



CHINESE CHURCH SUPPORT MINISTRIES

CHINA PRAYER LETTER

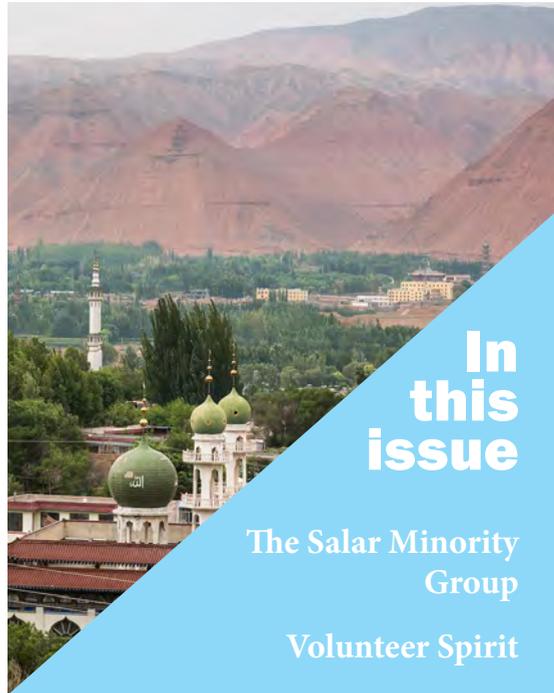


AUGUST 2019

The Salar Minority Group

The streetscape is unmistakably Turkic and Islamic. Along from the Mosque, is a row of Halal eateries. Outside, on stools, the customers are all men, most sporting embroidered skullcaps and prolific beards. Around the corner are hardware and vehicle repair shops, with younger men sitting about on motorcycles, smoking. Women almost invariably wear a black headscarf. If accompanying their husbands, they walk at a discreet distance behind. There are rows of stalls where openair butchers have shoulders of lamb hanging on hooks. Opposite, dry farming vegetables—chillies, capsicums, cabbage—are on sale from the backs of trucks.

Despite appearances, the location is Central China rather than Central Asia. It is the market at Gaizi (Jiezi) the largest town in the Xunhua Salar Autonomous County of Qinghai Province. The County runs for 90 kilometres along the course of the



In
this
issue

The Salar Minority
Group

Volunteer Spirit

Love is More Than Words

He Directs Our Paths

African Church Welcomes Migrants

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



Yellow River as it moves into Gansu Province. Salar people also live in nearby Hualong Hui Autonomous County and Jishishan Bonan, Dongxiang and Salar Autonomous County of Gansu. This small minority group totals only 150,000 people. Their dress is very similar to that of the Hui, making the two groups nearly indistinguishable.

Their ancestors are said to have migrated from Samarkand around 1370AD. Oral history tells of two brothers who led their clanspeople away from persecution. They strapped a Qur'an to a camel's head to guide them. The arduous journey took them eastward to Alitiuli, Qinghai. Here, while they overnighted by a spring, the camel transformed into a large white stone. Taking this as a divine sign, they settled there.

Since then, they have mingled with their Tibetan, Chinese, Mongolian, Dongxiang, Bao'an and Tu neighbours; but their religion and the colourful folklore surrounding their exile has given them a strong sense of identity.

Also setting them apart is their Oghuz Turkic language, which is similar to Uyghur, but has no written script. Salar use Chinese characters to write and most are fluent in spoken Mandarin and many in Tibetan.

In the 1700s, two schools of Sufi Islam (Khufiyya/Old teaching and Jahriyya/New teaching) developed causing firece division and unrest among the Salar. In 1871 The Qing dynasty stepped in to restore order by outlawing Jahriyya. The situation escalated to rebellion and after 3 months of fighting the Qing army killed an estimated 40% of all Jahriyya adherents and sent more than 600 to the Ili valley in Xinjiang province, where they still reside. Others have since migrated there significantly growing the Ili population.

In 1937 Salar made up the majority of Kuomintang General Ma Bufang's elite cavalry sent against Japanese invaders. Because of their fierce opposition, the Japanese were never able to capture Lanzhou.

A decade later, in 1949, the PRC secured power in Qinghai. The Salars' resistance

was defeated and about ten percent of the male population was rounded up and sent to “Reform through labour camps”. The Salar language was discouraged and religious expression was largely suppressed.

The Salar have their own traditional system of social organisation that has male family elders, clan and village level representation. It operates alongside the legally-organized political organ, (secretary of communist party, the head of the village etc). Through this network they have organised transport businesses and teams of migrant workers for odd jobs such as in the construction industry. They travel outside the county for work in summer and return for

winter. Salar village networks are running restaurants in other cities. In fact, by some estimates, nearly 1/10 of all of China’s noodle restaurants are run by migrants from Hualong.

