



# CHINESE CHURCH SUPPORT MINISTRIES

## CHINA PRAYER LETTER



**AUGUST 2020**

## Health Code App for Foreigners

Even though a normalcy has returned to most aspects of life in China after COVID-19, some residues of the pandemic's safety checks and controls remain in place and it seems people accept them as being here to stay.

For those that want to access public transport, hotels, shops, restaurants, supermarkets, residential compounds or other public locations, there are mandatory requirements to check temperatures and use health apps, or scan QR codes to prove travel history.

Many locations are also increasingly requiring use of 'health kit code' apps to demonstrate a person's health condition and travel history.



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

After their initial introduction, health apps were quickly updated to allow users to query the health status of young or elderly family members who could not use smartphones. Soon after, a version of the app came out allowing foreigners to also use the app by logging in with their passport. However, some foreigners could not register using a health app apparently because their English names were too long.

On July 1, 2020, China released a Health Code app designed for foreigners living within China and for international visitors. Officially called the 'Health Code Traveller Version,' the app, with its Alipay and WeChat Mini Apps, offers foreign travellers a convenient way to submit health information, such as travel history, COVID test results, and health symptoms.

This foreigner-specific version has the ability to recognize foreign names. All the user needs to do to register is enter their

passport number, scan a picture of their passport, and answer a few questions, which will include your whereabouts for the last 14 days and whether you've had any COVID-19 symptoms.

The Health Code Traveller Version app, and its mini programs, offer an English-language interface and the same color-code system as used by Chinese locals. Green means you are allowed to travel or enter public places, yellow means you need to isolate for 7 days and red requires 14 days of isolation.

Different cities and provinces issue their own codes, therefore in order to get that desirable 'green code' that says you are okay to travel in a particular region, you first need to apply for that location. You can apply from within your app but in some situations, it can take a day or two to be approved. In addition, some locations require travellers to undergo a COVID-19 test.

## Ngari Prefecture – In Transition

Shiquanhe is the largest city in the vast Ngari Prefecture which lies in Tibet's far west. Some may know of Shiquanhe by its English name "Ali". The Ngari prefecture covers a vast area (304,683 km<sup>2</sup>) but has a sparse

population of only 95,465. The climate is described as arid and windy, with a winter in Shiquanhe City commonly reaching minus 20°C (-4° F). The average altitude here is 4,500 meters (14,760 ft.) above sea level. Since 1993, a large portion of



Ngari Prefecture has been included in the Changtang Nature Reserve 羌塘国家级自然保护区, an area which, in its entirety, is nearly the size of Spain! The reserve has been expanded over time and was upgraded to a "National Protected Area" in April 2000 by the Chinese Government. It is currently listed as an IUCN Category: VI - Managed Resource Protected Area.

Conservation work in the reserve has been rewarded with an increase in Tibetan antelope, wild yak, wild ass, Himalayan blue sheep, Mongolian gazelle, snow

leopards, pika, Tibetan wolves, Turkestan lynx and Tibetan blue bears among other species. But Changtang Nature Reserve is now home to only a few Tibetan nomads and various park staff hired to prevent poaching.

In the last decade, this remote part of China has become significantly more accessible. An asphalt highway has been completed traversing Tibet from east to west. It brings an increase in economic opportunity. No longer is the journey from Lhasa in Eastern Tibet to Shiquanhe in the west, a bone-jarring,

# International Short-Term Teams

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teeth-shattering 3-4 day (nonstop) test of endurance in a 4-wheel drive vehicle. Now it only takes 20 hours, yet most travellers would opt to break up the journey, or rather simply take a two-hour flight from Lhasa - a civil airport was opened in 2010 at Gunsu (Kunsa) close to Shiquanhe.

From Shiquanhe, the G219 National Highway (the Tibet-Xinjiang Highway) continues north, passing through the Aksai Chin (territory disputed by India and China) and over spectacular mountains into Xinjiang Province where the road links with the Pakistan Friendship Highway, a vital component of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

China has invested heavily in building highspeed rail into Tibet's capital city, Lhasa from Qinghai, as well as a top-quality highway from Yunnan and a trade route to Kathmandu in neighbouring Nepal. The way is now paved for the

world to come to Tibet but the gates have not yet been thrown open. All foreigners must have permits to travel in Tibet and these must be applied for, on behalf of the travellers, by a tourist agency. They will need an Alien's Travel Permit, a Border Pass and a Military Permit as well.

Religion in Tibet suffers many restrictions, yet it still plays a large part in attracting tourists to the region. Mount Kailash, in Ngari Prefecture, is a mountain as yet unclimbed. It is considered sacred by Hindus, Buddhists and Jains. According to Hindu traditions immersion in one of two holy lakes south of Mount Kailas is thought to release people from their sins for a lifetime. Pilgrims who trek to the top of Dolma Pass are believed to undergo a symbolic death, entering the realm of the Lord of the Dead, to be born again as they reach the top of the pass.

There are no known Christians in the Ngari Prefecture, and currently there are few to no opportunities for them to hear.

## Ngari Tibetan Relocations

The people of north western Tibet's Ngari Prefecture are known as Ngari or Changtang (Northern Plain) Tibetans. With an average altitude of over 4500 metres, Ngari Prefecture is known as "the ridge of the roof of the world".

