



CHINESE CHURCH SUPPORT MINISTRIES CHINA PRAYER LETTER



MAY 2018

A Daughter's Story

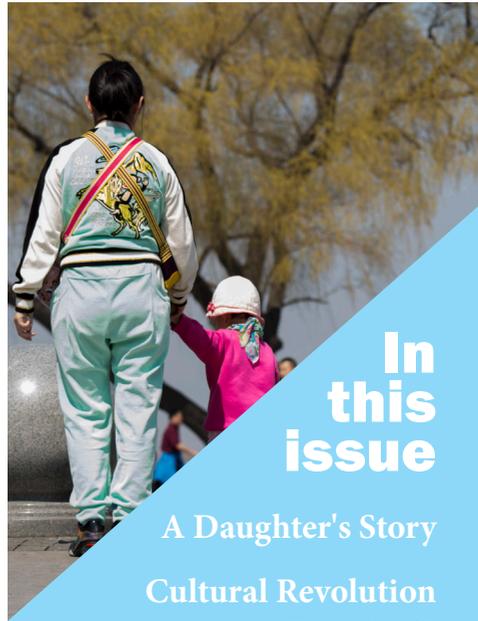
A Chinese born New Zealander tells the story of her Mums 17 years in a Chinese prison.

I want to tell you the miraculous story of my Mum.

In the late 80s in China, under the leadership of Deng Xiao Ping, the country began massive economic reforms. China was opened to the world but the character of Communism remained largely unchanged.

Like many other government workers at that time, my Mum, Fen, was told she could keep her job title but there was no salary anymore and she did not have to come to work!

So she started selling cigarettes from a little box, then upgraded to a trolley selling snacks mostly to students from schools near our residential block. After a few years, with 6000 yuan, she purchased a little shop –



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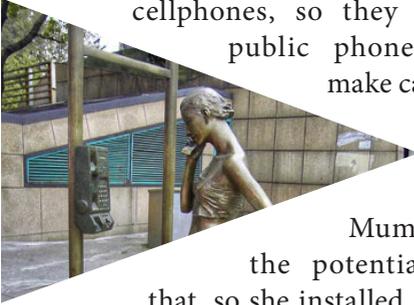
Bibles Expelled from Online Stores

News From CCSM UK

Seeking to serve, strengthen and support the church and the people of China

which was like a “convenience store”.

In the early 90s people didn't have cellphones, so they used public phones to make calls.



Mum saw the potential in that, so she installed some phones at the shop. Amazingly they made lots of profit. Soon after that, public phone boxes became very popular and were promoted by China Telecom, and they helped private businessmen install and operate many around the city. My Mum was able to get a few of these in different locations in the city.

From that time she made even more profit. Then some friends talked her into starting a training company to teach people to buy shares using computers. It was licensed by the China TAX Department at that time, but after 2 or 3 years, the government introduced a new law saying that all the share companies must be owned by the government and no private companies were allowed to operate this type of business.



So Mum's company, along with several other similar operations got into trouble and an arrest warrant was issued against her. She was in another city at the time she heard this news. She was worried about other family members, so she went back to her home city where she was promptly arrested and imprisoned. She spent nearly 3 years in detention before she was finally given her day in court where she was given a life sentence.

Sensing the coming problems she had sent me to study in New Zealand before all this happened. I left the country in 2001, one month before Mum was arrested.

Many people helped me in New Zealand including a number of Christians. They took me to an Alpha course. In despair, without news from Mum, and then hearing the news that my Dad had remarried, I found hope in Jesus, and was deeply touched by the on-going love from church friends.

In 2003 I became a believer and the first thing I did was to send a Bible to my Mum in prison!

My Mum started reading and praying to God. Later, her sentence was reduced from life to 18 years. During the following 7 to 10 years, I wrote letters to her every month, fortnight or sometimes every week when I could manage. I shared Bible verses with her

and encouraged her to keep praying.

All those letters had to be checked by the guards before she got them, so some of them read about the Bible and Jesus through those letters! (One of them is now the head of all the women's prison in that city, and she has kept in touch with both Mum and me).

