

## The Blue Palace

*Pss. 10: 17-18* "You hear, O Lord, the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry, defending the fatherless and the oppressed, in order that man, who is of the earth, may terrify no more."

Ever since 1997 when "Shekinah Shalom" was officially opened, we have longed and prayed to see transformation in the nearby state-run main welfare center, for the children there to flourish and reach the full potential that the Father has given each one. For some time we had envisioned a situation where these children could live in small family-style group homes. However, neither the main welfare center, nor we, were in a position to finance such a dream.

Then last Autumn, an exciting event occurred when the main welfare center leaders were approached by representatives from the international organization "Save the Children Fund" who offered to design and construct a building for the children. This was such joyous news to receive and so wonderful to see how the Father to the Fatherless was answering the heartfelt cries and prayers of many who have ached to see lasting change for these children!

"Save The Children Fund" approached us with great enthusiasm, encouraged to see the long-standing relationship of trust with the main welfare center that we had built up, and asking us to assist in the ongoing training and oversight of the housemothers.

Recently the finishing touches were put to this newly constructed building which we nicknamed "The Blue Palace". It contains 8 family-style apartments, each designed to accommodate 4-5 children from the main welfare center and 1 house mother. In April, Richard G. (nurse), Ching (occupational therapist) and Joan (executive officer) led training sessions in childcare techniques with the hired local house "mamas".

Very soon all was ready for welcoming the children. Forty children moved during the last weekend of May. Upon seeing the new building, clean, spacious and colorful, the children were very excited. The staff-to-child ratio has improved from 1:17 in the previous situation to 1:4 or 5 in the new homes. It is so encouraging to see these children in a family environment, where each one can receive more love and care.

**Stacie P.** (physical therapist) is going to the new homes to assist and train the mamas and children in rehabilitative exercises. Accompanying her is **X.Q.** (Shekinah Shalom rehab aide) who we hope will be the main trainer, supported by Stacie, giving increasing stability for long-term involvement with the children.



On Children's Day, June 1<sup>st</sup>, we were able to visit the children in "The Blue Palace". They were all cleaned up, dressed in new clothes and looked happy. We rejoiced to see some of the younger children, who had previously been lying in their beds much of the time, now in the arms of their "mamas". The older children were holding and attending to the needs of the younger ones.

One of the most touching moments of our visit was with a little boy whom we call "Xiao Di" (Little Brother). He is about 7 years old and is developmentally delayed. He is not able to speak, but communicates loudly through a gorgeous beaming smile. Upon sight of the bag of treats we had brought for the children to share, Xiao Di excitedly clutched his hands around the bag and started to open it up. Someone handed him a small package of biscuits (so that he wouldn't open up everything in the bag) and he was very happy. He struggled to get them open, tugging and trying to tear the package. Finally, after some time, the biscuits were opened and we all watched expectantly to see him happily eat it. However, as soon as he got the biscuit into his hand, he turned around and put it in the mouth of a small baby girl (one of his house sisters)! It seemed an automatic gesture for him to share his treasure with someone else first, although we *know* he was desperate to eat the biscuit. We were all touched by his eager and pure generosity.

### HOW WONDERFULLY GOD CARES !!

**We are happy and grateful to see the children in a better situation. They are now very clean, well fed and cared for, and it seems like a miracle compared to their living situation previously. There is no doubt the Father heard our heart cries for the children and answered in a tremendous way.**

We were concerned that seven children with special needs were not moved into The Blue Palace with the other children. We just received the following news:

"Main welfare center officials have proposed a new plan to us in which these children can move into a nearby building, "Morning Dew", where Shekinah caregivers currently reside. They are offering to build a new home nearer to Shekinah Shalom for our caregivers."

**We give Thanks!!**

*My, How They've Grown!!*

It has been such a joy and encouragement that the Father has been bringing back children who were adopted from Hephzibah in the mid 90's for visits. We have now had the pleasure of being reacquainted with **Xumei**, now 9 ½ yrs (adopted to the USA in 1999), **Kate**, now 8 ½ yrs (whom we called Beth, adopted to the USA in 1995), **Patrick**, now 7 ½ yrs (whom we called Samual, adopted to Holland in 1998) and **Sharon**, now 8 ½ yrs (whom we called Yi Yuan, adopted to Holland in June 1995).



*Adopted children visit China!*

It was wonderful to see how each of the children who visited (the first time since their adoption) have blossomed in personality and grown in confidence. Some of the children were instantly recognizable, while others had changed so much! They are happily settled in their families – so different from the last time we saw them on the day of their introduction, when stress and emotions were high and the children were suddenly in the arms of “strangers”.

Each of the children's visits were special in different ways:

**Xumei** still remembered some of the caregivers and a few of our children such as Ruby, Hannah, David and Ruth who have special needs, as she was older when she was adopted.

**Kate**, her mother and their friends really enjoyed their time in the baby's room and grew quite attached to a little baby in our care named Sarah who has a gorgeous smile. If Kate could have taken Sarah home she would have!



When **Patrick** and his parents and younger sister Patricia visited, it just so happened that we received 3 new babies into Hephzibah that day so we asked Patrick's mother if she wanted to give two of the children English names. She was touched by the opportunity and named them after her children, Patrick and Patricia.



It was also lovely to see **Sharon** and her family. As we looked at baby photos of Sharon from her time with us, we were delighted to see that she still has the same lovely smile and round, gentle eyes as in all of the photos! We remember her as a very contented baby then and it's fun to see that she is still a very contented child with a great sense of humor!

It is so clear that they are well loved and have been growing in character and abilities. Though most of them have lost any Chinese fluency they might have once had in Hephzibah, some are now taking Chinese language or culture lessons. This is great, as we feel it is certainly special for the children to retain aspects of their Chinese heritage. Most of the children have also been able to maintain contact with other families who adopted from Hephzibah or other places in China. We imagine that these friendships are tremendously special and will be increasingly precious as they grow over the years.

**Thank you for your faithful prayers for the children who are still in our care, may they also soon have families of their own. If you could see the growth and vitality of the children who have come back to visit, you would be so very encouraged that the love you are giving to the children through your prayers and financial support is so clearly yielding fruit!**

Please continue to partner with us in prayer for the children who have been adopted, that they will settle well into their families and home communities and that when they try to remember anything they can about their time with us, He will assure them without a doubt that they were loved. - Ellen J. and Liz M.

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*Adopted Chinese children now living in Holland!*

*What JOY.....to see such beautiful answers to prayer!*

**On June 14th, a small group from UK went to Holland and met with families who have adopted Chinese children. It was a very special day; not sure who was more blessed, the children, the parents or the team—but we were surely deeply touched and it was a memorable day for all!**



Arthur, Dorothy, Gill & Gwyn had a wonderful time!

Our thanks to Miriam (far right) who acted as translator and helped arrange the day.



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