On June 16, 1887 the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada appointed the first two missionaries to the Honan Mission. They were the Rev. Dr. Jonathan Goforth and Rev. Dr. James Frazer Smith, M.D. The Foreign Mission Committee had been hesitant about opening a new Mission because they were chronically short of funds. These two men had secured their support from students and Alumni of their colleges Dr. Smith from Queen's University and Dr. Goforth from Knox College. Dr. Goforth learned that there was a famine in North China and sailed in January 1888, however neither Dr. Goforth nor the Foreign Mission Committee realized that without a working knowledge of Chinese he would be unable to even reach Honan province. Upon his arrival in Shanghai, the local missionaries quickly made him aware of this fact and advised him to proceed to Chefoo to study the language.

Dr. and Mrs. Goforth arrived in Chefoo on March 25, 1888. The reason for choosing this site was that the veteran missionary Dr. Hunter Corbett of the American Presbyterian (North) had visited Toronto and recommended the new Mission to locate in North Honan, where no other Protestant Mission was at work. Dr. and Mrs. Frazer Smith, accompanied by Miss Harriet Sutherland, a nurse supported by the W.M.S. but appointed by the Foreign Mission Committee, arrived in Chefoo on August 31, 1888.

On September 13, 1888 Dr. Goforth and Dr. Smith took a steamer to Tientsin and then travelled 250 miles by cart to Pang Chia Chwang, Shantung, where Dr. A.H. Smith of the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions (Congregational), took them on an exploratory trip over North Honan and contiguous areas. They also went south of the Yellow River to Kaifeng, capital of the province. In all, the trip covered approximately 1,200 miles. The two Canadian missionaries were delighted with Honan and wrote: “It is a goodly land, let us go up and possess it.” But that was easier said than done. Honan was one of the most anti-foreign of all provinces and they experienced great difficulty renting a place. On November 1, 1888 the two missionaries returned from their tour of Honan. Dr. Goforth had been invited by the American Board of Missionaries to take his family to Pang Chia Chwang and study there where they could be nearer to Honan.

In December 1888 Dr. Donald MacGillivray arrived in Chefoo. Due to a lack of funds MacGillivray had volunteered to go out to China on half salary. On December 15, 1888 he set out on the 450 mile trip from Chefoo to Pang Chia Chwang where the Goforths were residing. In 1889, the Board appointed three married couples and two single nurses. They were the Rev. and Mrs. J.H. MacVicar, Rev. and Mrs. Murdoch MacKenzie, Rev. and Mrs. J. MacDougall, Miss Margaret I. Macintosh and Miss Jennie Graham. The three men were all graduates of the Theological College in Montreal and the MacVicars were supported by Ersking Church in that city. The MacKenzies were supported by Mr. David Yuile, a member of Erskine. The ladies were supported by the W.M.S. of the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

The appointment of eight new missionaries made it necessary to look for further accommodation. The American Board Mission again offered them residence in their station at Lin-ching, fifty miles nearer to Honan on the Wei River. Dr. MacGillivray moved there in June to prepare the place for the others. He was joined by the Goforths in July and the Smiths in November. Meantime, Dr. William McClure, who arrived in Chefoo in October, 1888, remained in Pang Chia Chwang and travelled out to Tientsin to escort the new missionaries to Lin-ching. The party arrived in Lin-ching on December 5, 1889 and shortly thereafter Dr. Goforth, on authorization of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, convened the first Honan Presbytery with Synodical powers.

In August, 1890 Presbytery authorized Goforth, Smith, McClure and MacGillivray to make trips into the interior of Honan in an attempt to secure property. By October, Drs. McClure and MacGillivray spent sixteen days at the small town of Chu Wang, thirty miles east of Changte. Drs. Smith and Goforth were also offered a place in the small town of Hsin-chen. With their entry into the interior anti-foreign activity escalated. On November 15, a mob, instigated by the Chu Wang gentry, burst into the Mission and carried off all the missionaries’ bedding, books, medicines, surgical instruments, furniture and clothing. The missionaries appealed to the local officials in vain. Dr. McClure then set out for Lin-ching and with the Presbytery’s consent proceeded to Tientsin to lay their case before the British consul. The British took the matter up with the Chinese government. The Chinese Viceroy, the famous Li Hung Chang, took a personal interest largely because the loot had been comprised mainly of medical and surgical

---

instruments. He was deeply interested in modern medicine and this inspired him to undertake a personal investigation. An agreement settling the issue was signed on February 4, 1891. The success of the final negotiations was largely due to Dr. MacGillivray’s remarkable knowledge of Chinese legal language and his skill as a negotiator.