Every time I went back and visited, my Mum and I prayed together through the glass window or over a meal, which was allowed in the prison cafe until the end of 2012. Those precious short reunion times were filled by the presence of the Holy Spirit, prayers and tears.

Mum become more and more aware of God's presence and guidance and she always prayed in times of pressure and

desperation. One year when I visited, I shared about fasting and praying. She herself started fasting every Sunday. The guards were worried and made her sign a paper to say they would not be responsible for any health problems because of her regular fast.

However, through the next 5 years of fasting each Sunday and praying healing verses over herself before each meal during the week, her health actually improved. She used to have high blood pressure, heart issues and diabetes, but now two of these three diseases are completely gone.

In late 2017, after 17 long years, Mum was finally released.

With my NZ husband, who has deep

International Short-Term Teams

- 
- * Mercy
 - * Medical
 - * Intercession
 - * Trekking
 - * English Cultural Exchange

June 2018:	Medical Team
July 2018:	Mercy Team & Summer Camps
August 2018:	Medical Team
September 2018:	Trekking & Intercession Teams
October 2018:	Cycle Team & Mercy Team
December 2018:	Cultural Exchange Team

love for the Lord and China, and our two children we went back as a family to welcome her as she celebrated her freedom.

My Mother said she always had much peace in the prison. Every morning she used to wake up around 5am and start praying, but in the recent years the guards told her she was making too much noise and said she was not allowed to get up to pray!

Two weeks after gaining freedom, Fen and her 80 year old Mum were baptised together in a bathtub in a local flat by the members of an intercession team who were in town! God had arranged this perfect timing to have those workers in that city at that time, to baptise Mum and witness this special event in her life.

In the last 5 months, she has done a

Bible course at a local house church, and joined a team to a “minority” region.

She is so thankful to have Jesus in her life and the freedom to read the Bible and pray now any time she likes! She is determined to share the gospel with those around her and to be used by Him. All glory to God!

Thank you to those who have prayed for my Mother over the years, the Lord has been so good to her and all of her family. All of them are now following and zealously serving the Lord.

Her Mum and sister are both believers. God has used this trial to bring Fen and her family to Him and saved her from the consequences of love of money which was once first in her life. God has turned a curse into a blessing. Our God is sooooo good!

Cultural Revolution Revisited?

Over the last year in China there has been increasing apprehension over the tightening of religious laws.

Now it seems the concerns are being realised as China enters another period of religious repression and persecution that many are equating to the Cultural Revolution of five decades prior and that lasted for 10 years.

Yet the environment surrounding the current repression differs vastly from the times of the Cultural Revolution. During the Cultural Revolution Mao completely closed China off from the rest of the world. In this present era we are seeing the opposite. Chinese, apart from those in restricted zones, still have freedom to travel abroad and this is not likely to change. Many young Chinese are encouraged to



experience life overseas where they have unrestricted access to Facebook, Twitter and Google along with Western ideology and religion. Once back in their homeland though, these Chinese will once again be limited to Government approved activities, restricted internet and conforming to government directed ideology.

In Mao's Cultural Revolution intellectuals, artists, people of faith and government officials, who might be seen to question the new culture, were harshly persecuted, sometimes beaten and even killed. They were required to work in the countryside to reprogram their way of thinking. Universities closed and after a decade of turmoil, famine and brutality the nation was economically and emotionally destitute.

No one in China wants to revisit those heavy times. In contrast the current government is looking to more subtle carrot and stick policies to strongly encourage society to fall into line. One

such policy is being fast tracked now. This is a trust ranking of citizens, companies and entities called a Social Credit System.

The Social Credit System will allocate individuals and entities a score based on their trustworthiness. It will gather information from sources such as social media, apps, banks and government records and surveillance. It is as yet uncertain what data will be taken into consideration but it will likely encompass transgressions such as bad debts, defaults, failure to meet contract obligations, bad driving, smoking in no-smoking zones, refusing military service, fake or unverified identities and even things such as frivolous shopping habits and time wasted on video games. It is expected that posting dissenting opinions or negative comments online will also downgrade your score. And that personal scores can be affected by the character of the people you socialise with.

