



CHINESE CHURCH SUPPORT MINISTRIES CHINA PRAYER LETTER



DECEMBER 2018

Amdo Tibetans

Traditionally Tibet has been divided into 3 regions, Ü-Tsang (Lhasa), Amdo (Anduo), and Kham (Kang). High on the Tibetan plateau the inhabitants call it the place where 'Heaven touches Earth'. It has a long and rich history. At various periods it has been under the rule of dynastic families, Mongolian conquerors and the Buddhist Dalai Lamas.

In 1724 Tibet was overcome by invading Dzungar Mongols. The Chinese Qing rulers saw this as an opportune time to launch their own attack on the Dzungars both subduing them as a threat to their empire and gaining the eastern regions of Amdo and Kham.

Two centuries later in 1912, the Qing Dynasty collapsed and Amdo and Kham, were left to the rule of warlords, local principalities and tribal chiefs. Large and powerful monasteries selected the leaders in areas under their control, and in the agricultural areas in the north and east of the region



In this issue

Amdo Tibetans
Church and Home
Schools

God Is Red

In Jesus Name

Opportunity in a Difficult Context

TSPM Church Structure

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

the Hui Muslims held power.

Not all was peaceful. Bloody clashes took place between the Tibetans and Hui Muslim warlords. These warlords later sided with the Kuomintang in 1928.

By 1952 the Communist Party of China forces had overpowered both the Kuomintang and the local Tibetans and had won control of the region. A revolt erupted among the fiercely independent Tibetans, beginning in Amdo in 1959, and led to tremendous loss of Tibetan lives and the bombarding of most of the monasteries. It was followed by a devastating famine.

Today, Amdo has been largely incorporated into the Qinghai Province with pockets in the Gansu and Sichuan Provinces. An Amdo county remains in the Tibet Autonomous Region.

What makes Amdo Tibetans distinct from other Tibetans is the language they speak, known as Amdolese. This is one of the four main spoken Tibetic languages, the other three being Central Tibetan, Khams Tibetan, and Ladakhi. Amdolese language is not a tonal language like Central and Khams Tibetan. In addition, there are many dialects within

Amdolese due to the geographical isolation of the many groups. However, all Tibetans use the same written script and can communicate by swapping notes. Across the different groups there around 1.4 million Amdo speakers.

Mostly living outside the cities, the Amdo Tibetans are generally semi-nomadic

herders and farmers. They are devoted followers of Tibetan Buddhism but mix it with the Bon religion and its multitude of divinities, rites and rituals. Dance plays a large part in their celebrations.

Amdo Tibetans have been described as intelligent people who require reasoning rather than instruction. According to the Joshua Project several mission agencies worked in the Amdo area prior to 1949 and at least five small churches consisting of Amdo Tibetans remain today. Even so, more than 95% of the Amdo Tibetans have never heard the gospel message. When they do come to believe, standing for Christ will take courage as they are likely to be disowned by their family.

The handful of believers working with the Amdo Tibetans are precious to the Kingdom as many people balk at living in the region due to the food, the remote areas and the arid and cold climate. In addition, during periods of conflict, sensitive regions have been closed off to visitors.



In recent years there has been a migration of young people from the villages to the cities for education and better work prospects. Here there is the possibility they may meet Christians and hear the Good News.



Church and Home Schools

Registered schools in China can be either public or private. Private schools require the parents to pay tuition fees and other fees required by the school. Public schools may be fully or partly subsidized by the government.

Back in the 1990s China began to see the upsurge of home schooling. It was in the face of China's 1986 Compulsory Education Law which stipulates nine years of education for all children at

registered schools. But for a time, official oversight and legal loopholes allowed parents to opt out of the mainstream school system.

While they enjoyed this relaxed atmosphere Church's and private coalitions began to facilitate kindergartens and even schools. The children's tutors were directly hired by their parents thereby these places could not technically be considered educational

International Short-Term Teams

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

December 2018: Cultural Exchange Team

April 2019: Cultural Exchange; Cycle/Intercession; Mercy; Medical; Come, See & Do Youth Leaders Teams

organisations.

