



# CHINESE CHURCH SUPPORT MINISTRIES CHINA PRAYER LETTER



JULY 2018

## Joe's Story

A Cultural Exchange Team experience from the perspective of a Chinese student...

*Waking up in the morning I switched on my mobile phone and noted a text from my friend in New Zealand. She had just finished a short trip to China and returned to her home country for Christmas. I looked over at the calendar she brought me not long ago. Each page showed different scenery of New Zealand. Flipping through the calendar, a white envelope slipped out. Her familiar writing style overwhelmed me. I fell into recollection, it was three years since I first met her...*

My beard at that time had not yet pierced through my chin, neither had my hair covered my ears. In 2012, I strutted into the university campus as a freshman. No religion and hot-tempered, I defied my seniors who would dress up like ambassadors yet talk like village party leaders. The fire of my youth was burning wild while the law of trade-offs escaped me.



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It was only later, after I received the faith and ruminated that I assumed a meeker manner.



But then, I

never addressed anyone as my senior. I recall many of them would call me “Sir Joe” when I first arrived. They urged me to participate in the student union. I just stared at them and snapped back, “No. Absolutely not. Never. Freedom is to me a wife forever!” Then I sped away.

Even though I was not a member of the student union, they asked me to translate a script. I read it out for them in front of the chairman and vice chairman, arrogantly dressed in my pyjamas. While my seniors proposed revision and correction of the wording, I sniggered in my heart – “You bureaucratic idiots! I’ve already discussed the script with my American friend.”

I was so naughty then.

One morning I came early to my English class,

arriving before my tutor. There were 7 or 8 white people entering the classroom. I was curious and advanced to meet them. “Hi, gentlemen, how can I help you?” They explained, “We are from New Zealand, friends of your teacher. Today we come to your class for interactive cultural exchange.”

One by one they introduced themselves. I immediately noticed a lady named Susan. Since her countenance gave away some oriental colour I paid extra attention to her presentation. She was a farm owner. With no employees, she and her husband kept 2000 sheep and six dogs. Above all, she raised 3 sons, which amazed me the most!



Later a young man called Tim came forward with a guitar to teach us a Maori song. He said he’s Susan’s son. After a round of introductions, they started a quiz game. Whoever got it right would be awarded a New Zealand milk lolly.

“Who knows the capital of New Zealand?”

Without thinking I yelled “Wellington!” All New Zealanders in the room applauded and exclaimed “Wow!”

“How about the largest city?”  
“Auckland!”  
“Wow!”

“I just taught you a Maori song, who knows what Maori is?”  
I burst into laughter. Tim looked at me, “You know this, too?”  
“South Pacific islander! New Zealand’s aboriginals!!”  
He gazed at me in astonishment. “Wow! You are so intelligent!”

I noticed when I answered the question Tim was pointing at me and said to his mother, “He is different!” Susan nodded. Then they saw I was watching them and we smiled with one another. I got many milk lollies...

We were divided into a number of groups to chat with the foreign visitors. Tim sat by me. Since all my classmates remained shy as they always did, I got him to talk with me in all topics about

New Zealand, its university education, the trade and exchange between the two nations... When Tim found no one else is talking, he said “Come on, everyone, don’t let Joe keep talking” However, all other classmates just formed a unanimous smile and still held their tongues, holding their pens and notepads in-hand.

Later I joined a group with Susan. The more I talked with her the more I liked her. Despite being ¼ Chinese, she is a real New Zealander, always gentle and kind, speaking with her mouth half open, never wide open.

Shortly after, my British Teacher sent me an email saying two New Zealanders would like to keep in touch with me. So I sent them my email address. On Lunar

# International Short-Term Teams



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

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

New Year day I got many emails from around the world including Susan's. She sent me a New Year painting with the words "Gong Xi Fa Cai" (Happy New Year) which caused me to smile heartily. From then on my inbox frequently received mail from Susan.

Just like my Kiwi mom, she cares about my daily needs and always encourages me. She listens to my distress and pains on campus life. She helped me with English manuscripts and speeches. With her help I learnt how to express and structure a statement. She knows

the physical recovery of my mother. How many vaccine shots I have had after being bitten by a dog. And my girlfriend then, when she heard I was bitten, only sent me a WeChat image showing a giggle with a covered mouth.

A year later I got an email informing of her return to Xian. I was so excited. We hugged each other tightly when meeting in a café. One day I would like to take her to NingBo to help her find her Grandpa's old house, and tell her the history behind the building....

## Cultic "Messianic" Movements

9/11 demonstrated the reality that religion can play a part in violence. Europe had known and experienced religious wars, from the bitterness of the seventeenth century English Civil War to the Thirty Years War in Europe, which left a quarter of the population dead. Religious war ceased with the Treaty of Westphalia signed in 1648, only to re-emerge in the twenty-first century.

Governments, rightly, have now to deal with this reality and pass laws to suppress religious ideas that propagate violence. The focus of Christian millenarianism has moved from Europe to China, as individuals believing themselves to be the Messiah rise up within cultic

movements and oppose society. This is not a new phenomenon in China. Between 1850 and 1864, a period when Europe was without religious wars, China suffered the Taiping rebellion, one of the worst religious conflicts in history. Hong Xiuquan and his friend Feng Yunshan began the uprising with their idea to see China become Christian and establish a new moral order.