In addition to their agricultural skills, Salar have long been known as merchants and traders throughout the Northwest, gaining prominent positions in government and business. Xunhua has become a major centre in China for washing and spinning sheep and yaks’ wool. Its modern mills are all led by native Salars. The industry has contributed significantly to Xunhua’s wealth, and produces a range of products, including luxury products for export to Europe and North America.



International Short-Term Teams

Email CCSM at
teams@amccsm.org to
find out what we have on offer.

Volunteer Spirit



A snapshot of nations' attitudes to charity is published each year in the CAF World Giving Index. This survey asks respondents three questions:

Have you helped a stranger, or someone you didn't know who needed help?

Have you donated money to a charity?

Have you volunteered your time to an organisation?

At first glance China appears to have achieved extremely well - it ranked within the top 4 nations for all three, according to total people numbers. On a per capita basis, however, the results looked very different leaving China very much at the lower end of the list – 133 out of 143 for volunteering and third to last overall in the year 2018.

The good news is that the percentage of residents volunteering is up from last year. And the government already has an action plan to dramatically boost the nation's volunteering spirit. Its goal? To get a whopping 10% of the population out participating over the next two years.

China has two systems for overseeing Volunteer Service Organisations. They are the Chinese Communist Youth League (CYL) and the Ministry of

Civil Affairs who control the number, type and range of NGOs's, often limiting them to only one of each type an area.

The key driver for the planned volunteer explosion will be the CYL which intends to manage a database of 90 million youth registered for deployment as volunteers. Supporting Xi Jinping's promise to alleviate rural poverty, it is mobilizing 10 million vocational school and university students to focus on rural and ethnic minority areas by 2022. They are already sharing their knowledge, digital savvy and next-generation ideas to raise up the technological, industrial, cultural and medical development of these more remote areas. Some of the volunteer placements are long term, even up to 1-2 years with volunteers often staying on after their deployment.

Opening online stores to sell ethnic handcrafts, use of drones in agriculture, modern irrigation techniques, starting tourist operations and other volunteer initiatives are already bringing real financial benefits to rural communities.

Supporting environmental protection and rural governance are also mentioned in the CYL guidelines for managing volunteers. According to an article in Global Times published on the 11th April 2019, students from Tianjin University volunteered their summer vacation to give lessons to rural residents and factory workers about the theories and spirit of the 19th Party Congress.



But what has changed in China? Why are such large numbers of students suddenly gaining a heart to volunteer? Free time is precious in China's competitive environment. The answer lies in the state guided mechanisms being developed to link "social practice" to academic performance and career opportunities.

Firstly, the Volunteer Service Ordinance states that 'Institutions of higher learning and secondary vocational schools can incorporate student participation in volunteer service activities into practice credit management.' Many schools and universities are already applying this.

Secondly, a new youth-focused social credit app is being built in conjunction with the CYL that will be the impetus for citizens to model good social behaviour. This app operates purely on incentives and does not administer punishments. Big data is collected on things like credit history, honouring contracts, cheating, plagiarism, publishing research papers, social connections and volunteering. Positive and negative traits are balanced

to provide a score. High scores will make you eligible for perks such as discounts on online courses, and shortlisting when applying for jobs.

Not all volunteer work is directed to rural areas and the new wave of social benevolence is not simply an academic movement. Popping up in the streets and communities across China are posters decreeing that not only schools, but families and society should participate in volunteer service.

Although the leap in volunteer spirit in China may be incentivised, it is opening doors for young people to work among China's poorest, marginalised and least advantaged. Welfare services, a sector where Christians have already been focused for many years, is truly benefiting from the initiative. No doubt, some students may find themselves working alongside God's servants and will learn the fulfilment of being part of it. For those that already know the Father, it is providing new opportunities to share their love and gain better understanding of his heart for the underprivileged.

Love is More Than Words

Twenty orphans with a mix of disabilities sit together in a room around a table. Their ages range from 15 to the late 20's. They are working on various tasks; some making bead work, others embroidery. A girl sits on the floor, her feet dexterously weaving a needle in and out of a cloth. Others struggle with uncooperative limbs that seem to have a will of their own. There is a sense of victory when the needle passes successfully through a bead and slowly the creation takes shape. It is a beautiful tissue box.

