



CHINESE CHURCH SUPPORT MINISTRIES

CHINA PRAYER LETTER



JANUARY 2020

Rightly Dividing the Gospel

Xi Jinping is a strong leader who puts his promises into action. His directives to “sinicise” religion in China are already well underway since he introduced the concept only four years ago. The term, Zhōngguó huà (中国化), translated as sinicisation, is often taken by foreign media to mean conforming with Han Chinese culture but it more correctly implies the act of ‘nationalising’ or bringing under state control.

Rewriting a sinicised Bible is in process and since 2018 purchasing a Bible in China has been only possible through a state church. It’s fair to imagine that the State’s sinicised Bible will soon be the only version. In November 2019, China’s religious leaders were called to meet in Beijing to determine ways to reinterpret religious doctrine to bring it in line with socialism.

It’s likely this meeting will lead to more editing, rewriting or



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removal of Christian books still available legally in China, more state control of pastors training and sermons and a large dose of Marxist social propaganda in churches and texts.

Most worrying is the mistreatment of scripture being forced on state churches, the only legal place where one can go to learn about God. A good example of this was a recent devotional posted on the TSPM website aiming to match Christianity with Marxist socialist ideals. The devotional was titled “Pray for the Motherland” and was based on 1 Tim 2: 1-2. It encouraged the reader to pray for the value goals of their country - prosperity, strength, democracy, civilisation/culture and harmony.

These are indeed worthy ideals but Paul’s intention in writing these two verses is clearly not matched with the values mentioned here, irrespective of how noble they are. If you just read on a little further to verses 3 and 4, it becomes clear that Paul is calling for prayers that lead to people being saved and coming to a knowledge of truth.

2 First of all, then, I urge that requests, prayers, intercessions, and thanks be offered on behalf of all people, ² even for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. ³ Such prayer for all is good and welcomed before God our Saviour, ⁴ since he wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. ⁵ For there is one God and one intermediary between God and humanity, Christ Jesus, himself human, ⁶ who gave himself as a ransom for all, revealing God’s purpose at his appointed time.

(1 Tim 2: 1-2) [NET]

More than ever, we live in a time in history when it is vitally important to know the Word of God well. By knowing His Word fully, we learn God’s character and priorities and His best desire for us, and for our rulers! In a pastoral letter to Early Rain Covenant Church, written after the arrest of Wang Yi, a Chinese pastor urged members, “Revive the gospel: you are the temple of the Holy Spirit. You live by the temple of the Holy Spirit. You live by the gospel and for the gospel.”



Rural Poverty Alleviation

– Joy, Heartache and Opportunity

Over the last four years, enormous change has occurred inside rural China as a result of the nation's Poverty Alleviation Campaign which aims to lift all China out of poverty by 2020. In particular, the "Poverty Alleviation Through Relocation" Scheme is having a profound effect on the lives of rural people – bringing some heartache and others great joy.

In an interview with "Closer To China", Party Secretary Wan Qinghua of Huishui County in Guizhou Province explained how it works. He said that poor rural households were moved to purpose-built townships. Those targeted for resettlement were chosen based on the following criteria in this order:

1. Households in locations not suitable for agriculture.
2. Households in degraded environments, or areas at risk of natural disasters like earthquakes.
3. People who were keen to move.
4. The poorest villages and townships.

In his county, relocating families were offered a subsidy of around 35,000RMB (around \$5100) per person. For one household, this usually covers the cost of their new state-built home with a little left over for household furniture. Effectively they can move in for no cost. Families apparently do not lose rights to their original homes and could visit the new accommodation before making final decisions.

International Short-Term Teams

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

Township officials are being paired with villages, and officials at all levels have made a pledge to reduce poverty by 2020 or face severe punishments. They must arrange for medical centres, schools, social structures and job training to keep the relocated families from returning back to their farms. Officials are under tremendous pressure to make relocations successful. This means generating jobs. Larger coastal cities are being paired with townships to share ideas and resources. There are plenty of opportunities for business and entrepreneurs with favourable bank loans to get involved in poverty alleviation.

