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26 November 2025

REV GARY BARCLAY, MINISTER, 586282

JOHN MARTIN, CLERK TO BOARD, 815817

JEAN HASTINGS, TREASURER, 811225

JOHN CROSS, SESSION CLERK, 818254

CHRISTMAS POST BOX

If you are in the habit of bringing Christmas cards to church to hand out to friends in our church fellowship, to save you wandering round everyone, there will be a post box in the Hub on Sunday 7th December and Sunday 14th December for you to leave your cards. The cards will then be delivered, free of charge, by the Murrayfield Posties. No need to add an address – just make sure the recipient's name is on the envelope.



SUNDAY SERVICES

This Sunday's service, being the last of the month (and St Andrews Day), is an opportunity to donate goods or money to Start Up Stirling. In the evening, there is a joint churches' **Advent Service** in Fallin Church at 6.30pm.

Next Sunday, 7th December, will be a **Communion Service** at which there will be a retiring offering for the work of Scripture Union.

CHRISTMAS LUNCH

We still have spaces available for anyone who would like to join us for our annual Christmas Lunch at The Gallery Restaurant, Forth Valley College, Stirling on Friday 5th December at 12.30pm. Please let Ann (Lomax) or Jean (Hastings) know asap if you would like to come to the lunch. The cost of the lunch is £29.50 (£26.95 plus a tip) and it would be appreciated if this could be paid to either Ann or Jean before the 5th December. If you require transport please speak to either Ann or Jean.



OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD

Twenty actual shoeboxes were sent to Operation Christmas Child from Murrayfield along with donations of knitting. In addition, twenty-two boxes were filled online. Many thanks to all who contributed to this year's appeal.

TRICIA'S ADVENTURES IN CHINA

Many of you will remember Rev Tricia Johnston asking us to pray for her trip to China. Well, she's there now, and this is her description of her first week.

Update No 1: November 2025 Partner Visit:

Just a few thoughts as I approach the end of my first week of this year's Partner visit.

After we were seated on the Cathay Pacific flight from Hong Kong to Nanjing, the British captain announced that there would be a slight delay as there was a minor issue with one of the engines which they would like to resolve before we took off – me too!!!

During our 2-day Exposure Visit to Suzhou and Nantong, when we were going to be visiting Amity supported Projects, we enjoyed two lunches and two dinners. At one dinner we had 19 dishes served for 10 of us, but at none of the meals was rice served – I miss a nice bowl of rice to go with my green veggies!!

I love it when a Chinese colleague/friend trusts you enough to feel safe in saying exactly what they are thinking! After the 3-hour morning celebration of Amity's 40th Anniversary and the 3 hour afternoon celebration of Amity's 40th Anniversary, and before the 2½ hour Gala Dinner, I said to an Amity colleague, 'I bet you'll be glad when this is all over and we're all away.' And she simply said, 'Yes'!!!

After all the official Amity celebrations and meetings had finished I moved from the Nanjing International Conference Hotel to the Central Hotel for the rest of my time in Nanjing. This was partly due to costs – at US\$150 per night the Conference Hotel was expensive – but it was also due to location. The Conference Hotel is located near Purple Mountain on the outskirts of the city; Central Hotel is, as it says, in the city centre so is much more convenient for the meetings with SCCG partners. When I checked into the Central Hotel the receptionist told me she had upgraded my room, which was very kind of her. I can now appreciate a bigger room, a great desk and office chair to do my writing up and a walk-in wardrobe. What I'm less than thrilled with is the floor to ceiling mirrors on either side of the toilet!

When I came to China in 1988, as an Amity teacher, you would see rows and rows of bikes parked outside shops, offices etc. Now, it's rows and rows of scooters. There are hundreds and hundreds of them on the streets. They are such a convenient and quick way to get about the city but, apparently, there are lots of accidents as they do go very fast. As we are heading into winter most now have their 'winter gear' attached to them. If you imagine putting your hands into a padded winter 'jacket' with thick gloves at the end of the sleeves. The gloves are attached to the handle bars so the riders' hands, arms and lower chest area are covered in this warm padded, often colourful, material as they ride along in cold winter weather.