Even though the schools were unregistered, the landlords and state authorities generally turned a blind eye as long as there were no complaints.

Parents chose to avoid state registered schools for a variety of reasons...

Migrant workers who wanted their children to travel with them to cities away from their designated home town paid hefty subsidies for their children's education at state schools. In addition, these rural children often experienced bullying and prejudice at urban schools.

The incentive for a great many to look for alternative education systems was the intense pressure placed on students to achieve in state schools. For others it was to give their children an education more focused on critical, independent thinking, innovation and team work.

For Christians, generally, it includes a desire to have their children to grow up with a Christian worldview and without indoctrination of atheist curriculums.

By 2014 Chinese Churches in the north, northeast, south-eastern coastal area, southern area and even in the central region were starting schools. In the large cities and throughout the provinces of Zhejiang and Henan, churches were running Christian schools. Between 300 to 500 schools were estimated to be in operation.

schools missed out on the certificate issued by registered schools - required for those preparing to sit national university entrance examinations, or the gaokao. Internationally recognised homeschool systems, such as ACE, could give a student the qualifications needed to apply to foreign universities – but costs to study overseas are very high and a good level of language learning is required. Neither are online college degrees a good option for further education as they are not thought highly of in China with its highly competitive job market.

Now the government has sent clear message...It will no longer turn a blind eye to children that have not entered the state education system. The period of leniency has apparently ended. In February 2017 the Government released a policy stating “[Students] should not be allowed to study at home to replace the national unified implementation of compulsory education.” Applications to be excluded from this compulsory education will require special permission and will likely only be granted in cases where health is an excuse.

This builds on the 2013 guidelines that "core socialist values" should be incorporated into the national curriculum and "cover all schools and those receiving education".

Already reports have come in of Church schools and kindergartens being shut down. Unregistered schools are no longer being overlooked and the rapid rise of the homeschool movement seems to have come to an abrupt halt.

4 However, graduates from these

God is Red – A Book Review

The Secret Story of How Christianity Survived and Flourished in Communist China

By Liao Yiwu, (also known as Liao Wei), a Sichuan born Chinese who has spent time in prison for his works as a writer, and whose books have been banned in China. Many of his books include interviews with people from the lower ranks of Chinese society who have suffered injustice and endured hardship under government policies. He is a prolific writer, and a musician and poet. He is openly critical of the Chinese communist regime. Liao made a dramatic escape from China and now travels between the USA and Germany, where he has won awards for his works.

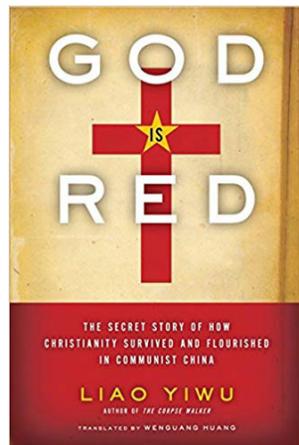
Please note that CCSM is not a political organisation. Yet we feel this book brings valuable and timely insights to Chinese Christianity and is a worthy inclusion in the Prayer Letter. It tells real and untold stories that recite church history and suffering in China leaving the reader with a better understanding of what it is like to go through persecution.

God is Red, begins with a series of interviews and accounts through which Liao investigates Christianity in Yunnan Province. He is introduced to contacts who recall the lives of the foreign missionaries who first came to the area. Local Christians tell of the missionary's selfless acts of service in sharing the gospel and caring for the people, including occasions where numerous lives in remote areas were saved by their medical assistance during pandemics.

Liao is fascinated by the strength of faith in the stories he hears.

He travels with a Chinese doctor who gave up wealth and status to serve Christ in remote villages. He shares with the reader discussions with real people whose lives were changed by encounters with the Lord.

In meetings with the relatives he



documents the treatment of Christians during the Cultural Revolution. 'God is Red' is a precious recount of the stories of those who bravely gave up their lives during the Mao era rather than denounce their beliefs. As he starts to write about Yunnan's mountain men of faith, he begins his preface with the words, "Every inch of soil beneath my feet was red, shining under the frail winter sun, as if it had been soaked with blood".

