

## Monthly News Summary: People's Republic of China

### November 2006

Compiled by The United Methodist China Program, Room 1335  
General Board of Global Ministries, The United Methodist Church, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115

**Amity Foundation Wins Prestigious National Award.** The Amity Foundation, a General Board of Global Ministries partner organization in China, has received the prestigious China Poverty Eradication Award in the 'organization' category. The award is given by the China Foundation for Poverty Alleviation in recognition of outstanding contributions which have led to substantially alleviating poverty in some of the poorest areas of China. "Amity is very proud to have received this award," said Mr. Qiu Zhonghui, Amity's General Secretary. He continued, "We fully realize that we could not have achieved this without the vision and wisdom of Amity's founding leaders and the support and goodwill of all our friends and partners, both overseas and in China. The award belongs to all of you who have supported us and walked with us through thick and thin. It is a tribute to what can be achieved through the ecumenical sharing of resources." The awards were given on October 17, the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. United Nation's Secretary General, Kofi Annan sent a congratulatory message to the award ceremony. The Amity Foundation is a social service organization that was begun in 1985 by Christians in China looking for a way to live Christ's gospel in society. Amity works with local communities in projects designed to empower and lift people out of poverty. It facilitates work in health care, education, rural development, blindness prevention, relief and rehabilitation. Many United Methodists are familiar with Amity through its printing press which, since 1987, has printed more than 45 million Bibles in China that are distributed throughout the nation by the China Christian Council. *Source: The Amity Foundation; General Bd. Global Ministries, [http://gbgm-umc.org/global\\_news/pr.cfm?articleid=4274](http://gbgm-umc.org/global_news/pr.cfm?articleid=4274).*

**China's Response to North Korea's Nuclear Test.** Following North Korea's announcement that it had conducted nuclear tests, the Chinese government denounced North Korea's actions. The BBC reported that Beijing called the tests 'brazen' and demanded that North Korea immediately cease all other plans for tests. This was seen as uncharacteristically strong language as Beijing is a huge supporter of quiet diplomacy, keen to get the North Koreans back to the six-nation talks which had been stalled for over a year with Pyongyang refusing to re-enter negotiations until economic sanctions against it were lifted. North Korea's nuclear tests can be seen as an embarrassment to China, that Beijing's influence goes only so far. While advocating 'appropriate' United Nations sanctions against North Korea, Beijing balked at signing an original UN Security Council draft, headed by the U.S., which called for military intervention in the case of Pyongyang's non-compliance. China was also aware that further economic sanctions could cause a flood of refugees from North Korea across its own border. One of the most controversial aspects of the resolution for China and Russia alike was the proviso allowing nations to inspect cargo coming in and out of North Korea. Beijing and Moscow both were afraid of naval confrontations with Pyongyang as a result. In the end, the proviso for military intervention was dropped, but inspection of cargo remained, and United Nation's Security Council Resolution 1718, imposing sanctions on North Korea because of its claimed nuclear test, was passed unanimously. *Source: "China calls for calm over North Korea", BBC News, Oct 4, 2006; "China's 'nightmare scenario'", BBC News, October 10, 2006; "China urges UN action on North Korea," BBC News, Oct 10, 2006; "UN slaps sanctions on North Korea," BBC News Oct. 14, 2006.*

**Woman is China's Richest Person.** Ms. Zhang Yin, 49, worth \$3.4 billion, is the richest person in China and the richest self-made woman on earth, the *Times* reports. Ms. Zhang's wealth now surpasses that of Harry Potter author Ms. J.K. Rowling and television celebrity, Oprah Winfrey. Zhang made her fortune by buying scrap paper from the United States and recycling it into paper packaging for China's booming export industries. The *Times* reported that Ms. Zhang, a native of Heilongjiang province, began building her fortune in 1985 when, with less than \$4,000, she set up a waste paper business in Hongkong. In 1995 she established the Nine Dragons Paper Company in Guangdong taking a chance that China's fledging economic prosperity might continue. Ms. Zhang is one of eight children and remembers growing up in a family where clothes were patched and meat was served only on holidays. *Source: "World's wealthiest self-made woman," The Times, October 12, 2006.*