In January, 1892 Presbytery met for the first time on Honan soil at Chu Wang, and in January, 1894, resolved to try to secure premises in the North suburb of Changte. In April, MacGillivray succeeded in obtaining a fifty-year lease on a most suitable site of twelve mou (about 2 acres) just outside the city wall in the North suburb. That summer the Sino-Japanese war broke out and the British consul would not allow British subjects to return to the interior. Dr. MacGillivray and Dr. Grant remained alone and carried on work without too much interference. In 1899, Dr. MacGillivray accepted the invitation of Dr. Timothy Richard to go to Shanghai to become an editor in the Society for the Propagation of Christian and General Knowledge (the name of this society was later changed to the Christian Literature Society for China).

In 1900, the Boxer Rebellion forced the Honan missionaries to flee to Shanghai, or to return home to Canada. Most of the members did not return to Honan until the early months of 1902. In May of that year the Mission purchased seven acres of land on the banks of the Wei River and opened a station at Weihwei. Three more stations were subsequently opened at Taokow (1908), Wuan (1910) and Hsiuwu (1912). A railway from Peking to Hankow was completed in 1904 and passed through both Changte and Weihwei. In 1905 a boys' school was opened at Weihwei and Mrs. Mitchell opened the Mission’s first girls’ school at Weihwei in 1906. A High and Normal School for boys was opened at Weihwei in 1908. Interest in education intensified and in 1915 the Mission decided to co-operate with Cheeloo University in Medicine and Theology. Later, they also shared in the Arts Faculty.

With the rise of anti-foreign feeling and activities in 1925 the Mission evacuated to the coast in June. They were, however, able to return in September. More serious troubles broke out in 1927 and the Mission again evacuated. This time, the missionaries were not able to return to their stations until near the end of 1929. The next major upheaval which forced the missionaries to flee occurred in 1937 with the Japanese invasion of Honan. While some of the missionaries remained in Honan until 1939 others went to join the West China Mission in Szechwan, or remained at Peking, Tsinan, Tientsin, and Shanghai, some returned to North America.

The beginning of the end for the Honan Mission came in 1947 when the Communists, who already occupied most of the rural areas, captured Weihwei. A few missionaries remained there for a short time while the majority fled. The Communists took over Shanghai in May, 1949, and Chungking and Chengtu in December. In 1951, owing to the impossibility of the majority of missionaries working under the new regime, the Overseas Board of the United Church voted to close out their three China missions. In the spring of 1952 the last of the Canadian missionaries received exit permits.

**South China Missions**

The mission opened in Kwangtung Province (from which Chinese in Canada had come) with the landing of the first missionary Rev. W.R. McKay, in 1902. Missionaries and the support of their work came from the Presbyterian Church in Canada until the time of Church Union in 1925, when the United Church of Canada took responsibility of this former Presbyterian field. At that time there were two central stations (Kongmoon and Shekki) and fourteen other places of worship. The educational work consisted of 15 day schools as well as boys and a girls’ boarding school, the two latter in Kongmoon. Three hospitals served the areas, two at Kongmoon and one at Shekki, the money for the latter being provided by wealthy Chinese merchants who continued their interest by caring for all maintenance, except the salary of a missionary doctor.

The mid and late twenties were years of unsettled conditions. First, there was the question of a possible division of the field between the United Church of Canada and the Presbyterian Church in Canada, which left the missionaries somewhat perplexed as to their future service. Fortunately this matter was settled amicably with only one missionary returning to Canada as a non-concurring Presbyterian. Far more serious was the war of nationalism with its bitter anti-foreign, anti-Christian and especially its anti-British accompaniments, which swept China and was most intense

---

in the province of Kwangtung. During one boycott the mission was abandoned by missionaries for six months or more.

An outstanding feature of 1926 was the transfer of the evangelistic work of the mission to the Kwangtung Synod of the Church of Christ in China. This meant that the Chinese were undertaking the administration of their own churches but still counting on the help of missionary personnel and funds from the Canadian Church. The transfer of the evangelistic work was but a first step in the long process of devolution. The Secretary of the Mission, Rev. W.R. McKay, opposed the transfer of educational and hospitals work to the Chinese Church. A deputation from Canada in 1927 discussed at length this burning issue. The transfer of educational work was hastened by demands of the government for registration of all schools. The staffing and operation of hospitals became a live issue and the subject of much correspondence. McKay objected to the appointment of Dr. J. Oscar Thomson to the Canton Hospital (a cooperative institution affiliated with Lingnan University) on the grounds that the Board had not fulfilled its responsibility to provide a doctor for the Shekkei hospital. The Board confirmed the appointment of Dr. Thomson to Canton and a few years later sent a Canadian doctor to meet the need at Shekkei. By 1930s administration of both educational and medical work came under the jurisdiction of the Synod. The role of the missionary was no less important. He became a colleague rather than the leader, as the indigenous church took on more responsibility and became stronger until in the years ahead it had to carry on alone when missionaries had to be withdrawn due to political and international upheavals.

During the early 30s the work progressed in a normal manner. Churches, schools and hospitals rendered an effective ministry, though financial help from the Board left much to be desired due to the slump in Missionary and Maintenance givings of the Church, reflecting the economic conditions in Canada.