Captivating conversations reveal the heart and soul of Christians across Yunnan's rich mix of cultures and people groups. He talks with local Han and Bai, Miao and Yi minority peoples. He is introduced to Tibetan catholic monks, Han house fellowships and protestant churchgoers. His travels span from the city of Dali to the very "belly button" of the remotest mountains.

Further into the book he then enlarges his study of Christianity to Beijing and Chengdu, meeting and exploring how Christianity has affected the lives of old and new believers there.

What is particularly intriguing about this book is that Liao does not have a faith in Jesus. So his examination of Christianity is from a truly indigenous,

non-Christian perspective.

First penned in 2011, *God is Red* is not hot off the press. But it remains a recommended read for those interested in learning more about the circumstances and experiences which have shaped and continue to shape the Chinese church of today.



The Intercession Team this year was very multi-cultural with members from New Zealand, Malaysia, Hong Kong, England and also a Chinese national.

Romans 8:34 says that Jesus himself “is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.” In the Bible the same word translated as “intercession” is in other places also translated as “they met together”. The well-known Bible teacher Derek Prince describes intercession as “to come

between God and those who deserve God’s judgment”.

What does intercession mean to you? Is it something only the older people in the church can do? Does it mean long and arduous prayers? Climbing mountains to pray at the top? That sure sounds like hard work! So perhaps with these stereotypes it’s not surprising that of the various trips that CCSM arranges into China, Intercession has the least people signing up. But for those that have gone it is often said to be the most rewarding.

The pulling down of spiritual strongholds through prayer is another area of intercession. Numerous people remain in spiritual bondage in China.

Although the Chinese church has experienced rapid growth in recent years, the work of the Great Commission in China is a long way from being complete. There are so many communities, cities

PRAYER POINTERS

Amdo Tibetans

Pray for opportunities for Amdo Tibetans to hear about a loving Saviour and that they will respond with open hearts.

Pray that this region will continue to enjoy a period of peace so that it can remain open. Pray that the Amdo Tibetans may truly find hope and peace in the One True God.

Thank God for the Amdo Tibetans who have accepted Christ. Pray that they will be kept safe and that they will be bold in sharing the message to their people.

Church and Home Schools

Pray that parents can teach their children Christian truth and values and that they will be able to hold on to them despite peer pressure and propaganda.

Thank God that he gives us his Holy Spirit to all who ask for it young and old, to “guide you into all truth”.

Pray for the teachers, parents and children who have had to leave the Church Schools and return to the state school curriculum.

God Is Red

Thank God that he has used this writer, Liao Yiwu, to record the stories of believers in China.

Thank God for the encouragement these stories are to other workers and intercessors. Often the fruit of their labour is not seen till years later.

Praise God for his ability to transform the lives of individuals and even whole communities.

Thank God for the people who obediently carried his message to difficult and remote places

PRAYER POINTERS

In Jesus Name

Thank God for the Intercessors and prayer warriors who intercede for the unreached people of China.

Pray that the Father will increase the passion of the Church to obey the Great Commission.

Thank God for the opportunities the latest team was given to pray in strategic locations.

Pray for the seeds that have been sown. Pray that they will be watered and will take root and grow.

Opportunity in a Difficult Context

Pray that trusting friendships will quickly develop and grow between foreign workers and students and will continue even after the workers return back to their homelands.

Ask God to help Christians provide personal support and pastoral care for Chinese students who endure tremendous pressure to work long hours.

Give thanks for the few workers who have stayed longer term in more remote regions. Pray that they will quickly develop their language skills and be effective in their work. Pray that these workers will in turn have the financial and pastoral support they need.

TSPM Church Structure

Praise God that ultimately, He is control of all things.

Pray that the Chinese people who genuinely seek after the Lord will not be deprived of hearing the fullness of the gospel truth.

