

Faithful in the Waiting



“The end of all things is near. Therefore be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray. Above all, love each other deeply... offer hospitality...use whatever gift you have received to serve others... so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.”

1 Peter 4:7-11



This summer, as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has begun to share the global stage with news of climate change, the people of North Korea are suffering the effects of the closed border (taken as an anti-COVID measure), while extreme weather conditions ravage the land.

Typhoons and devastating floods occur most summers. This year, however, abnormally high temperatures above 35°C and accompanying humidity levels around 70% in July presented intense challenges to the sick, young, and elderly. Few people in North Korea have access to air conditioning. The heat is stifling and dangerous.

In fact, it is so hot this year that state media reports have repeatedly warned residents about the dangers of dehydration and low sodium levels, especially for the elderly and those at risk of heart disease or stroke. The heat also poses a severe threat to the harvest. On top of the extremes of July, on the heels of the month-long heatwave and drought, parts of the country have also experienced major flooding.

Multiple typhoons are anticipated in August.

Humanitarian aid could alleviate suffering during this time of crises but closed borders prevent it. Under pre-COVID conditions, by this time of year, First Steps would have made three visits to monitor the conditions and needs on the ground, offering support and care to our hard-working partners. Our hearts ache for our Korean colleagues and friends who are facing these circumstances without life-saving drugs or emergency supplies from outside the country.

Even with the knowledge of the challenges and suffering in the country, we must not lose hope. We have seen so many examples of God’s sovereignty, and we trust in Him. As we long to visit and stand with our partners, we are grateful that we can send them messages; we cherish the hope and anticipation of returning as soon as permitted. We are also in regular communication with the North Korean Ambassador to the

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United Nations who assures us that our partners will be keen to see us return.

In the meantime, there is much for us to do here! Our goal is to be faithful in the waiting: get ready to ship, improve shipping and procurement efficiencies and systems, and tend to administrative tasks. Additionally, we are arranging contracts, shipments, permits, and extensions of our soymilk program. We have been praying for the right opportunity to act quickly and redouble our efforts in the country once shipments resume. We do not know when, but we patiently wait for the Lord's timing and very much look forward to seeing our North Korean friends, whenever that may be. We don't want to waste even one minute as we prepare, in hope, for what's next.

We are conducting an extensive revamping of the First Steps database. This involves an efficient cataloguing of over 30,000 photographs from our visits to North Korea over 20 years as well as organizing data which will make it possible to retrieve information quickly and easily and compare for

example, how many children were receiving a daily cup of soymilk in 2006 compared with 2016.

As many of you know, we have had a shipment of soybeans and Sprinkles waiting at the Chinese port of Dalian since last summer. Soybeans are robust and don't degrade easily—in normal circumstances, they should last for years. Nevertheless, since they are currently stored in shipping containers, we are concerned for the potential loss of this shipment if they spoil. The Sprinkles, while stored in a warehouse, will not spoil but will reach their expiry date in March 2022. We have weighed various options including repositioning them to another country. These options seem infeasible due to prohibitive

costs or logistics. Additionally, all our packaging is in Korean making distribution elsewhere problematic. But most importantly, the need for both the Sprinkles and the soybeans in North Korea remains acute—even though it looks humanly impossible for that shipment to enter North Korea in the near future. We believe, however, that we must be willing to risk the loss of this shipment in order to be poised and ready to ship to the country at any time, to meet the immediate dire needs of the children and mothers we serve. We are therefore asking you to pray with us for a miracle. Simply put, we are asking our Heavenly Father to allow that shipment to enter North Korea before it is too late. Would you join us in that prayer?



Children in North Korea rely on our shipments.





20th Anniversary Book, Hot off the Press!



With the 20th anniversary of First Steps only days away, we are excited to share that the First Steps Anniversary book has been published.

We are thrilled with the presentation of this hardcover commemorative book with its interlacing of stunning photos and compelling narrative which together, celebrate the journey God has brought us on over the past 20 years.

If you have already placed your order, you can look forward to the arrival of an exciting brown package in your mailbox. For those of you who haven't yet placed an order or would like to place an additional order, please let us know as soon as possible as our first printing is a limited edition and is selling quickly.

The dimensions of the 48-page hardcover book are 30.48 cm x 22.86 cm (12" by 9").

Orders can be placed by emailing us at admin@firststepscanada.org, calling us at 604-732-0195 (Mon - Fri, 9 am - 5 pm) or by mailing the form below.

The cost of the hardcover 20th anniversary book is \$60 including shipping. Payment can be made by cheque or by Interac e-transfer to info@firststepscanada.org



name _____

address _____

city _____ prov. _____ postal code _____

phone _____ email _____

Please make cheques payable to First Steps Health Society and forward to: 3260 West 5th Ave. Vancouver, B.C. V6K 1V4 Canada
For further information contact us at 604.732.0195 or visit our website at www.firststepscanada.org



Gleaners - Easing Food Insecurity One Spoonful at a Time



Orphanage children show us the soup mix.