Then in 1938 war conditions again prevailed. The Provincial city, Canton, and the surrounding area fell to the invading armies. Fear and apprehension took possession of the whole province. Bomb attacks filled hospitals with dying and wounded and with the arrival of the Japanese troops about one-half of the area of mission work became a part of “Occupied China.” Schools ceased to operate and the buildings became filled with refugees. Union Theological College moved to Yunnan province the Union Normal School transferred to the Portuguese city of Macao. The church became a scattered flock and attendance fell from hundreds to tens. By December 1941 the only remaining Foreign Mission Board missionaries on the field were Rev. Dr. and Mrs. T.A. Broadfoot, whose adventures during the following year or two make a story on its own. They escaped to Yunnan Province where Dr. Broadfoot served in church work until an opportunity came to return to Kongmoon in 1945. With the reappointment of former missionaries Rev. Duncan McRae and Dr. Wallace B. McClure, the task of rehabilitation was undertaken, and much of the former work re-established.

These two missionary families carried on effectively until in 1952 the Communists forced all missionaries to leave, thus passing on to the Church of Christ in China (Kwangtung Synod) the complete responsibility for Christian witness while it could continue to operate. Only meager reports have come out of South China since that time.

The South China Mission was considered a small mission in respect to numbers of missionaries sent from Canada and the financial grants from the United Church of Canada, especially when compared with other areas in the world. This fact may have been partially responsible for the occasional personal disagreements as to policy. There is no doubt as to the devotion of missionaries who labored under handicaps in order that the Christian witness might be established in this corner of the great land of China. Throughout the years there was close cooperation with The Woman's Missionary Society of the United Church of Canada. A Joint Medical Plan was worked out whereby the two Boards shared 50-50 the cost of medical personnel and other medical costs. The missionaries of both Boards also met in joint annual Council meetings to plan all phases of the work.

**Medical Work**

Emphasis was laid on medical mission work from the beginning as it was felt by the Board, and by the Woman’s Missionary Society that medical work was a vital and essential part of missionary propaganda. In the beginning, very few Western-style medicinal practices were used in China. The pioneering party of 1891 included four men,
two of whom were doctors and two ministers. As more missionary doctors arrived, they spread out to various central stations and outstations. Towards the end of 1908, the first nurses arrived in China. By 1920, the missions had twenty-one doctors, men and women, working in eleven hospitals, in ten central stations. Over 40,000 individual patients were attended to annually, including out-patients, in-patients, and patients visited in their homes. In addition to hospital and medical clinic work, nurses and doctors were involved in public health initiatives, such as Baby Welfare Clinics, visits to nearby jails, and teaching health procedures at Middle Schools (with inspection of the pupils).

As with the mission field in general, development in the medical field was marred by the many riots and revolutions the Missionaries had to endure. Many buildings were lost, and the medical missions had to re-build many times. Lack of proper equipment, the expense of equipment and medical supplies, as well as the taxation on buildings and land hampered work and development. As remarked in many Annual Reports of the Board of Overseas Missions, and the Woman’s Missionary Society, another issue always felt was understaffing and the lack of balance between foreign missionary supervision, and adequate Chinese Christian staff. It was realized fairly early on that the most effective and significant thing the medical missionaries could do was to maintain a few hospitals at a high level of efficiency so that the Chinese who received their training there could carry out into their own work with the high standard of medical practice to which they had been introduced in mission hospitals and schools.

In 1914, the Medical Faculty of West China Union University was formed (see above: West China Mission), and a first class of medical students began. As it developed, it also held courses in dentistry, pharmacy and nursing. The campus held the Union Hospital, a Women’s Hospital (run by the Woman’s Missionary Society), an Ear, Nose and Throat Hospital, a dispensary, an obstetrics and gynecology department, a T.B. Sanatorium, a Leper Hospital, and other areas related to medical education. At the time, the only Dental College in China was at West China Union. As the University developed, doctors, nurses and other specialists began to graduate and take up work at various stations in Western China. In 1920, the first four men graduated from medicine, and in 1921, Whang Tien-Chi was the first graduate in Dentistry. In 1932, Miss Yo Yi-ch’en was the first woman to graduate from Medicine. In the year 1941-42 about 600 men and women were receiving medical and dental training on the Chengtu campus. The University was constantly evolving and developing to suit various needs.

Throughout the years, the Chinese began to adopt a Western style of medicine. Eventually, there was a desire to take control over the standardization of medical work and education. It was remarked in the Annual Report of the Board of Overseas Missions in 1945 that the Chinese Government had plans for a nation-wide medical service which would include training centres, both in Universities and hospitals. The high standard that the Missionaries had rendered was recognized by the Chinese, and they wished to incorporate those standards into their general plan.

Overall, the hospitals continued to function in cooperation with Missionaries, until they were completely taken over by the Communist regime and missionaries returned home in 1952. Remnants of Medical Missions of the United Church still live on, as many of the hospitals and universities in China today had their beginnings with these missions.

---

16 West China Union University. “West China Union University” 1942: p. 11.