Hong planned to overthrow the Qing government, which was persecuting Christians. As the rebellion unfolded, Western interests became involved, principally the US, Britain and France, and committed Christians took both sides. General Gordon, a devout Christian, became known at that time as "Chinese Gordon" because he



General Gordon (1833-1885), a committed Christian, was sent by the British government to assist the Qing Empire during the Taiping rebellion.

was sent by Britain to assist the Qing Empire and later famed for his ill-fated defence of Khartoum. On the other side, A F Lindley, also a committed Christian, fought purely for religious reasons, disdaining the payment which other Westerners wanted. Lindley fought because the Taiping rebels were Christians and he considered their cause to be just.

As time went on, both sides committed grave atrocities resulting in 20 million dead or – according to some estimates – 70 or even 100 million. British diplomats based in China described the insurgents in this way: "Their ultimate success and power of consolidating themselves are

doubtful  
... They have done nothing to ameliorate the condition of the people, but on the contrary wherever they have been successful, they have been a curse and terror to the unfortunate, whose substance they have pillaged, whose gods they have insulted and destroyed, and whose houses they have burnt." - Medhurst and Bowring, 1854.

Hong considered himself as the Son of God and younger brother of Jesus



Hong Xiuquan (1814-1864), leader of the Taiping rebellion, who claimed he was the younger brother of Jesus Christ, called to set up a "Messianic Kingdom" by the sword.

Christ, called to set up "Jesus' Messianic Kingdom" on earth in China by means of warfare. This was a far cry from the example and teachings of Jesus

who told his followers to love their enemies (Matthew 5:44). Nowhere in the New Testament is it permitted that Christians wage war against their rulers, however oppressive the rulers may be. Rather, Romans 12 tells us to pray for those in authority, and to endure persecution if need be. Christians must be loyal citizens of their country, whilst at the same time praying and working for justice, peace and righteousness.

Today, such “messianic” leaders continue to arise in China. In 1991, the Eastern Lightning movement developed, with up to a million members, believing that Christ had returned as a Chinese woman to set up “His Kingdom”. Some 14 other similar sects have now been banned, rightly, by the Chinese government, because they are subversive and potentially violent. Before we are too harsh in our criticism of the Chinese government, we need to remember that Western governments such as Britain, France and the US have also passed laws against sects which they believed to be a threat to their societies.

Whilst the Chinese government may not fully understand the underground Church is made up of devout Christians who respect their government and country, sadly there are always those who would foment violence. Equally, the Chinese government would be aware that in our day there are Christians who are too ready to take

up arms, and those who want to use violence to gain freedom for Christian minorities who are suffering violence, whether it be Myanmar, Iraq or Sudan. The mercenary militias that take the name of Christ now utilise violence on behalf of national Christians. This is abhorrent.

The spectre of sects and cults taking on a religious and messianic character is growing. Jesus warns us that in the last days many will come in His Name “claiming ‘I am the Messiah,’ and will deceive many” (Matthew 24:4-5).

We live in a dangerous time, when religious movements can all too easily take up weapons and where religious liberty can be espoused by governments for their own ends. Christians therefore need to be exceedingly cautious in allying religious freedom to any particular government, particularly when such governments are making war against other nations and using “religious liberty” as a pretext for regime change. The West must beware of these ramifications and Christians in the West must temper just concern with understanding for governments, such as China, that seek to maintain national stability and harmony.

[Original title: *Be not deceived: the real threat of cultic “messianic” movements in China*. Published with permission from Barnabas Fund]

# PRAYER POINTERS

## Joe's Story

Thank God that He wants us to have genuine relationship with us... and that He chooses to use us, through our relationship with others, to reveal Himself to them.

Pray that the Father helps to connect new believers in China with those who are willing to be faithful friends and are able to disciple and encourage them.

Pray that God will lead team members to those He wants to connect with.

## Cultic "Messianic" Movements

Thank God that the Chinese Government has recognised many cults and has taken steps to prevent them from growing.

Ask God to protect His church in China from deception. Pray that Satan's lies, with which he plans to confuse and attack the church, will not gain traction.

Pray that God will give wisdom to those making decisions on how to deal with cults that do rise up.

Pray that God will provide teaching and comfort to believers who are coping with persecution. Pray that they will not seek to take up weapons or take matters into their own hands, but that they will look to God for peace.



# PRAYER POINTERS

## Jonê Tibetans

Thank God that seeds have been sown in the Jonê area and that some Tibetans have chosen to accept the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Pray that the Lord will protect and grow this fellowship and that they will not be stamped out.

Ask the Father to feed these sheep providing them with sound teaching. Ask God to send the Holy Spirit to lead them in the way of truth.

Pray that God will use these believers to bring reconciliation, peace and blessing to this area.

