

# Partnership yields church building for Chinese Christians

March 2, 2006

Posted: 3/03/06

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**By Lance Wallace**

*Cooperative Baptist Fellowship*

YANTING, China—Seventy Christians in a Chinese city of 200,000 people have a new place to worship, thanks to an unusual partnership between Chinese Christians, a Houston Baptist church and Anglican relatives of one of Cooperative Baptist Fellowship's Global Missions field personnel.

CBF Global Missions field personnel Bill and Michelle Cayard brought together these partners to play a crucial role in the life of a small church that had sought their help to make their dream of a church building a reality.

"They've dreamed, they've invested, they've stretched as far as they can," Cayard said. "So we committed the funds to get them the rest of the way there."

In late November 2004, an English-speaking Chinese pastor told the Cayards about a small congregation in Yanting that had purchased an old factory building for their church.

The State Administration for Religious Affairs, the arm of the Chinese

government that relates to churches in the country, helped provide old chairs for the group to begin meeting in the facility.

As the members celebrated having their new facility, the government also stipulated that the church look like a church. That's when the pastor went to Cayard, a former construction manager, for help.

Although the Cayards are just completing language school and settling into their place of ministry in Chengdu, the opportunity arose for them to involve CBF. Members of their home church, South Main Baptist in Houston, contributed \$5,000 for the project.

By March 2005, the construction began on a new roof, windows, gables and a cross to begin the factory's transformation.

When Cayard's aunt and uncle, Bev and Ben Sibley of Orlando, Fla., came to China for a visit, the Cayards took them to the facility and showed them the progress. Despite having no connection to CBF, the Anglican couple rallied friends and family to put forward an additional \$5,000 to purchase pews.

The actual cost of the church benches was about \$2,500, leaving the remainder to be used for scholarships for Chinese students to attend seminary and for subsidies for pastors' salaries throughout the province.

Now, Yanting Christian Church has a more visible witness to their community.

"It brought tears to my eyes when we drove into Yanting and saw the construction progress," Cayard said.

The construction project recently was completed.

"This is the first place of worship for the Yanting Christian Church," Mrs. Cayard said. "This is a significant step for this church and this community."

Throughout the process, the Cayards have been grateful for the cooperation and support of the local State Administration for Religious Affairs and the Sichuan Provincial Christian Council.

"We were encouraged that the local government leader met us at the church upon our arrival to thank us, along with the church leaders," Cayard said.

"With the church leaders, we prayed together both in Chinese and English. It was very moving. The government official then joined us for a celebratory banquet lunch."

Yanting Christian Church will have to grow into the facility. The small congregation doesn't come close to filling the facility, which will seat 600. The Cayards can't wait to visit when the place is packed.

"The way the Chinese church works is that by this time next year, it will be standing-room-only," Cayard said. The building is equipped with a small kitchen that the members are using as a base for a ministry of feeding those in poverty.

"It is so encouraging to see them reaching out beyond their doors to engage the needs in their community," Mrs. Cayard said. "We were blessed to be a small part of their growth."

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