The group is run within a welfare home by a very special charity. Most of the group are here because their orphanage could not find them a 'forever home' before they reached 14, the age after which adoption is no longer permitted. Then the teenagers are moved to a welfare home, a state-run centre that cares for the elderly, mentally impaired and those with physical disabilities. This home has over 300 residents.

The feeling in the craft room is warm and inclusive. A couple of older women look on intently. They live in the welfare home and have asked to join the group but must first come and observe before being allowed to take part in the industry. That is because the group is far more than a hobby club...this is a family unit. To join the group means that you have decided to join the 'family'. And families stick together.

The handcrafts are later sold by the charity staff to bring a small income. It helps to subsidize some outings and brings in pocket money for the group.

The group does other activities too. They enjoy art and those that can, learn reading, writing, maths and computer skills. This year the group put together an orchestra and were main feature at the welfare centre's end of year celebration. It's hard to express the joy that the somewhat unusual band radiated. Arms swinging wildly, seemingly without control, somehow managed, at the last



PRAYER POINTERS

The Salar Minority Group

Being born a Muslim lies at the core of Salar identity and way of life. Pray that those that come to know Christ will be supported with all that they need after they are 'born again'.

Pray that they would count the cost of following Jesus and know that Jesus is worth losing everything for.

Thank God that the Salar get on well with their neighbouring ethnicities. Pray that the Chinese church will gain knowledge in how to reach out to the Salar and that God will give them the courage and the passion to do so.

Volunteer Spirit

Praise God for opportunities for Chinese youth volunteers to work with the many Christians who operate in the Welfare sector. Pray they will be able to observe the true value that God places on all lives.

Pray for the youth as they as they go out that they will be protected from harm. Pray that they will be able to offer real benefit to lives and communities. Pray for those that administer the programs.

Pray that the volunteers will be a blessing and will not inhibit faith-based organisations in their work.

Love is More Than Words

Thank God for the value he places on work with the disadvantaged. "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." Matthew 25:40-45 [NIV]

Thank God that volunteering is being encouraged in China through schools and universities. Ask that God will increase the heart of the Chinese to give their time to the less advantaged. Pray that the family group members will in turn be a blessing to the student volunteers.

Ask God to encourage those that work in the welfare home charity. Pray that they will not grow weary.



PRAYER POINTERS

He Directs Our Paths

Pray that Lexi can demonstrate the Gospel to her family as they see her transformed life. Her family travelled to New Zealand for her wedding. Pray for her family to have open hearts.

Ask God to raise up intercessors for the Miao and to send Chinese Christians to minister the love of Jesus.

Pray for the salvation of key Miao leaders who will boldly declare the Gospel among their own people.

Ask the Lord to establish many fellowships of believers among the Miao for the glory of His name!

African Church Welcomes Migrants

Praise God that he has provided a way for Chinese to hear the gospel in Africa.

Pray that relations between Africans and Chinese workers will be positive, stable and open.

Pray that Chinese believers who return to China will be able to connect safely with churches there and will continue to grow in their faith.



Chinese Church Support Ministries

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

second, to strike a perfect note in perfect rhythm. The music was delightful, and they were, hands down, the highlight of the concert.

Four full time staff who oversee the teaching and physical and emotional welfare of the group. They are joined by around 5 university students a week who have volunteered from local universities. Volunteering is part of the students' curriculum requirements. Around 20 different student volunteers come through the centre each month giving 60 hours. They play an important role in the group's book club, reading to those that cannot read and helping others. There is a great range of books, carefully selected to benefit both readers and students. The charity recently held an event to recognise and thank its volunteers.

Through the care given to them most of these orphans have come to know and love of God. The charity has undoubtedly, profoundly and dramatically changed the life of these orphans. They now have purpose, respect and value. They are no longer lonely, abandoned and unfulfilled. The manager of the centre pointed out, "to this group, love is more than words, it is action".

It is a long term wish that the charity could operate a small bakery or a similar business that could earn a more substantial income for the family group. It would help the orphans achieve more meaningful work, a level of independence and the opportunity to leave the welfare centre.

He Directs Our Paths

Circumventing rice fields and hiking along meandering paths into hidden and remote villages was a huge part of my 5½-year missionary journey in SW China.

All my life I had dreamed of being a missionary to people who had never heard the Good News. Through divine circumstances, God gave me the desire of my heart - to tell a largely unreached minority group, China's Miao (Hmong) people, about Jesus.

In the Miao villages I shared and shared



but saw very few conversions as there were many obstacles. There was unrest in the region, and they spoke with their own Miao dialect and didn't often speak Mandarin. The work was difficult and dangerous.