Pray for Godly leaders to become ordained in the Three Self Patriotic Movement and that the ministers who should not be ordained will quickly fall away.

Pray that ministers in the TSPM will be guided by the Lord in how to shepherd their congregations despite the limitations imposed on them.



Chinese Church Support Ministries

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

and even whole minority groups that remain unreached or virtually unreached. There are many places where the ‘ground is hard’ and there are barriers to accepting the message of repentance and salvation.



Jesus is never late, but with this trip the team leader was very much left waiting for the Lord to supply both the team members and resources.

Of course, He provided, and this only affirmed how much God is committed to sending people into China to intercede and to wage war spiritually, and the importance He places on this work.

The team seemed to have many more opportunities to share than previous teams. This was a very busy team! Surely this is a sign of the Holy Spirit's unwavering desire to bring China to Christ regardless of the current persecution.

The Team were able to:

- Visit and pass through 14 villages, towns and cities and 3 mountain sides.
- Pray through 20 religious strongholds
- Chat with many different religious leaders
- Visit 8 different families, discuss with them the Gospel and pray for the sick
- Pray for 8 different minority groups
- Meet with 5 teams of workers and

pray for their needs

- Baptise an elderly woman who had just come to faith, but was too sick to go to church

God gave a timely reminder to the team leader that His heart for China remains, even in the face of persecution. He tells:

“At one stage when I was thinking if I should be coming this year, I felt an electrical shock within my leg like a strong unseen finger poke me in the side of my calf, and all I heard was in a loud voice in my spirit “GO!”.

God wants China saved, he wants us to “GO!” I am thankful for the privilege of being able to be the leader of the Intercession Team yet again. I am also thankful for my fellow team members who gave up time, money, and loved ones to come and wage war in the spiritual realm alongside me. I am hopeful and prayerful that next year more people will be willing to “GO!” and be part of this amazing harvest field we call China.”

Opportunity in a Difficult Context

At a Chinese university, as an English-speaking foreigner, you will find little difficulty in entering conversations and building friendships - if you're working with English major students. Invitations to restaurants, excursions and even homes will come flooding in.

But what if the students are not so passionate to learn English and your own Chinese language skills are rather rudimentary to begin with? How hard is it then to develop relationships that can meaningfully impact lives?

I recently met and talked with Rose, a young woman who took the plunge and left for China to find out.

What type of work did you do in China?

Mainly English teaching to undergrad students. English was a compulsory paper, as opposed to a chosen major. The role could be described as an exchange post grad student position. Being there I was able to improve my Chinese language learning. The position included some writing classes, relieving for an English focus class and listening practice.

Was it easy to find work?

Yes, but start the paperwork process early, e.g. obtaining the invitation letter, to give time to obtain a visa. The university assigned a Chinese PhD student to assist with the process.

Flight tickets were supposed to be reimbursed but don't expect things

to happen quickly. I advise keeping itineraries and even boarding passes as these may be required later in the reimbursement process.

How would you describe the city you were in?

It was a less developed city with few westerners, but there were still many different nationalities. As a Christian there was plenty of opportunity - but in a difficult context. You need to know that that is where God wants you to be. The area had a poor climate and was dusty and dry. It was cold in winter and there were no tourist attractions.

What did you find challenging?

Compared to my country there was no personal space. For example, buses were crowded with no need for those standing to hold on to a rail because you were sandwiched between other passengers. Simply getting off the bus was a challenge.

At the university it was hard to prepare with shifting schedules, rooms booked out, class cancellations at last minute etc. Knowing who to go to for information was not always easy.

Other challenges were the small desk space in my assigned work area and the lack of a common room in which to relax.

Do you have any advice for building relationships?

Students generally don't try to talk to you

in English when English is not their major. I did get to English corners, but these were not well attended here. I found that asking the meaning of a person's name often led to interesting conversations.

Hiking brought an opportunity to talk with friends but here students seldom have spare time, even on weekends.

What insights did you gain from this trip?

