**Junie Tong – An appreciation**

Junie was able to attend and contribute papers to only two ACE Conferences:

* 2013: *Christianity and the Socio-Economic Development of China*
* 2015: *Economics of Justice in Smithianism and Confucianism*

Yet the request from several ACE members for this appreciation is testimony to the way she touched people by her intellectual and spiritual gifts as well as her force of character. Even though her active participation in ACE was sadly brief, it is heartening for Rob, her husband, as well as her family, her friends, her colleagues and her fellow Church members to know that ACE members are among those who mourn Junie’s death from cancer in January 2018.

I knew Junie first as a colleague at Staffordshire University and then, increasingly, as a friend. Among the words describing Junie are positive and tenacious: positive in putting forward ideas; tenacious in putting them into practice. Just one example. Within a year of taking up post at Staffordshire in 2012, Junie took over a module on international business and set about developing it by introducing a practical, work-experience component, drawing on her wealth of business and educational experience. Junie worked with Stoke-on-Trent UK Trade and Industry to develop a semester-long placement scheme for undergraduate business students with local SMEs that wanted to start exporting or to extend their exports. To illustrate with just one example, she brokered a placement for a Chinese business student with a Stoke-based firm called World of Stage Limited who needed help “*to assess the feasibility of taking shows to China, Japan and other Asian markets*” and “*to investigate routes to market*”. This and many other such placements ticked boxes on several Higher Education agendas: University – Chamber of Commerce cooperation; University – SME cooperation; and employability, integrating academic study with practical vocational experience. Her module served as a pilot, demonstrating that this was a scalable project: she was on the point of securing substantial funding from the Higher Education Innovation Fund to extend the reach of her project to the regional level at just about the time that she was diagnosed with cancer. My belief is that if she had not been prevented by illness, she would have created a scheme that by now would be having a national impact – a scheme, moreover, with particular salience for post-Brexit Britain.

Junie was not just a great colleague but also became a great and forthright friend. Typically, it did not take very long for our conversations to turn towards religion and Christianity, although Junie was of the view that these are not at all the same thing. I remember one of her typically forthright openers: “*Do you believe in the holy Spirit*”. I think she was less than impressed by my reply, which began along the lines of “*Umm … sort of*”!

Although Junie was strong in her Christian faith, she never purported to have all the answers. Instead, she impressed and influenced by the way she lived her faith, which included a great sense of humour. Junie was born and lived for a while in Hong Kong. As such she straddled two cultures and was at home not only in English but also in Cantonese (her first language) and in Mandarin. She lived in two cultures but was not wholly of either of them. No surprise then, that she was much preoccupied by comparison, contrast and synthesis across cultures, as suggested by her two ACE conference papers. Similarly, she followed Jesus by being active in the world but by no means wholly of it. Immersed, in the world, yes; but not wholly submerged by it.

Junie was brought up in a Christian family, but in her earlier adult years she drifted away from faith. According to her own testimony, she lived “*the capitalist life*”, as she put it: “*I was proud and focussed on myself*… *The surrounding poverty and disparity were of no concern to me*.” But later, whilst living in Shanghai, Junie became a truly committed Christian. She took part in her church’s music ministry, and became a leader on their Alpha Courses. Professionally, she moved from the world of investment banking into promoting micro finance. She was also practically engaged in supporting various charities and causes, including orphanages in China and homes for battered women.

Even towards the end of her life, while struggling with a particularly aggressive form of cancer, her testimony – both personal and public – helped to sustain and strengthen the faith of others. Junie’s testimony, given in church just a few months before she died, was full of the sense of her Christian family surrounding her with huge mutual support, love, and comfort. Two weeks before she died, Junie said to her husband Rob, “*God is calling me home*.”

All in all, Junie died as she lived: not only forthright but also inspiring. Her death was a loss to ACE collectively. I miss her.

Geoff Pugh (28-12-2020)