There are mixed emotions. Not everyone desires to forgo rural self-employment to take a factory job in the city. Managing money is challenging after leading a life of self-sufficiency, and with little or no education wages are likely to be low. For farmers over 45 retraining is difficult and the chances of finding a good job are slim. Many



have loved their rural life with its simple tranquillity and beautiful natural

environment. When they leave their generational homes, they leave their familiar lifestyle, their memories and even their family burial grounds.

Some have expressed fears that they no longer have the security of their farms to feed them if they cannot find work. China has not forgotten it's great famine when 36 million died.

Those who stay behind lose their friends and familiar support structures, this is especially difficult for the elderly. As one young woman despaired, "This used to be a lively village but now it's a joyless one, as few people are left here".

Rural migrant workers stand to gain the most. Officials are doing their utmost to bring industry and development to the new towns to employ these people locally. Their own jobs depend on it. If the schemes live up to expectations these workers will no longer need to be separated from their children and parents while they work in distant cities. Every child in the townships will have access to a school nearby, further breaking the cycle of poverty.

There is a great need for social workers to connect people with resources and to assist with the transition. There are opportunities for NGO's and philanthropists to get involved, especially in the fields of mental health, childcare, care of senior citizens and training.

The Tea House Servant

Just as Starbucks is synonymous with American culture, teahouses are an iconic part of the Chinese way of life. In ancient times Chinese scholars used the teahouse as a place for sharing ideas. Political allegiances and social ranks could be temporarily laid aside in favour of an honest and rational discourse. There's something very relaxing about drinking tea that makes it easier to open up, talk about life, solve problems and build friendships.

Nowadays teahouses are found spread all over China's cities, coming in all shapes and sizes. Some are decorated to create a serene and tranquil environment with calligraphy, paintings, flowers and miniscapes. Others are vibrant boasting live storytelling, music and opera. Some offer snacks to accompany their tea selections, others do not. They may serve their teas in small teapots according to the traditional Chinese tea ceremony (Gong Fu ceremony), or with long-spout teapots dramatically twirled by athletic tea-servers more reminiscent of a martial arts expert.

Then there are teahouses that compliment their tea service with newspaper sellers, shoe polishing, ear-cleaning and even massage – all available while you are seated at your table drinking tea. There you can unwind from the fast pace and



pressures of modern society. Bring a chess board or mah-jong set. And for regular customers, the neighbourhood teahouse may even have a special shelf for you to store your favourite teacup.

Teahouses can be a place to rest, to meet friends (or a date), to holding family gatherings and make business deals.

Pastor Jiang, originally from China and now living in Chicago, USA, has opened a teahouse as a place for Chinese students to come. According to a ChinaSource Blog, Pastor Jiang opens his Living Water Tea House every Sunday for a lively discussion on a current topic or a discussion about Chinese art, photography or music. The tea house aims to give these international students the chance to develop their creative side. They are given the opportunity to just talk and express what they feel and

think, and to ask deep questions.

Tea houses are traditionally places to listen and Pastor Jiang said, “If you are willing to sip some tea, open your heart, and really listen to others it’s a very effective way to reach Asian students.”

Back in 2015 Pastor Jiang asked himself what he could do to help people find Jesus? His answer was “I can serve people by cooking and making tea”. His prayer that God would make it fruitful has been

answered. The teahouse currently has 60-70 regular attenders and claims around 15 baptisms a year.

However, the Chinese students’ time spent in America soon comes to an end and they must return home. They will then face a less open environment and one that has become extremely difficult for Christians. They need ongoing support and encouragement to hold on to the faith they have found.

IVF in Demand

IVF is becoming a booming business in China. But there are still long wait lists for fertility treatment as the number of facilities struggles to catch up with rapidly rising demand.

In January 2016 the government introduced in the universal two-child policy. The new policy, as expected, is presenting China with an initial “pile up” of babies, but also a sudden increase in demand for IVF facilities as older women try for a second child before their body clocks rule it out.

Last year, Liu Jiaen, who runs a private hospital in Beijing offering IVF services, told The Japan Times that the number of Chinese women coming to him for IVF rose by 20 percent following the relaxation of the family-planning policy.

He told them that prior to that, the



average age of his patients was around 35. Most of the women now are over 40 and some are even close to 50.