**Social Harmony Key to Party Plans.** The 16<sup>th</sup> Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) met in Beijing and issued a communiqué highlighting the issue of 'social harmony', a major focus of President Hu Jintao, who is also the General Secretary of the Central Chinese Communist Party. According to the New China News Agency, Xinhua, it is the first time the Party has focused on social development, rather than political and economic affairs. The communiqué also included strong statements on corruption and abuse of power. As China's remarkable economic growth continues, the country is divided by a huge gap between the rich and poor, and rising prices for housing, medical services and education. These, combined with an inadequate social security system, massive government corruption at all levels of society, and rising unemployment among new graduates, are making people more anxious about their future, said Wu Zhongmin, a professor with the Party School of the CPC Central Committee and quoted by Xinhua. The building of a 'harmonious society' was first coined by President Hu Jintao in 2004 as a "democratic society under the rule of law, a society based on equality and justice, an honest and caring society....in which humans live in harmony with nature." The 16<sup>th</sup> CPC meeting also set the date for the 17<sup>th</sup> National People's Congress which will elect a new CPC Central Committee and begin a new 'five-year' plan. *Source: "CPC Central Committee concludes plenum," China Youth Connection, Oct 12, 2006.*

**Conservation Plans for Arable Land.** China's State Council has ordered the Ministry of Land and Resources to revise its plan for land use and guarantee that 295 million acres of arable land be conserved until at least 2020, according to Xinhua. The original plan had asked for conservation until 2010. The practice of local governments selling off fields, cultivated for generations, to outside developers, without consulting with or offering a fair compensatory package to farmers, has become a national problem especially in the east. As the Central government relinquishes less and less fiscal responsibility over social services, selling off arable land to commercial developers at high prices is one way local governments have compensated. While Beijing has encouraged local governments to ensure equitable compensation, corruption has meant that many farmers have not received adequate compensation, re-training, or benefits like preferential interest rates on small loans for new business ventures. The plan will demand that governments at all levels make concentrated efforts to protect arable land. From 1996 – 2004 China's arable land has shrunk from 321 million acres to 301 million. Six of the ten wealthiest people in China have made their money in property development. *Source: "China to conserve 120 mil hectares of arable land," Xinhua, Oct. 17, 2006; "World's wealthiest self-made woman," The Times, October 12, 2006.*

**China celebrates 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Long March.** The 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Long March was celebrated in the Great Hall of the People, Tiananmen Square, and broadcast on China Central TV, China National Radio, China International Radio, and the Internet sites of the *People's Daily* and New China News Agency, said Xinhua. The Long March was the movement of tens of thousands Communist soldiers, cadres, porters and followers who were in search of a new base area amidst intense fighting with Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist army. From 1934 - 1936 the Red Army and Communist party command columns fought and moved throughout the countryside, sustaining terrific casualties. By the time they reached Yan'an, Shaanxi province, they had traveled over 7,500 miles. Only 8,000 of the original recruits had remained, although the Red Army had gained an additional 12,000 in new recruits as it moved and liberated peasants, women and the marginalized poor in the countryside. The Long March is seen as a military maneuver that eventually led to the defeat of Chiang Kai-shek's Guomindang (Nationalist) army, and the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949. *Source: "Grand ceremony held to mark 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Long March," Xinhua, October 22, 2006; Patricia Buckley Ebray, Cambridge Illustrated History China, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pg 287.*

**Learning Golf Will Give an Edge.** The BBC reports that golf lessons are on the curriculum for certain students at Xiamen University, Fujian province, one of China's top universities. The idea is to produce graduates with good communication and social skills, both needed in the executive world. Golf is enjoyed by China's social elite and recognizing that there is some truth that 'company decisions are made on the golf course', Xiamen University president, Zhu Chongshi, said that golf lessons will be available to all students but will be mandatory for those majoring in management, law, economic and software engineering. *Source: "Chinese university in golf drive," BBC News, October 17, 2006.*

### **For Further Information**

[Amity Foundation](http://www.amityfoundation.org)

[BBC News](http://www.bbc.co.uk)

[China Daily](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn)

[China.org.cn](http://www.china.org.cn)

[Embassy of the People's Republic of China, in the USA](http://www.china-embassy.org/eng)

[General Board of Global Ministries, United Methodist Church](http://www.gbgm-umc.org)

[www.amityfoundation.org](http://www.amityfoundation.org)

[www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)

[www.chinadaily.com.cn](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn)

[www.china.org.cn](http://www.china.org.cn)

[www.china-embassy.org/eng](http://www.china-embassy.org/eng)

[www.gbgm-umc.org](http://www.gbgm-umc.org)

**The United Methodist China Program** seeks to facilitate deeper understandings between China, the United States and other nations throughout God's world. It respects the autonomy of Protestant churches in China and recognizes that, with God's guidance, Christians in China are shaping a bold new witness. The United Methodist China Program relies on partner organizations, including the China Christian Council, to help it define new relationships within China's post-denominational context. Through education, communication, and exchange, China Program is a sensitive lens through which we and people within China can see and understand each other more accurately.

The *Monthly News Summary: People's Republic of China* is prepared by Diane Allen, a GBGM missionary serving as China Program Associate to the United Methodist China Program. She can be supported through the Advance Special # 10163Z.