



# CHINESE CHURCH SUPPORT MINISTRIES CHINA PRAYER LETTER



APRIL 2019

## The Dong People

The Dong Minority people (also known as Kam) live amongst the lush remote mountains in the Hunan, Guizhou and Guangxi provinces. Their terraced rice paddies wrap around the steep landscape irrigated by large wooden waterwheels in clear mountain rivers. The main crop is glutinous or “sticky” rice, and they are skilled at raising fish and ducks simultaneously with the rice in their fields.

The Northern Dong and Southern Dong speak different languages. Furthermore, there are many dialect groups and inter-marriage is rare between them. The Southern Dong have retained more of their culture and ethnicity than the Northern Dong.

Dong are outstanding builders and craftsmen. Of note are their temples and beautiful covered bridges with distinctive roofs. Houses are three storied with livestock on the lower level, the living area on the next story and food storage on the upper story. Each Dong village



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

features at least one elaborate drum tower. They are used to summon the people to their local meetings and social events which frequently involve dancing and music. Dong do not have their own written language, so songs were a vehicle to pass on traditions, history and beliefs. Dong love opera and are renowned for their polyphonic choirs.



Songs and poetry traditionally play a large role in courtship, although Dong now often practice arranged marriages as in the Han culture. The young girls are usually taught to weave and embroider at the age of seven. By 12, they will start work on their wedding dress and will usually marry at around 17 or 18. Dong men send their sweetheart a marriage proposal through the mail. The answer is delivered in a rice ball. If accepted, there is a flower in the middle but if not, there are hot chillies. Once married life begins, the bride remains with her parents until the couple have had their first child.

A popular event amongst Dong villages is bullfighting. Each village shares in raising its own “king bull” or “holy bull” for the bull fighting festivals.

The Dong’s folk belief system strives to keep harmony between nature and

people, and good and evil. This means they are bound by many superstitions and rituals and regularly offer sacrifices and gifts to avoid retaliation by offended spirits. They also practice Buddhism, Taoism and ancestor worship and worship of historical revered leaders and mythical figures. Altars feature in the living area of most households. Rice grains, bamboo roots, snails, chicken bones, eyes, blood, and eggs are used for divination and a form of black magic, called Tu, is practiced by some in remote areas. Dong have many myths and legends about the origins of the world.

The younger generation are now identifying less with their traditional beliefs. Although these are still an underlying part of their “DNA” they have become influenced by communism and humanism.

China Inland Mission worked among the Dong around 1910. In the 1930s missionaries from Liuzhou in Guangxi travelled to northern Guangxi and won 80 Southern Dong to Christ near Fuluh Township. In 1998 one ministry led several of this minority group to Christ.



started a house fellowship of 40 people [Operation China, Paul Hattaway, 2000].

However, for more than 99 percent of Dong, an unreached population of over three million, their true Creator, His salvation plan, authority over spirits and the gift of eternal life are yet to be explained.

The government restricts access to many Dong villages. But there are a few villages where the local enterprise and craftsmen have been commandeered by the state who run the village as a tourist zone.

Visitors must pay to enter the village. Dong people are naturally friendly and welcoming, but reports say there has been a change in these commercialised villages. The village folk are becoming more grasping and the salesmen more pushy.

Chinese Mandarin and characters are taught at school and so Chinese-language media can be used when sharing the Dong.

## Little Red Phone App

"Workers of the world, unite!"  
(全世界的无产阶级, 联合起来!)

Who has not heard this rousing slogan, a quote from the Great Helmsman? It was one of 267 adages now recorded in Chairman Mao Zedong's "Little Red Book" which was first published in the 1964.

Leading up to the Cultural Revolution, Chairman Mao's Defence Minister Lin Biao first used the book to glorify the personality of Mao in the military. It was a tool to win hearts and minds to the communist cause. Mao's quotes were arranged into chapters covering the various key themes of Communist theology such as "class struggle" and

# International Short-Term Teams

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“correcting mistaken ideas”.