First announced in 2014, the system aims to be fully operational and mandatory by 2020. At this stage eight private companies have been given licenses by the government to trial and develop their social ranking systems. Over a million Chinese are already part of the trial. One of these companies is China Rapid Finance, a partner of Tencent the social-network giant who owns

WeChat and its payment service WeChat Pay. Another is Sesame Credit run by the Ant Financial Services Group (AFSG), an affiliate company of Alibaba and its payment platform Alipay.

Hundreds of millions of Chinese already use Alipay and WeChat Pay to make their daily purchases both online and, via their cell phones, with brick-and-mortar retailers. These companies and their associated apps collect data on many aspects of citizen's lives from their shopping purchases, travel movements, dating sites, who they transfer money to and even where they eat and how much they exercise. Your character rating as determined by the Social Credit system's algorithms will be publically available.

It may not be a repeat of Mao's Cultural Revolution but China is hurtling into a

period of state control that has previously only been imagined in Big Brother novels. Citizens will be self-managed to live honest and good lives.

The alarming thing worrying Christians is that following their faith outside the realms of atheist government's approved Three Self Church Patriotic Movement is likely to have adverse effects on their social credit scores. Even having house church member connections in their social media contacts could potentially diminish an individual's scores.

Grim repercussions follow those with low scores. Your rank will determine your eligibility for a mortgage or a job, where your children can go to school, where and how you can travel - or even the level of health care for which you are eligible.

SARA Abolished

At the March 2018 National People's Congress in Beijing the Central Committee of the Communist Party announced its plan to deepen reforms of Party and state institutions.

The plan included a long list of restructuring which introduce a plethora of new committees, ministries, leading groups and juggled the administration of various sectors.

that SARA (the State Administration of Religious Affairs) was to be dissolved. Going forward the responsibility for managing religious affairs will be tasked to the UFWD (United Front Work Department).

Whereas SARA was previously a department of the State Council, the United Front reports directly to the Communist Party's Central Committee. The move will allow the Communist Party of China (CPC) more direct

PRAYER POINTERS

A Daughter's Story

Thank God for the work he has done in the lives of this family. His ways are higher than our ways.

Thank God that he comforts those in prison.

Ask God that this testimony will bring light and truth into the lives of many others.

Pray for the guards who read the prison letters and others that have heard God's message through Fen's time in prison. Pray that God will lead them to respond to the call in their lives. Ask that God will finish the good work that has been started in their lives.

Cultural Revolution Revisited?

Give thanks that Chinese have freedom to travel and encounter Christ outside of China.

Pray that China's believers who choose not to join Three Self Patriotic Movement Churches will find ways to avoid losing points in their Social Credit scores.

Pray that believers who make a stand for their faith will still have their needs met by the Lord.

Pray that the Lord will uphold and comfort house church believers if they find themselves with a poor social credit ranking. Pray the Lord will bestow honour on them in what is a shame-based culture.

Give thanks that the Social Credit System will have many positive social outcomes.

SARA Abolished

Pray that God's hand will be on the United Front Work Department leaders assigned to the Chinese Church. Ask for his blessing on them and pray they will have wisdom and empathy toward believers.

Pray for the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party that they are able to see clearly the blessing that the church is to China.

Pray that the United Front will make Bibles and Christian teaching material more readily available.

PRAYER POINTERS

Bibles Expelled from Online Stores

Praise the Lord that his Word is eternal and powerful to change lives. Pray that every Christian in China will have access to the Bible.

Ask God to bring to the light any mistranslations in the newly proposed Sinicized Bible.

Ask God to encourage and assist more people into translation work for China's minority groups that don't have a Bible in their own language. There is still so much more work to do.

News From CCSM UK

Pray that those new people who are joining us in prayer for China will be encouraged to pray and keep on praying.

Pray that God will bless China through us – our words, our money, our actions.

Pray that Chinese Christians will know God's protection and will not be afraid.

Pray that despite the Chinese Government restrictions acting to curtail Christian practice that in fact the church will grow and bring glory to God.