## News From CCSM UK

Pray for many to become believers in China

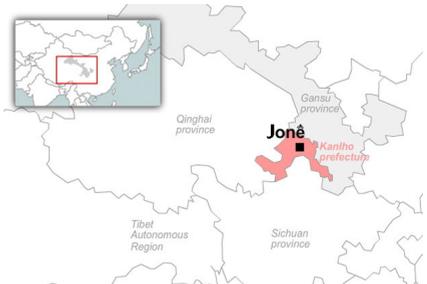
Pray for the protection of believers and for their encouragement as they see God at work

Pray for wisdom for church leaders as they lead their congregations during these challenging times

Pray that we as believers outside China will be faithful in prayer, faithful in support and faithful in honouring God in our own lives.



Jonê Monastery. Photo credit: Jiang Ning



Chinese Church Support Ministries

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

# Jonê Tibetans

(Also known as Chone, Choni, Cone, Zhuōní Xiàn)

The wild and remote Gansu Province is flat and arid in the north and very mountainous in the south. It's in these greener and far more scenic southern reaches that the Jonê Tibetans live. Around 100, 000 people speak the Jonê Tibetan language and inhabit the Jonê administrative district in the beautiful Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. A small number live in neighbouring in Sichuan Province.

With a complex tribal structure, their lifestyle, customs, housing and costumes are visibly different from those of other Tibetans, making them a unique branch. As the tribe's women sport a hair-do with three thick plaits, locals call them Sangemao in the local Chinese dialect, literally meaning "three bundles of hair". The river Tao river flows through Jonê County helping to irrigate rice crops and support a mixed population of Tibetans (known locally as Tebbus), Muslims and Han Chinese.

For centuries Jonê was ruled as an independent principality, governing 48 clans. A detailed history was written by the famous explorer, geographer, linguist and botanist, Joseph Rock, and published in a 1928 National Geographic article: 'The Prince represents the twenty-



Photo credit: Jiang Ning

second generation, but is not of direct descent. His ancestors, a Tibetan official family, left their own country and made their way across Sichuan and the Min Shan Range...to the Tao River in 1404, conquering and pacifying the tribes and villages on the way. Upon informing the Imperial Court in [Beijing] of their conquest of the territory for the Chinese Empire, they were made hereditary chiefs of Jonê and the subjugated tribal lands. At the same time the Emperor, Yung Lo, gave them a seal and the Chinese name Yang.' Today many Jonê Tibetans still have the surname Yang (杨).

According to Jonê tradition the royal succession was awarded to the eldest son with the next youngest becoming the lama of the monastery. In the case where there was no younger brother the prince would hold both positions.

Jonê monastery grew to contain 172 buildings at its height with 3800 monks.

Rock used Jonê as a base for his excursions for two years. After he departed he heard reports that the monastery had been almost completely destroyed. In his biography Rock tells the story of Prince Yang's abduction, and his rape and murder of some women related to a neighbouring Muslim warlord, General Ma. In retaliation, the Muslim forces had attacked Jonê and slaughtered many of its citizens. At that time there were frequent brutal clashes between Muslim Hui and Tibetans.

In 1949 Chinese General Fengyu Shang stripped the last prince of his title and confiscated his land.

The monastery at Jonê has now been rebuilt but it a far quieter place than in its heyday. Few monks reside there now. But Joseph Rock tells of being nearly overcome by powerful spiritual

forces when he attended a ceremony and listened to chanting in the monastery. He said he had to leave the building before he blacked out.

Only around twenty-three percent of the Jonê Tibetan people have had the opportunity to hear of the power and freedom that Christ has to offer. Efforts have been hampered in recent times by continued unrest and hostility between factions in the area causing Jonê to be zoned "sensitive" and closed to foreign visitors.

Paul Hattaway in his book Operation China (published 2000) said, "Today there are about 200 Jonê Tibetan believers in Lintan County, to the northwest of Jonê County. A church was constructed in 1997 – the first ethnic Tibetan fellowship in Gansu Province. "One woman sold her hair, and another family sold their TV to help build the new Church."





## News From CCSM UK

*Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.*  
John 5:24

Jesus is here speaking about His authority and being sent by His Father. He uses a stark picture “crossed over from death to life”. Not a slight change, not a subtle difference, but the difference between life and death.

Crossed over, in the direction from death to life, not the expected direction

from life to death.

Jesus reverses the usual. He reverses the way the world works ! He takes death and from it produces life !

Believing on Jesus means we cross from death to life, transformation !

This is the Good News we have to share, this is the Good News that thousands even millions of Christians in China share day by day.

We can rejoice together that we





share in crossing from death to life, and rejoice when someone joins us in that crossing.

Please pray that during this time of uncertainty, increased restrictions, fear about what might happen in China, the Good News of Jesus Christ will continue to be shared and be rooted deep in the Christian's lives.

We know the Communist  
Government  
cannot stop  
God, so

pray that God will be honoured and glorified across China, and that even the persecution and control exerted will result in His Kingdom growing and His church increasing.

Pray also that as we stand together with believers in China, we will be encouraged, challenged and quickened by God to serve His purposes. We have been blessed with freedom and many resources, we therefore owe a debt to use our freedom and use our resources for the honour of God, for the extension of His kingdom.

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