I saw that among the students there is a

need for pastoral care. The pressure on them is tremendous. There would be opportunities to provide some personal support outside of the campus. In this location there were plenty of openings to mix with minority groups. In a cultural context, values can be very different.

I would say to others, "Be sure of why you are going. It's tough, language learning. In the spiritual context you need to choose to be thankful. Worship and remain close to God.

TSPM Church Structure

Part 3 of an article by Robert Menzies, "The Future of the Church in China: Why China's House Churches will Prevail". This article was written in 2017, just prior to the persecution of the house churches in 2018. Peter asks the question, "What would happen if the TSPM and the house churches were actually allowed to exist on equal footing?"

In his essay he compares the TSPM churches and the house churches in three key areas: church structure, theology, and worship patterns. In this exert he reviews the TSPM Church Structure:

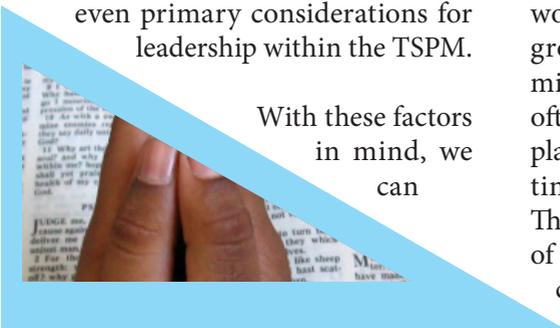
A few years ago, a student at the local TSPM seminary approached me... he was frustrated by his courses at the local TSPM seminary. He felt that the seminary's "post-denominational" curriculum, which describes various positions on theological topics (e.g., Lutheran, Presbyterian, etc.), is confusing for young students... Many in the TSPM are frustrated with the seminaries and their training methods that are devoid of any clear doctrinal stance... The "unity" of the church is imposed through a strong, hierarchical institutional structure. This structure is maintained by carefully

limiting the way that church leaders are selected and trained.

The path for becoming an ordained, TSPM minister is extremely narrow. A prospective minister must, above all, study at a TSPM seminary. This is tremendously limiting since educational levels in the countryside are often too low for admission, the prospective student must have recommendations from a TSPM pastor and thus prior experience in a TSPM church, and the number of students admitted into TSPM seminaries each year is ridiculously low due to government restrictions.

After graduation, the young believer often serves an apprenticeship in a designated church under designated leadership. Given the mixed character of the TSPM, this can be a very challenging experience for earnest young believers. Finally, the ministerial candidate must be viewed as acceptable by both church and government leaders in order to be ordained.

A leading TSPM pastor once told me about his own struggles navigating the complexities of life in the TSPM. He described a number of the challenges that he, an Evangelical minister, faced as he sought to follow God's call on his life within the confines of the TSPM. As he considered all of the struggles that he had faced, he said the greatest was this: he was compelled to ordain pastors that he knew should not be ordained. Clearly, this minister found that spiritual qualifications were not enough or even primary considerations for leadership within the TSPM.



With these factors
in mind, we
can

understand why so many gifted young believers gravitate to house church settings. Here is an environment where they can exercise leadership gifts without going through a rigorous process that in most cases is not open to them anyway. Many opportunities to explore and develop their sense of calling are available in small group settings. And, while underground training opportunities are increasingly available to house church Christians, strong emphasis is placed on practical ministry. This tends to foster and strengthen the development of spiritual gifts. In the house church, anyone may emerge as a leader. The only qualifications are spiritual in nature.

It is important to note that TSPM churches tend to be dominated by the clergy. They do not feature participation or ministry on the part of the laity. If possible, professional clergy always lead the Sunday worship services. Furthermore, small group meetings where lay leadership might be encouraged and developed are often not tolerated. Meetings must take place at designated places, at designated times, and with designated leadership. This limitation seriously impacts the life of the church, for these are precisely the contexts where gifts of the Spirit might be exercised and the body built up.



CCSM UK

PO Box 5857
Sheffield, S10 9GG
T: 0114 229 5796
National Director: Martyn Wells
uk@amccsm.org
www.amccsm.org