In modern society, Chinese women are opting to delay marriage and start families later, but fertility declines with

PRAYER POINTERS

Rightly Dividing the Gospel

Pray for the Church that they will hunger and thirst for His Word and will be faithful to live for the gospel.

Pray that the Church will be led by the Holy Spirit into all truth.

Thank God for Christian radio and other media platforms such as SD Cards that deliver Scripture and teaching into China in the face of censorship. Pray that these will continue to be funded and available to all China's language groups. Pray for new safe innovations for the future.

Rural Poverty Alleviation

Thank God for the opportunities that the Poverty Alleviation Through Relocation Schemes are creating.

Pray for those that fail to adjust to resettlement. In a form of reverse migration, some parents are returning to farms leaving grandparents and children in the townships for schooling and medical care.

Pray that relocated families will quickly find employment.

Pray that Christians within the resettlement communities will shine and bloom in their new locations.

The Tea House Servant

Thank God that He has blessed the work of Pastor Jiang and the Living Water Tea House ministry.

Pray that more people in the Mandarin Christian communities outside China will make opportunities to reach out to the Chinese students and diaspora in their land.

Pray that the returning students will receive support and encouragement to continue the race once back in China.

PRAYER POINTERS

IVF in Demand

Pray that China's strong family traditions will be treasured and respected in future Family Planning legislation.

Pray for the aging generation who will face retirement and hospital care with fewer workers and taxpayers to fund their needs.

Pray for those middle-aged wives who are now allowed a second child but are struggling to become pregnant.

The Baonuo (Baiku Yao)

Praise God for the beautiful mountains the Baonuo live in and for the musical and dance skills they have been blessed with. Pray that these people will prosper as they share it with outsiders and that will have greater contact with the outside world.

Pray that the Baonuo will have greater opportunity to hear and share the gospel.

Pray that God will provide people through social services and work projects to help the rural Baonuo adjust to their new urban lifestyle.

News from CCSM UK

Pray for peace for all Christians in China who face opposition to their faith.

Pray for families to know how to teach their children about God when the schools are denying that God exists and ridiculing faith in God

Pray that unbelievers will see something attractive about Christians that draws them to God.

Pray for all the Teams to be fully booked, so that they can serve, while the doors remain open



Chinese Church Support Ministries

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

age. Then, there are those who have sadly lost their firstborn, or who have married a second time and want to start a new family.

Younger women too are seeking the help of IVF for infertility problems. There are numerous studies that show women who previously have terminated pregnancies are more at-risk for certain diseases, like Pelvic Inflammatory Disease, that cause infertility or future miscarriages.

In 2016, the year of the policy change, China treated more than 40 million patients with fertility problems, and numbers continue to rise as assisted reproductive technology becomes more widely accepted. One estimate says that in just five years' time there will be around 1 million IVF babies a year born in China and numbers could further increase to match countries like Denmark where 10% of all babies are the outcome of IVF. However, a great proportion of Denmark's, and other country's, IVF babies are from single mothers or same sex couples. Yet, unlike Denmark, China

has not legalised gay marriage. Single or same sex couples travel offshore for an IVF baby, but the child is considered "illegitimate" in China. In early 2016, the Chinese State Council issued a new regulation that allowed parents to register "illegitimate" children to the hukou system using their birth certificate or a paternity testing certificate. But without a father on the child's birth certificate the child may not obtain a "hukou" — household registration certificate.

Foreign IVF clinics offer other enticements. For more traditional Chinese, the appeal of gender selection, not offered in China, makes the treatment worth the time and expense. Diagnostic testing to identify and eliminate embryos with a genetic disease is also offered by offshore clinics. This is also something that China has made a priority in its 5-year plan. In future Chinese IVF clinics will also offer genetic screening for intelligence.

Right now, China needs more babies. Between 2011 to 2018 the country's labour force shrank by 2.8% and predictions say it will continue to decline by almost a quarter in the next few decades putting enormous pressure on social structures as the population ages. In addition, the population is still skewed toward more men, so women will be spread thin in supporting family roles for the young and the elderly. China is planning today for the challenges ahead.





Photo: 简朴生活之旅 Flickr.com

The Baonuo (Baiku Yao)

China's Yao Minority includes many distinct groups with different customs and languages. One of these, the Baonuo, are commonly called Baiku Yao (White Pants Yao) by the Chinese because of the men's distinctive white trousers.