During the Cultural Revolution millions were killed and victimised as Mao’s Red Guard sort to purge the Communist Party of any bourgeois leanings. To own a copy of the Little Red book became a mark of allegiance to the Party’s struggle. Mao’s soldiers would often check to see if those suspected of anti-socialist tendencies were carrying it or whether they could quote from it. Paper became scarce as so many copies were printed.

Sixty years on Xi Jinping is reinventing history with his version, what is being called “The Little Red App”. It has become the most downloaded app from China’s Apple Store.

The app’s called Xuexi Qiangguo or “Study Strong Nation”. Its name is play on words – Xuexi being the word for “study” but also containing the president’s name, suggesting users are to “study Xi”. Unsurprisingly, the app includes his speeches, statements, and rich media content including songs, dramas, films, books and articles. The dominant theme is promoting the Communist Party, it’s “great revolutionary history” and Xi Jinping Thought.

Developed by Alibaba, Xuexi Qiangguo is pegged to be a super app that already encompasses a whole range of services such as messaging and video conference calls (it’s integrated with Alibaba’s DingTalk messaging app) calendars, scheduling, and to-do lists. It lets users send virtual red packets after linking their Xuexi Qiangguo account with

the Alipay wallet app.

“Study points” are earned by logging on, reading articles, watching videos, making comments, and taking quizz tests. Usage behaviours are monitored, and the app can tell whether users are actively reading and engaging. So, clicking an article and walking away will not earn points. As a carrot, a new feature that allows users to redeem their study points for gifts is expected to be launched soon.

The apps dramatic uptake is not all due to its features. It has been heavily pushed by the Party. Government employees, universities and private companies across the country are now requiring their staff to use the app every day.

On social media some Xuexi Qiangguo app users have expressed worry about their careers and job security if they don’t keep up their point scores. Teachers have been required to earn 40 points a day, eating into family time and causing stress among older users who are not adept with modern technologies.

How will this app affect Christians in China? Just as the Little Red book was used as a screening mechanism by the



Red Guard, the Little Red App could also be used to flush out those that don't agree with the Party's atheist ideals. With the app's links to payment platforms like

Alipay and threats to job security, some worry it could potentially possess the ability to influence people through their purse strings.

## The Matter of Mission



*Part 7 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 beginning in 2018. Robert 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 excerpt he focuses on the topics of evangelism and mission.*

Perhaps the clearest indicator that the TSPM churches and the house churches reflect significantly different theological orientations is their approach to evangelism and missions. The house churches live and breathe missions.

In 2010 a Chinese house church leader, Brother Zhang, spoke in the chapel of an “underground” Bible school affiliated with the house church movement. After an inspiring service, he met personally with Sister Ma, a Christian from a Muslim family and people group. Sister Ma explained that she felt called to take the gospel to her people. I still remember Brother Zhang’s words of exhortation. He said there are “three fears” that you must overcome if you want to share the gospel with your people. First, don’t be afraid of “poor living conditions.” Second, don’t be afraid of “difficult work” (that is, ministering among unresponsive people). Finally, don’t be afraid of “going

to prison.” If you overcome these fears, the Lord will use you in a powerful way. Sister Ma was encouraged by these sobering words.

This attitude of total abandonment to the purposes of God and His mission is also reflected in the songs that flow from and permeate the worship of the house church movement. I have included below my English translations of two songs found in Lu Xiaomin’s collection entitled, *Sounds of the Heart*.

Lu Xiaomin and her songs are known and loved by house church groups throughout China. I asked one Chinese friend how many believers knew about these songs. He exclaimed, “All the house churches sing them!” *Sounds of the Heart* is an updated and expanded version of *Songs of Canaan*, Lu Xiaomin’s previous and hugely popular songbook. *Sounds of the Heart* contains 900 songs and is

the closest thing to an “official” songbook that exists in the house churches in China today.

In view of their popularity and impact, the songs penned by Lu Xiaomin are an important insight into Chinese

Christianity. I have found them to be quite different from most Christian songs in the West, but powerful and full of inspiration. They are also intensely missional. I believe the following songs capture well the ethos of the house church movement.