Over ten years and fifteen shipments, the North Okanagan non-profit, Gleaners, has been donating dried soup mix, dried apples and pears to First Steps. Now, while we are not able to ship Gleaners soup mix to children (aged 1 - 17) in orphanages in North

Korea, we are working to keep our supply chains, administrative systems, and staff working efficiently, ready to ship to North Korea at a moment's notice. In order to do that, we've decided to contribute to Gleaners and thereby maintain both our

own operating efficiencies and also bless Gleaners as our faithful partner and those they serve. In addition to working with us in North Korea, Gleaners has shipped to many countries including Armenia, Bosnia, El Salvador, Guatemala,

Haiti, Honduras, Tanzania, Ukraine, Zimbabwe, producing over 7.2 million servings of soup mix per year. Gleaners is an efficient, well-run organization, which shares our faith in God and our heart for children, mothers, and their nutritional security. We recently donated 40 tonnes of beans worth CAD \$31,400 dollars. Gleaners will add the soybeans as a source of protein to the soup mix. Our partners in North Korea have enjoyed the soup mix in the past, adding fermented bean paste to give it a Korean flavour. Once we can again ship to North Korea, we know they will be happy to receive the soup mix with soybeans already incorporated!



Using Gleaners soup mix to prepare a nutritious side dish.



Children enjoying Gleaners soup mix as a side dish.



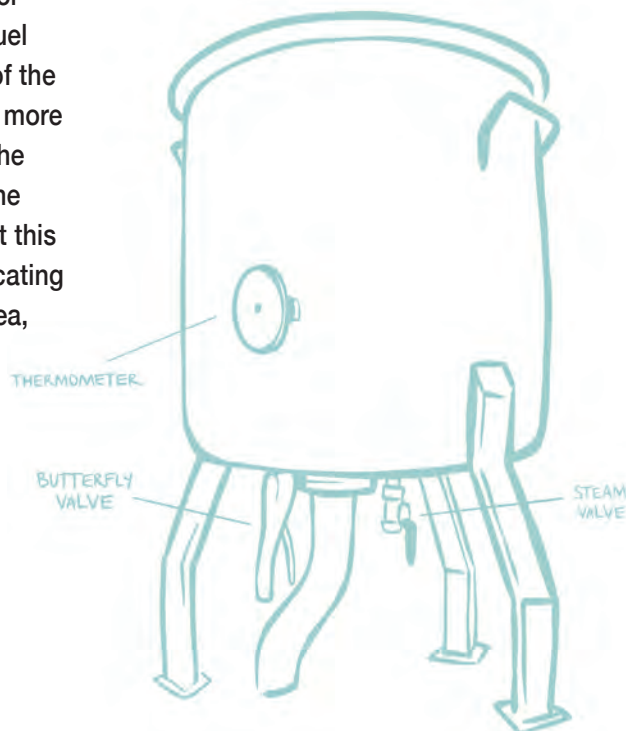
Snacking on delicious Gleaners apple chips.

VitaPorridge Cooker - Now a Working Prototype

While we haven't been able to monitor our programs first-hand, we have been hard at work at our Vancouver office, rallying to expand our programs. We are delighted to share an upcoming extension to our soymilk program, the VitaPorridge cooker. We are working with Frank Daller, co-founder of Ottawa-based Malnutrition Matters, who has coordinated with a food technologist in Belgium to manufacture the cooker and test the Thai-produced prototypes. The new customized VitaPorridge system can produce about 40 litres of whole soya porridge with a little added rice or maize, resulting in a highly nutritious, balanced meal. When two cookers work in tandem, with one boiler and one grinder, the system can yield up to 80 litres of porridge per hour, enough for 400 children. It is also highly fuel efficient because almost half of the cooking is done without using more steam. Remarkably, 100% of the soybean is utilized including the hull. We are very excited about this new cooker and are communicating with our partners in North Korea,

preparing them to integrate these efficient cookers into our soymilk system.

Exporting to North Korea requires organization, coordination, and paperwork. We need exemptions from the UN Security Council, as well as export permits and sanction exemptions from the Canadian government—each with its own process. However, since we haven't been travelling, we have taken advantage of this time to negotiate contracts with our soybean supplier, arrange shipping, and apply for all the necessary permits. Of course, none of this would be possible without the support of the First Steps supporters who have been faithful, even as our core work is on hold for now.



Gifts of Kindness



Soybeans are shipped from Canada to North Korea to make soymilk. One cup of soymilk costs just 3 cents, including shipping.

Donate \$ _____ towards soybeans.



Micronutrient Sprinkles are sachets containing a blend of vitamins and minerals that are added to food. Sprinkles prevent anemia and rickets and lower the rates of diarrhea and pneumonia, the leading causes of death in children under two years of age. A \$50 donation to the Sprinkles program provides nine months of sachets for a pregnant and nursing mother and 18 months of sachets for a baby (6 to 24 months).

Donate \$ _____ towards micronutrient Sprinkles.



20-litre **stainless-steel milk cans** are vital for storing and transporting soymilk from production centres to the children we serve. They cost \$100 each.

Donate \$ _____ towards milk cans.



The **VitaGoat** is powered by *combustible fuel* (wood, coal, etc.). It processes soybeans directly into nutrient-rich soymilk and provides about 1,500 cups of soymilk per day to hungry children. The cost of a VitaGoat is \$5500.

Donate \$ _____ towards a VitaGoat.



VitaCows process soybeans directly into soymilk providing children with a warm and protein-rich drink. The VitaCow is powered by *electricity* and can produce 2000 cups of soymilk per day to feed hungry children. The cost of a VitaCow is \$7000.

Donate \$ _____ towards a VitaCow.

name _____
address _____
city _____ prov. _____ postal code _____
phone _____ email _____

Please make cheques payable to First Steps Health Society and forward to: 3260 West 5th Ave. Vancouver, B.C. V6K 1V4 Canada
BIN: 821724036 RR0001. Gifts are acknowledged with an official receipt for income tax purposes.

For further information contact us at 604.732.0195 or visit our website at www.firststepscanada.org

Please Recycle or Pass Along. Contact us at info@firststepscanada.org to receive First Steps Newsletter by email.