One day, during my prayer time I told God, “If I must leave China suddenly, I won’t have the time or peace of mind to figure out where I should go. If you would just let me know now, that piece of the puzzle would be in place for me.” A weird thought came into my mind... “New Zealand”. This was confirmed to me many times over the next 3 years.

In 2018 things deteriorated in China. As the government stepped up its persecution of Christians, and religion in general, I watched missionaries being stripped of valuables and deported. I knew that soon the inevitable knock was coming to my door. My amazing journey with the very special Miao people could fill a book, but this chapter of my life came to an end on Dec 31, 2018.

I had wrestled with God, but he made it clear to me that it was time make the move to New Zealand.

I struggled with the thought of leaving my place in China. It had become home to me. But God is faithful to direct our

paths when we trust in Him with all our hearts! [*Prov 3: 5-6*]

I went with mixed feelings: grief over leaving China, and excitement... God had placed a new church on my radar through two women. One woman I had met at a wedding in north China and the other at an airport in Guangzhou. Not knowing what God had already said to me, they each spoke about the same great Chinese church and community in New Zealand. Amazing! Both had been baptized there and one had gone on to be a missionary in New Zealand.

After just 4 months in New Zealand I had an opportunity to share with a young Chinese girl, Lexi. We met after a youth service and I learned that she had been attending services for 6 months and had not yet made a decision to accept Christ. I shared the Gospel with her, and she chose to follow Jesus. Lexi and I began discipleship and she was baptized in July. She is marrying a young Chinese man who was saved at this church too! He was really excited when Lexi told him

she had chosen to trust in Christ!

For me, the most exciting thing was when Lexi asked which minority group I worked with in China and I discovered she was from the Miao people group! China has 56 official people groups and it was incredible to think that God had brought Lexi from the very minority group I was

called to reach in China, to come to New Zealand to hear about Jesus and be saved! The odds were about the same as finding a needle in a haystack!! I could hardly contain my tears. I realised that God had brought me to NZ to continue my calling with the Chinese in a place where I can share and disciple freely. Hallelujah!!!! .

African Church Welcomes Migrants



Even high-powered businessmen are on the back foot in a foreign land.

As aliens, there are a series of questions to answer... how do you find friends? Who can you trust and who do you not trust? What cultural perceptions do people have of me? It can be lonely far from home and family.

Over the past few decades Chinese have

been leaving China for opportunities in Africa. Research companies have estimated around 10,000 Chinese owned companies on the African continent and around 227,000 workers in 2016. Other estimates place figures much higher at over a million. China has invested heavily in Africa, bank rolling its Belt Road Initiative and other investments to the tune of US\$143 billion between 2000-2017. Workers are being sent out to work on infrastructure projects such as railways, airports and roads.

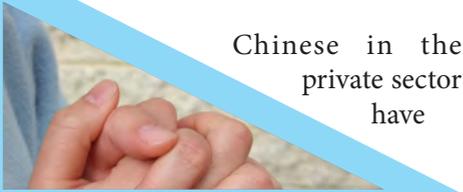


Inter-racial relations are mixed. Some African nationals are wary of neo-colonialist agendas and are worried about China putting their countries into debt. Others express concerns that Chinese are taking local jobs. It has not helped that

stories have reached the media of racist attitudes coming from Chinese towards Africans working with them on some project sites. Others see a positive boost to the economy and trade benefits.

Christians, however, see this economic migration, as a precious opportunity. Religious restrictions that hinder Chinese hearing the gospel in China don't exist in nations such as South Africa and Kenya, privileged with religious freedom. Believers are reaching out to the immigrants. The Christian's friendship and trustworthiness opens doors to discussing beliefs and sharing the gospel.

To accommodate the Chinese visitors Mandarin has been incorporated into services at some churches. And in Nairobi city, Kenya, the three main churches are run by Taiwanese, Hong Kong and Malaysian pastors.



Chinese in the private sector have

greater ability to make personal connections and explore religious interests. Those working on government projects have less liberty, busing to and from work, and returning to compounds in the evening.

However religious liberty is not a luxury for all Chinese who find Christ in Africa. Nairobi also has its own Chinese underground church to protect the identity of worshippers wanting to return to a life back in China. Communist Party members and state workers who become Christians their risk their jobs if their faith becomes public. And others wanting to network with the house churches in China on their return also seek to keep their belief away from the ever-lengthening arm of China's surveillance network.

New converts returning to China are often ignorant of the oppression Christians are experiencing there. Media coverage inside China is carefully filtered. New believers need to be warned of the risks and connected with the Chinese underground before returning home.



CCSM UK

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