**We do Not Fear Strong Wind and Rain**

**We do not fear strong wind and rain  
For the one with us is Jehovah  
We do not fear strong wind and rain  
For the one with us is greater than ten thousand  
We will not cast our nets in the narrow, shallow stream  
Nor will we cast our nets in the tranquil lake  
Small trees survive violent winds and savage rain  
They grow into tall trees that reach to heaven.**

**We are an Invisible Army**

**We are an invisible army  
We are evangelists without names  
If God helps us, who can stand against us?  
‘Charge forward’ is our battle cry  
The blood of martyrs spilled over thousands of years,  
Cries out to those of us who follow  
The throng of saints over thousands of years,  
In ragged clothes, drifting, yet not discouraged  
On the battlefield these soldiers were tested  
In strong winds and waves these helmsmen were tried  
In these last days we will face even greater trials  
So we constantly ask the Lord for His guidance.**

By way of contrast, I have yet to see TSPM leaders at a high level openly talk about missions; that is, taking the gospel to other people in other cultural groups or nations. I have heard, however, many stories of how TSPM pastors who are too active or aggressive in reaching out to other communities

are reprimanded and punished. Can a church that does not view missions (proclaiming the gospel to those who are not Christians, especially those who have not heard) as a central part of its purpose really be considered the church? Does it have a future?

# PRAYER POINTERS

## The Dong People

Thank God that the Dong, after centuries of having no written script, now have the ability to read (in the Chinese language) and that they may be able learn about Christ through Chinese language media.

Praise God that there are people who have a heart to bring the Gospel to the Dong communities. Pray that God opens a way for them to share despite government restrictions, the remote locations and spiritual opposition.

Pray for radio ministries that can minister to the Dong in their own language.

## Little Red Phone App

Thank God that He has placed Xi Jinping as leader in China and pray that He will accomplish His purposes through him. [Romans 13:1]

Pray that Xi Jinping will use this app wisely to benefit and unify the Chinese people. [Timothy 2:1-2]

Pray that the believers in China will be given the strength to withstand any pressures put on them and that they will not deny their faith in exchange for 'quiz points' if put to the test on matters of belief.

## The Matter of Mission

The words of Lu Xiaomin's song declares, "We do not fear strong wind and rain, for the one with us is Jehovah". Praise God for the boldness and faith he has given the Chinese Underground Church.

The song also states, "Nor will we cast our nets in the tranquil lake." Pray that the Chinese Church will not be driven by fear to play it safe and abandon the call to missions.

Pray that the Chinese church will be encouraged and will be able to withstand the trials ahead.

# PRAYER POINTERS

## The Word for Uyghur

Thank God for technology such the Hayatnuri website and apps. Pray that they will be received and bear fruit.

Thank God for those He has already led to find these precious resources and pray that many more Uyghur will discover this buried treasure.

Ask the Father to preserve this remaining yet strategic means of getting the Good News out to the Uyghur people.

Pray that they will find hope in Christ to sustain them in the midst of the terrorizing fear the government has subjected them to and in a traditional faith that offers no assurance of salvation or even certainty of God's love for them.

## Tribute to Samuel Lamb

Thank God for inspirational leaders and great men of faith who encourage us by their perseverance and conviction and passion for Christ.

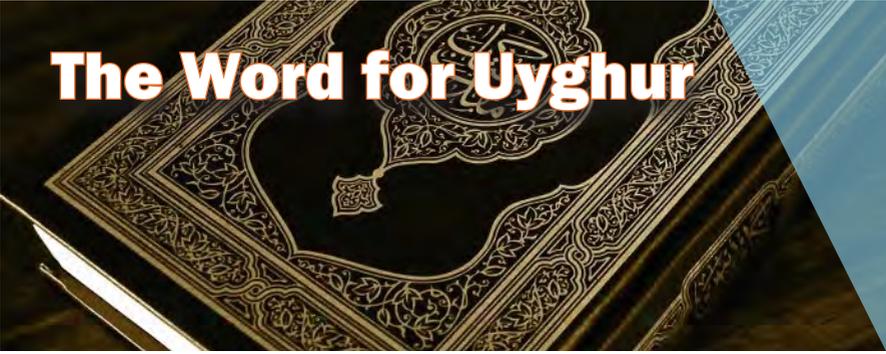
As Samuel Lamb entreated: “Pray that we (the Chinese Church) will receive the strength to stand firm.”

