

BACKGROUND ON CHINESE AIDS ORPHAN PROJECT

This is First Baptist Church's third annual concert for the benefit of the Chinese AIDS Orphan Project. Last year's concert is currently supporting eight children ranging from kindergarten to high school students. One hundred percent of the funds from this year's concert and the sales of concert CDs will go directly to the Orphans Project. Nothing is taken out at any level for administrative or other expenses.

In rural areas of China's Henan Province, more than two thousand children have no parents because one or both of their parents died of HIV/AIDS. In the 1990s, outsiders came into their impoverished villages, set up illegal blood centers, and offered money to adults for blood donations. Needing a little money to add to their meager incomes, many donated blood. Due to contamination and non-sterile procedures, more than ten thousand of those who gave blood contracted HIV/AIDS and, because there was not adequate treatment, many died. When one parent died, the surviving spouse often left to remarry, leaving the children behind. This left more than two thousand children without parents and a generation of grandparents without the old age support they had relied on from their children. Now many of those orphaned children live with grandparents who are often very elderly, in poor health, and have very small or no incomes. Without assistance, the orphaned children have inadequate diets, no opportunity for any education, no winter clothing for walking to school in the winter, and for many, no home or place to live.

Amity Foundation, a Chinese charity organized almost 25 years ago by Chinese Christians, recognized the tragic situation of these children. Amity developed a program that allows American churches and individuals to provide monetary support for specific orphaned or abandoned children in Henan Province. That support consists of small amounts of money to pay a minimal amount to allow a child to remain in the home of a grandparent or other relative who could not otherwise provide for all of the child's needs, and for assistance in paying school fees, such as for books, school supplies, uniforms, dormitory fees for high school students, and winter clothing, as well as a little meat or eggs to add needed protein to the child's diet. The small amount of \$225 per year supports an elementary or junior high school student, and \$450 supports a high school student who must pay a dorm fee since there are no high schools in the villages where the orphans live.