Chinese Church Support Ministries

Seeking to serve, strengthen
and support the church and
the people of China

control of religious affairs.

In addition to SARA the United Front has absorbed the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office and will also oversee the actions of the State Ethnic Affairs Commission. Thus, the UFWD will become China's main agency directing ethnic, religious and overseas Chinese affairs.

Broadly speaking the United Front has the role of managing relations with the non-Communist Party leadership, including individuals and organizations holding social, commercial, or academic influence, or who represent important interest groups, both inside and outside China. In so doing, the UFWD seeks to ensure that these groups are supportive of and useful to Communist Party rule.

The United Front is known for its active role in managing ethnic and religious minorities, particularly in Tibet. It played an important part in building support for "One country, two systems" in Hong Kong during the 1980s and 1990s, operating under the name of the "Coordination Department."

SARA's function has been to oversee China's five official religions. In this role it had control over religious appointments, the selection of clergy, and the interpretation of religious doctrine. SARA was also meant to ensure that the registered religious organizations supported and carried out the policy priorities of the Communist Party of China.



The five officially recognised religions of China are:

- Buddhist Association of China
- Chinese Taoist Association
- Islamic Association of China
- Three-Self Patriotic Movement (Protestant)
- Chinese Patriotic Catholic Assn.

Other notable restructures announced as part of the government overhaul were the transfer the duties of the central leading group for preventing and handling cult issues and its office to the Committee for Political and Legal Affairs of the CPC Central Committee and the Ministry of Public Security and also the formation of a central committee for comprehensive law-based governance.

Bibles Expelled from Online Stores



Since March 30th 2018 the Bible has no longer been available from online retail platforms in China. Searching the keyword “Bible” on Taobao, Jingdong, Dang Dang, Duoban and Amazon.cn will only bring up books about the Bible or Christian religion but not the actual Bible itself.

Claims of the Bible being banned have followed but are not exactly correct. The truth is that only books with a government issued ISBN number are legally allowed to be published or distributed on the Chinese market. The Bible has never been issued with an ISBN number. Therefore, removing them from online retail platforms is, in fact, simply enforcing the existing law.

Bibles are still available for purchase “in-house” at churches. Joann Pittman from China Source describes the regulations that permit the printing and distribution of Bibles in China:

“In addition to books that are legally published for the market, various sectors of society are allowed to publish materials and resources for “internal use” (neibu). A neibu book or magazine can only be sold internally; it cannot be sold in stores. In China Bibles are neibu; they are published by the China Christian Council, the government

sanctioned Protestant organization. As such, they can only be sold in churches. They are all printed at the Amity Press in Nanjing, which, according to Christianity Today, is now the world's biggest Bible publisher.”

The move to take down bibles from online stores is not surprising as it is in line with General Secretary Xi Jinping's shift toward inflexible adherence to Communist Party regulations. His “rule-of-law” ideal does not abide loopholes or tolerance in interpretation of the law. In the past Bible sellers and unregistered churches had been monitored but were seldom subjected to the full arm of the law. Now it seems both are the focus of the authorities and are facing a harsh clampdown. The Communist Party is concerned about the large number of Christians in unregistered house churches. Because the government does not regulate the house church leaders or the topics they preach they are regarded as a threat to national security.

Bibles have also disappeared from brick-and-mortar stores, many of which were acting as agents for the churches. They are now only available directly from churches and seminaries.

The Bibles disappearance leaves questions

as to the future availability of Bibles in China. However there is no need to assume that Amity Press will not continue printing Chinese Bibles and allowing churches to distribute them internally. Even so, as in the past, Chinese Christians do not readily have access to sufficient quantities of large print Bibles, children's editions, pastor's editions and have limited quality leadership teaching materials. Many millions of people in China's minority groups still do not

have access to Bibles in their own mother tongues.

The expulsion of Bibles from online markets was immediately preceded by the release of a white paper, "China's Policies and Practices on Protecting Freedom of Religious Belief." In this the government announced plans to reinterpret and retranslate the Bible into a more sinicised format.