Pray that as China's church goes through this latest religious crackdown once it will experience “more persecution, more growing”.



**Chinese Church Support Ministries**

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and support the church and  
the people of China



# The Word for Uyghur

“Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.” [1 Timothy 4: 13]

*In the West the ability to study a Bible in our own language is something we can thankfully take for granted. For centuries the Uyghur people of Xinjiang Province did not have this privilege of a translation in their language. CCSM asked the Uyghur Bible Society how hard it was for Uyghur to attain a copy in their language today.*

“It is indeed very difficult, and in some ways increasingly so, for Uyghurs to access the Scriptures in their own language. Since around 2006, our translation of the entire New Testament along with Genesis and Exodus into modern Uyghur was completed and printed as a single bound volume. Other portions of Scripture have also been published, but unfortunately, not inside China so the book cannot be legally sold unlike the Qur'an which was fairly freely available in Uyghur until a couple of years ago when the present regime's ambitious campaign to effectively wipe out religious belief among the Uyghurs began in earnest.

What physical copies of the Scriptures in Uyghur that are there were all carried into

the country for discreet, internal distribution. The still relatively small number of Uyghurs who have become followers of Jesus are connected enough to generally have been able to get their hands on a copy of the Scriptures.

Some though, in the present dire circumstances where an estimated 10-11% of the adult Uyghur population have been indefinitely interned in political re-education concentration camps, have discarded whatever religious literature they had for fear it could be used as an excuse for them to be taken away for "study" as these prison-camp sentences are euphemistically being called.

Consequently, we are extremely grateful for the blessing of new communications technologies which allow digital versions of the Scriptures in Uyghur in both print and audio format to be distributed. In particular, the website [www.hayatnuri.info](http://www.hayatnuri.info) and associated smartphone apps, has as its one overarching agenda to make the existence of the Scriptures in Uyghur known by that population, and allow them to "take up and read."



Since that effort began around five years ago aided by the power of targeted Internet advertising, thousands of visits from the Uyghurs' homeland in Xinjiang have been recorded along with many copies of the phone app installed and PDF, and MP3 audio files of the Scriptures downloaded.

Only due to ongoing arduous efforts to keep the Hayatnuri website and apps

available inside China and serving ads up is there the present possibility of Uyghurs getting a hold of God's word. That we still have visitors is amazing considering the risk Uyghurs in Xinjiang feel to be perceived as religious. Even those not in a concentration camp live under constant surveillance. Phones are checked by police on the street and an app is usually installed which ostensibly is "for their own protection" but is believed to give even further surveillance powers to the authorities. So, access is very limited.

Remember though, theirs is not like the situation believers in the former Soviet Union or Eastern Europe faced when efforts were made by Western Christians to bring the persecuted church Bibles. The vast majority of Uyghurs are Muslims. A huge amount of our effort to spread the Scriptures is for evangelism.”

## Tribute to Samuel Lamb

Lin Xiangao, also known as Samuel Lamb, was the son of a Baptist preacher. He spent his early years in Macau and Hong Kong and attended Bible college in Guangxi. During his early life he witnessed the Japanese invasion and the Chinese civil war which led to the Communist Party under Mao Zedong sweep into power in 1949.

Six years on, in 1955, when the fledgling Three Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) was in its fourth year, Pastor Samuel was preaching to a church of up to 400 people in Guangzhou (Canton). The

TSPM had been set up to exclude foreign influence from the Chinese church as at this time the church was viewed by many Chinese as a foreign religion and a tool for Western imperialist expansion.

