so friends! I was exhausted by the end, but also happy. And to cap it all, on the train back home I ended up sitting with 3 of my old girl students, so had a chance to catch up with them too!



Youngsters practising a bit of stick waving martial arts at a nearby temple!

Along with two other teachers, I will be going to another city for 3 nights, spending the actual Spring Festival Eve there. It will be as crazy as usual I guess; billions of fireworks all going off in the course of an hour over the midnight of 13th, plus billions of others throughout the whole period. The time is a time of extreme noise well into the night, and sore throats from having to shout, and also breathe in enormous amounts of firework smoke for several days. But also great fun, along with the danger of getting hit by one of the many stray fireworks set off, mainly by children, which helps to add to the excitement!

As far as we know, the new semester begins 8th March, so we still have a long time of not having much to do. Life really does seem either so busy I can hardly catch my breath, or so slow I feel I'm coming to a halt. I believe I will be teaching my 4 old Reading and 2 old Writing classes again, but my Culture classes have ended. Instead I will be teaching Speaking to 2 first year classes - so ahead of me are two real content courses and one course that is simple for me to plan and teach. It will be good

to have an easy course this time, as last semester, with three content courses, really did challenge me.

Together with some of the other foreigners here, we continue to regularly meet for times of encouragement and fellowship as well as socialising, and have continued to occasionally pop over to the local, official church. I still understand very little of what is taught, the teachers often using dialect, but hopefully as I study, I will understand more. It's a group that is probably about 500 regular attendees, of which maybe half are older local village people who now live on the edge of the ever expanding city. It's great how they simply arrive and leave when they wish, and the whole thing is both ordered and formal but also very relaxed and simple.

Some of the older ladies we are sure are illiterate, so the teaching is kept simple and over the hour talk, each point is repeated in several different ways.



Me with friends by the river

I can follow most of the songs in the song book (my past reading lessons are coming into their own), but I only catch 5 - 10% of the teaching. It does give me chance however to sit, and watch all the old men and women as they chat, doze, listen, and smile when they catch me looking at them!

I thank you for your support and would value your prayers for language study; my teaching, especially of reading; times of sharing with those who are showing interest in life's deep issues; my health; and focused quiet times.

With love and thanks to you all,

David

To support the work and for further details and information about opportunities, please contact
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The Kingdom within the Kingdom

Dear Friends,

The characters for China, 中国 (zhong guo), literally mean “Middle Kingdom”. A lot has been read into that, such as their ‘sinocentric’ world view – how Chinese see themselves as the center of the universe, and China’s walled-in mentality when it comes to trade and diplomacy. The authority structure of the Communist Party is still very similar to that of the old empire, and the average person in China knows that they have few, if any rights when confronting representatives of the government. Yet there is a Kingdom that is growing within the Middle Kingdom that is characterized by citizens with a unique dual citizenship. Some estimate there are now well over 100 million Christians in China who respect the government, but worship the one who sits on a throne in heaven. This is the Kingdom within the Kingdom.

This month’s newsletter features one of our British teachers, David, who has been in China over 10 years. He’s a good writer, and I enjoy receiving at least one newsletter from him every month. David never planned on being in China this long. He went over with the blessings of his church and friends, and found that he communicated well in a classroom. He also found that he communicated well outside the classroom and many students became friends who very naturally wanted to know what motivated him to live in another culture so



different than his own. His Chinese friends found out that David has a very deep spiritual side, rooted in a personal relationship with Jesus. This is so radically different than anything they have been taught that many went out of their way to challenge his faith and try to discover his *real* motives. They found out through his friendship and his inexhaustible joy in life that his faith is indeed real, and they wanted to learn more about it. David doesn’t keep statistics, but it’s possible that hundreds, even thousands, of these friendships have led to a spiritual rebirth where the students have come to put their trust in Jesus. David’s tentative foray into teaching in China has become a lifelong love of the culture and people that will be his treasure forever.

Not everyone has David's kind of faith or his adventuresome spirit. In any group of friends, there's usually one or two who stand out from the others for their spirituality and responsiveness to the challenge to "Go!" At **Caring For China**, we are looking for those friends of yours who already sense in their hearts a pulling toward China. To be fully prepared, they need to have at least a bachelors' degree, and preferably a Masters degree. An ESL (teaching English as a Second Language) accreditation is not hard to get, and is becoming increasingly seen as a requirement for teaching in China. Most important is having a group of friends at church or in a small group who are willing to pray for their friend whom they send out and to keep in touch and support them in all ways during the time they are there. Likewise, the teacher in China can communicate with friends at home who can vicariously share their abundance of spirituality and adventure with them. **Caring For China** can provide a lot of the infrastructure that makes that support possible.

Who do you know who has expressed a spiritual interest in going to China? Sometimes it takes a friend to give them permission to pursue their dream. Encourage them to contact Kathy@CaringForChina.org to apply for a one or two year assignment. We will take it from there. Be prepared to hear some incredible stories about some incredible people in an incredible Kingdom...within a kingdom. They could return rich with a treasure that can never be taken away!

Yours in Christ,



Jon Dietz, President
Caring For China