At the moment, the days are warm and bright, which is great, but in the evening, when the sun goes down (around 5.30ish) the temperature starts to drop and it can get quite chilly. As Nanjing is in the south of China there is no heating in the hotels so, working at my laptop in the evening it can get quite cold. My hands especially get cold so I usually go and run them under warm water just to heat them up a bit.

When we were going to Nanjing Special Education University we had to go through a passage that led to a facial recognition machine. Our image appeared on the screen and then the 'gates' opened to let us in. On the way out of the university, we had to walk through a similar passageway, on the opposite side of the road. Our image came up on the screen, and presumably because it matched with the one going in, the gates opened. On Friday I visited a

newly opened (5 days earlier) community centre for the elderly. It is the ground floor of a huge block of flats and was gifted to Amity by the local authority. There are a number of units along the ground floor (presumably for shops, office etc) and the two that Amity have been allocated are about 50-60 yards apart. One unit will provide services for people living with dementia, the other will provide a range of social activities. In between the two, is a facial recognition system. It isn't operational at the moment but, I just found that a bit concerning.

One thing I've noticed is seeing more overweight 20/30 somethings. The numbers are miniscule compared to our country, but it seems to say something about the change in diet and the impact of more western foods being available – at Amity's Anniversary Gala Dinner, French fries were the accompaniment to two dishes!! KFC and McDonalds are big in China; the little 7Eleven shop next to the hotel has a lot of sandwiches, ready meals and, in a hot cabinet, things like breaded chicken breasts/legs. There's also a little counter area and microwaves where folks can buy a ready meal, heat it up and eat it in the shop. A university lecturer I was speaking to was saying many of her students have told her they don't cook, don't want to cook and would much prefer buying/having takeaway food delivered.

There has been a scandal in Nanjing!! Some good, respected restaurants have admitted to using ready-made meals rather than cooking from fresh. Not surprisingly, this has had a negative impact upon the hospitality industry. People are now saying, 'I can buy a ready meal myself and just heat it up; it's much cheaper than going out'. Some restaurants have signs outside their premises confirming they don't use ready meals!!

Imagine, you are tired and getting ready for bed. You get into your bed and press a light switch just next to your bed but, instead of the light going off, another one comes on, so you click that one off and try another one and some lights go off but not all... such is my nightly routine!! The number of light switches in a hotel room is dizzying!! In the Central Hotel, I have a corridor light switch, two switches in the shower room, two in the toilet area, two next to the shelf where the kettle is, one next to the air conditioning control and 6 in between the two single beds!! And this isn't unique to the Central Hotel; every hotel I've ever been in has had multiple light switches, so going to bed and turning off the lights can be a 'stressful' event!! Sometimes I get it right and press the one main switch (which doesn't control the corridor, shower room or toilet lights in the Central Hotel) but, often, I find I press one switch and it goes dark apart from one little light somewhere in the room... and so starts the hunt for its switch!! So, I hear you say, why don't you just read the label on each switch and then you'll know what it controls – maybe!! In my room here in the Central Hotel, there is no label on one switch and two that say 'strip' - but there are no strip lights... back to pressing switches and hoping for the best!!

I'm now writing this from Tianfeng Hotel in Shenyang. I arrived here, at 5.45pm, on a jam packed flight from Nanjing. I was met by Dr Wang and her poor husband who has a cold – I bet he could have seen a trip to the airport far enough!!! They also gave me a beautiful bouquet of roses! They are so kind. We had a lovely dinner together and I'm now back in the hotel getting organised for tomorrow's meetings.

I stayed in the Tianfeng Hotel last year and it's lovely but I'd forgotten it's 'toilet' quirk – the toilet faces a floor to ceiling window looking out onto the main street!

On that note, I'll leave you and unpack ready for this week's events.

Best wishes,

Tricia