Samuel refused to join the state-controlled Protestant Three-self Patriotic Movement (TSPM), not on political grounds, but because then it was largely controlled by modernists who denied the very basic beliefs of the Christian faith (i.e. the true resurrection of Jesus, the absolute



reliability and authority of the Bible and the centrality of the cross for salvation) [OMF (GCM), Samuel Lamb (1924-2013) – a Tribute, 14 March 2014, <<https://omf.org>> ]. Because of his rejection of the TSPM and his refusal to register his church, Samuel was accused of being a counter-revolutionary and was given 16 months in prison.

After he was released, he returned to pastoring his flock in Guangzhou. It wasn't long until he was arrested again. This time Samuel was given a punishing 20-year sentence beginning in 1958. Even in the *láogǎi*, (re-education through labour camp) he shared the gospel whenever he could. God preserved his life despite the dangerous and back-breaking work he was assigned to in the coal mines.

While serving this time, the Cultural Revolution (1966 to 1976) raged through China. Christians that had given their allegiance to the TSPM and those that had not were persecuted alike. The TSPM was

effectively shut down. The entire Chinese body of Christ was driven underground. Many Christians were killed and many joined Pastor Samuel in the labour camps.

During this period both his wife Sui Ling, his father and even Chairman Mao passed away. Deng Xiaoping had just become paramount leader of the People's Republic of China when Samuel was released in 1978. A year later the TSPM was re-established. China was once again ready to begin opening up to the outside world. It was an opportune time to have English language skills because young Chinese were keen to embrace foreign trade. Samuel used teaching English as a means of leading people to Christ and soon a house church started up at 35 Da Ma Zhan. Known as the Damazhan Evangelical Church, numbers continued to increase and soon the location was changed to a premises at 15 Rong Gui Li, De Zheng Bei Road, Guangzhou. The house church became known as Rongguili Church.

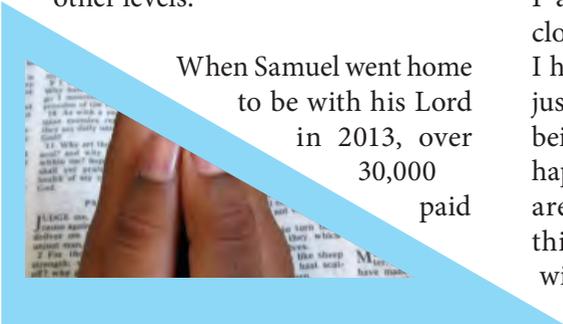
News of Samuel Lamb's long suffering had reached the West and he was regarded as a Christian hero of the faith. This is perhaps why the authorities tended to leave Rongguili be. Still, in 1988 he was given a warning by the Public Security Bureau to stop his activities [*Freedom of Religion in China, Asia Watch Committee 1992*]. And once more in 1990 he was arrested and interrogated for 2 days. His home was searched, member lists and church material were confiscated, and the church was ordered to close down as it was an illegal, unregistered church. Pastor Samuel told Open Doors in an interview that before 1990 his church had 900 attendees. After this attempt to close the church, the people returned, and it grew to 1200. This growth continued and Rongguili Church operated over 4 floors in the building complex with the sermon being broadcast to packed rooms on the other levels.

respect at his funeral.

In February last year, China's religious laws were tightened and by the end of the year great sadness was again felt around the world when Rongguili Church, Zion Church in Beijing and Early Rain Covenant Church in Chengdu, were forcibly closed by officials. Rongguili Church had up to 5000 people attending its services at the time it was shut down.

Now the world watches. As Pastor Samuel himself had stated many times, "More persecution, more growing; that's the history of the church, also the history of our church."

Pastor Lamb regularly warned, "We must be prepared to suffer. We must be prepared for the fact that we may be arrested. Before I was sent to prison, I already prepared a bag with some clothes, shoes and a toothbrush. When I had to go to the police station, I could just pick it up. I was ready. People are still being arrested. You don't know what will happen tomorrow. Today the authorities are not bothering us. But tomorrow things may be different. I pray that we will receive the strength to stand firm."



When Samuel went home  
to be with his Lord  
in 2013, over  
30,000  
paid



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