The Baonuo have a fascinating story around their fine-looking trousers: Legend says a neighbouring chief sent soldiers to wipe out the Baonuo. The heroic Baonuo leader, King Pan, led his troops against the invasion but they were driven back into the mountains, finding themselves trapped. The king had his trouser legs torn to shreds below the knees during the fighting and was mortally wounded. Just then, an old man showed them a path that would lead down the cliff to safety. The king was so happy he slapped his knees and his bleeding hands left bloody fingerprints on his trousers. The Baonuo commemorate him by wearing knee-length trousers with red stripes sewn on to resemble handprints.

The women wear fine blue banded skirts produced using indigo. Their black tops

have intricate square designs embroidered in silk on the back representing a legend whereby a Baonuo King's seal was stolen and the people tragically did not respond to his call to gather for battle during an invasion. It is also said to represent King Pan's agreement with the Chinese to release the Yao from having to pay tax.

The Yao celebrate their Pan Wang (King Pan) festival annually on the sixteenth day of the tenth lunar month. The festival celebrates the mythical origin story of the Yao people, and has evolved "into a happy holiday for the Yao to celebrate a good harvest and worship their ancestors."

The Baonuo say they were once cannibals. When someone died, the corpse was eaten. A small boy named Laga, who could not bear to see his mother eaten, suggested they hold a traditional bull-beheading ceremony instead. After that, at funerals "thirty or more brass drums are hung from a frame. The Baonuo consider their brass drums sacred. They are normally hidden away except for special occasions. An offering of wine, meat, rice and water



Relocation Scheme. In the last two years a township of around 2471 homes has been built and the scattered and isolated mountain village people have been moved from their generational homes to this new town. Their local customs and beautiful surroundings are being developed to earn money from tourism.

Illiteracy and semi-literacy among the Yao nationality stood at 40.6% in 2002. The new town provides a local school, childcare and medical centres.

Yao religion is a blend of Daoism, folk religion and a pinch of Buddhist belief. In their remote villages the Baonuo used to be afraid of outsiders. Several foreigners who visited a village in the mid-1980s were stoned to death. Baonuo gospel recordings were first produced in 1999. The missionary David Joannes shared the gospel with a few Baonuo but the great majority of Baonuo will never have heard of Jesus Christ.

is performed by the head of the family. After the drum beating a large water buffalo is beheaded."

The Baonuo have a rich culture of legends, music, dance and handcrafts. They have been labelled "a living fossil of humanity" by UNESCO. This culture is now being used to raise the Baonuo people above the poverty line. 13,500 Baonuo in Nandan County (of the total 42,000 Baonuo population) have been resettled as part of the Alleviating Poverty Through

News from CCSM UK



Happy
New Year!

I pray that you will have a fresh revelation of Jesus Christ this year that will be shared with your family, friends, fellow church members and neighbours – both near and far.

He (Jesus) answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind"; and, "Love your neighbour as yourself."

Luke 10:27

We can give thanks to God for all our workers still living and working in China. For the short-term teams that went

to serve, were kept safe and returned rejoicing. For the SD cards that were funded and so copied and distributed around China, providing Bibles and much needed Literature and training resources. For all the prayer that was given, and all the answers received. We can also give thanks that this Prayer Letter continues to inform and encourage prayer across the UK and around the world.

What can you do for Chinese Christians this year? Pray for them. Tell others about the struggles they face. Hold a church meeting focused on China, it's people, it's church and God's calling to China. Go on a team to serve and gather friends to pray and support you in this. Give financially to enable this Prayer Letter to continue, the SD Cards to be

distributed, and for medical work, care work and provision for the disadvantaged. Ask God if he wants you to go and serve in China.

In the December issue one article provided a report from the Intercession Team. This Team is an ideal way for you to exercise prayer, with others. To see for yourself what China is like – including the challenges and obstacles to the Gospel. How about asking your church if they want to send one, two, three people on the Intercession Team – and see what blessing you and your church receive from this venture.

We are greatly blessed and enjoy freedom to meet and worship God in the UK. Let us give thanks for this and continue to pray on a regular basis for our brothers and sisters in Christ in China.

Blessings

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