

Chinese Christian Mission

Reaching Minorities in Hong Kong

Missionaries: Benjamin and Karen Rees

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THE WORKERS



Benjamin & Karen Rees

Benjamin Rees is a second-generation Christian missionary. His parents, William O. and Melba (Palmer) Rees, served as missionaries in Tibet, West China, South Africa and Hong Kong. Ben was born in Kunming, West China, and grew up in South Africa and Hong Kong. He has two bachelor's degrees from Ozark Bible College (now Ozark Christian College) in Joplin, MO, and a master's degree through an extension program of Azusa Pacific University in California.

Karen (Davis) Rees was born in Cushing, OK, and grew up near there. She has a degree in elementary education from Oklahoma City University, and taught 6th grade in Carl Junction, MO for 4 years. She has also taken classes at Cincinnati (Ohio) Bible Seminary, Ozark Bible College and Missouri Southern State College. Her parents, Loren & Doris Davis, served as Ben & Karen's forwarding agents for the first 25 years of their work.

Ben & Karen were married in 1971. They have two children, both born in Hong Kong. Their son Matthew, born in 1976, is teaching in Hong Kong, and their daughter, Megan, born in 1980, is pursuing her master's degree studies at Harding University in Searcy, AR.

THE PLACE

Hong Kong is a main "hub" for trade, commerce, finance and communication in Asia. Formerly a British colony (for over 150 years), it is now a "Special Administrative Region" (SAR) of China.

The land area, of just over 400 square miles, includes a portion of the mainland plus over 200 islands of various sizes. Although highly urbanised, Hong Kong also boasts sizeable "country parks" which allow people to get out away from the city for relaxation. The climate is sub-tropical and monsoonal.

THE PEOPLE

Hong Kong has a total population of more than six and a half million people. As part of China, most of the people, naturally, are Chinese.

However, because of its strategic location and its varied history, Hong Kong also has a large population of people from many other countries. This gives Hong Kong a rich and varied cultural heritage; it also adds to the strategic importance of Hong Kong as a meeting place of East and West.

With regard to Christian work, this means that there is a need for a variety of ministries in order to reach these other groups of people as well as just the Chinese. It also opens the possibility that people who are reached in Hong Kong can carry the gospel with them when they return to their home countries.

The largest minority group is people from the Philippines. There are also large numbers from India, Pakistan, Indonesia, Thailand, Japan and Korea, as well as from such "western" countries as the U.S., Canada, Australia, Britain and other parts of Europe.

THE WORK (PAST & PRESENT)

Ben & Karen began their work in Hong Kong in 1975. For the first six years, they ministered to a Chinese church that Ben's parents had started. Their main focus was on preparing the local Chinese Christians to carry on the work of the church themselves without missionary involvement. When Ben & Karen were no longer needed, they moved on to other work.

Other work with Chinese over the years has included Ben teaching for several years at a local Chinese Bible college, filling in for another missionary family when they were on furlough, and a small part in a radio ministry that the Hong Kong missionaries were jointly carrying on for a time.

Since 1981, Ben & Karen's main work has been ministering to a church made up mainly of people from the Philippines who are working in Hong Kong — starting with three ladies that God led to them just as their work with the first Chinese church was ending.

As with the Chinese church, their main focus has been on training the church members for ministry and church leadership. However, since the members are all transient, Ben & Karen provide continuity for the church and ongoing training as older members leave and new ones arrive. As people from this church have either returned to the Philippines or gone on to other countries, many have taken the things they have learned from Ben & Karen in Hong Kong and used them in churches in these other countries.

In addition to the ones from the Philippines, others who have been a part of the church for varying lengths of time over the years have included a few Chinese, a couple of men from India, a woman from Ireland, and some Burmese seamen. Visitors have included tourists from many different countries, and a sprinkling of others who are working here from such countries as Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and Nepal.