News From CCSM UK

*When I am afraid, I put my trust in you.
In God, whose word I praise – in God I
trust and am not afraid. What can mere
mortals do to me? [Psalm 56:3-4]*

Having had the privilege of visiting China in March and meeting many of our workers there and also attending two Christian conferences in the UK during April, I have had many chances to listen and to share about what God is doing in China.

Those we support in China do value your prayers and your prayers make a difference.

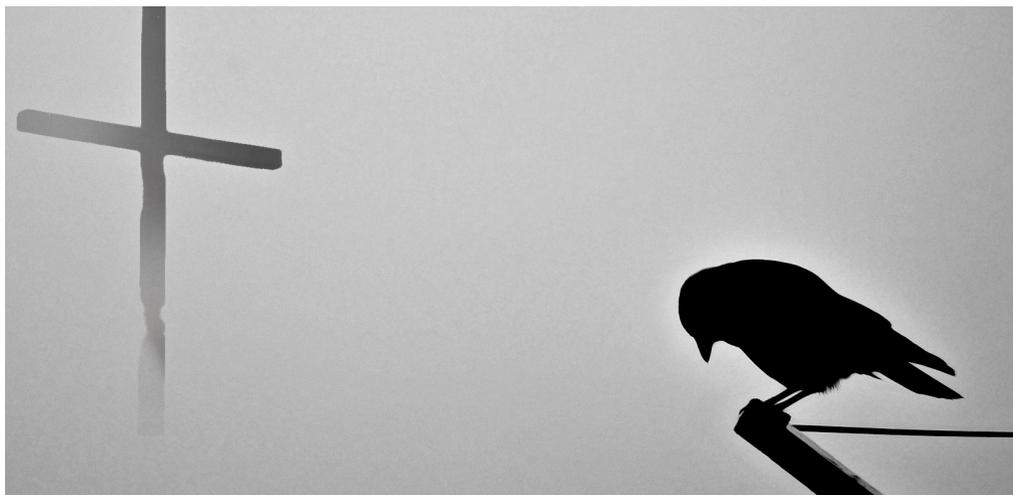
In the UK it has been a pleasure to explain a little of what life is like for Christians in China and how the church is responding to the tightening of regulations. There are many people who know only a little



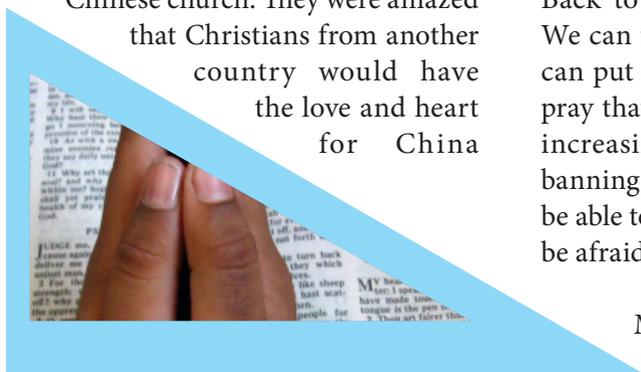
of the story of what God has done in China and what He is doing now. If you have chance to share this Prayer Letter with someone else, please do (or ask me to send one) as this could be the start of a life of prayer and serving for China.

It has been encouraging to have new people wanting to receive the Prayer Letter and finding out about our short term Teams to China. The work we are doing with the Micro SD Card (AppSTER) project was thrilling to many people we shared with. Pray that increasing interest and prayer would also be matched with financial support so we can increase the numbers of cards we can supply.

What was especially encouraging



was the expression of thanks from two or three Chinese students studying in the UK who came up the stand and having heard what we do for China were deeply thankful for Christians in the UK serving, praying and supporting the Chinese church. They were amazed that Christians from another country would have the love and heart for China



demonstrated over many years.

Let us be worthy of this appreciation as we continue to love, serve, pray, give and go.

Back to the verses at the beginning. We can take comfort ourselves that we can put our trust in God. We can also pray that Christians in China who face increasing challenges including the banning of the sale of on-line Bibles, will be able to put their trust in God and not be afraid.

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