Almost all Ngari Tibetans were traditionally nomads, surviving as

yak herdsman in the cold and arid conditions. The land there is not suitable for arable farming so the nomads traded for items they could not obtain from their livestock or from hunting. Traditionally Buddhist monasteries also played a large part in society but during



the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) ten of the 13 monasteries in the region were demolished.

Over the last two decades the government has enacted a campaign across China to settle its millions of nomads, particularly from zones it has designated as fragile or overgrazed ecosystems. The remaining Ngari nomads and poor outlying communities have also been offered relocation under Xi Jinping's Poverty Alleviation scheme.

A high percentage of Ngari's rural population have been identified as living under China's extreme poverty line and therefore qualify for assistance. The aim is to give these citizens access to earthquake safe housing, roads, amenities, communications, health care and education. In 2018 in an interview on China's CGTN digital news, He Bin, an official from the Ngari Prefecture Development and Reform Commission, reported that 700 families were being relocated into the Kangle residential area in Shiquanhe City. The new homes were furnished, and families just needed to pay for utilities.

Kangle was just one of 30 planned relocation sites in the region. A total of 8,185 people from 2,225 families were expected to be relocated to these sites. Across wider Tibet Autonomous Region, the numbers moved to new homes under the Poverty Alleviation scheme comes to over a quarter of a million people. When they move, they are registered with a bank card so that any



payments allocated to the households are transparent and embezzlement is made very difficult. Those moved from their land for conservation reasons are offered eco-compensation for giving up their lands. Subsidised loans are also available to begin new enterprises.

According to official narratives, relocations are not forced on families. Norbu Dondrup, Tibet's Executive Vice Governor, explained that they have a large number of working groups and cadres working at grass roots level to "guide thought" and help the poor families in their decisions to move. He also said, "We also provide them with job opportunities depending on their capabilities and skills after receiving



training." State-owned factories have been opened in the region to help with this.

Living as nomads, these families

would not have had the benefits of city infrastructure, and their lives had been largely devoid of any technology or machinery. But as herders, they traditionally held a certain respect in Tibetan society and this respect can be diminished as they try to find work beside the more educated urban Tibetans. They find themselves needing to accept labouring, transport or unskilled service industry work.

The Ngari Tibetan language is spoken over a vast area of western Tibet, but as with many other areas in China, reports are reaching CCSM that schools are no longer teaching in the local language. This will have a profound affect on the culture of Tibetans in the future. But Chinese language skills and 15 years of free education (including 3 years of preschool) will greatly broaden options for this generation of Tibetan children. 1986, barely 16.1 percent of school-age children in Ngari were enrolled.

## Social Welfare stopped

Many religions have experienced ongoing persecution in China, but the intensity has deepened significantly in the last four years. The scope of oppression is continually broadening and now, even Taoism and Buddhism are experiencing widespread destruction of religious sites and artifacts. Their expressions of belief are coming further under the "guidance" of the Party.

This year folk religions are receiving similar treatment. Folk religions are pervasive in China and are unlikely to appear in surveys in China because they are not one of the five religions officially recognized by the government. However, they make up by far the largest group among the religions,



# PRAYER POINTERS

## Health Code App for Foreigners

Thank God for technology that can be used to help protect our senior citizens and more vulnerable in society.

Pray that travel will soon be returned to normal and that people will be free of the inconveniences of masks, health checkpoints and fear of illness.

Pray that Covid-19 will completely dissipate and that relations between Chinese and foreigners will be more than restored. Let God take what was meant for harm and use it to accomplish His purposes.

## Ngari Prefecture – In Transition

Give thanks that the precious flora and fauna in the Tibetan Plateau are receiving conservation attention.

Pray that God will open the doors for the gospel to be shared in this region and that the ears of the Tibetan people will be opened to hear.

Pray that there will be peace in this region, both among Ngari's various people groups and with the neighbouring countries.

Pray that the highways will indeed lead to greater prosperity for the Ngari people.

## Ngari Tibet Relocations

Thank God that all Ngari Tibetan children now have an opportunity to be educated.

Pray that the Ngari Tibetan families will be able to successfully adjust to the great changes they are experiencing.

Pray that Christian businesspeople will be drawn to this remote region and will bless the Ngari Tibetan people.

Pray that Ngari Tibetans will no longer be deprived of the true gospel message.



# PRAYER POINTERS

## Social Welfare stopped

Thank Jesus that he promises, "Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. "

Pray that God will provide abundantly for believers who are being penalised for their faith.

Pray that the church will be recognised by their love for one another.

Pray for the officials who are required to act on edicts that may be against their conscience.

## Eziza's Choice

Pray that people will come alongside Eziza, and others like her, to help comfort and support them.

Pray that all Eziza's children will know the love of their father.

Pray that God will minister deeply to this family and will bring restoration of all they have lost.

## The Long Walk

Thank the Lord for the concern and compassion shown for Ge from the Chinese netizens and from the truck driver.

Thank God that this incident has brought to light a very real problem. Pray that the right solution will be found.

Pray that the elderly and those unable to use smartphones will not be neglected as China becomes more and more digital.



**Chinese Church Support Ministries**

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with many adherents also practicing the state approved Buddhist or Tao beliefs.

Human rights watchdog, Bitter Winter, recently received news of edicts being sent out, at county and provincial levels, placing onus on village committees to demolish folk religion temples and to place these religions under their control. They reported that between April and early June, at least 100 Folk religion sites suffered crackdowns in Hebei, Henan, and Zhejiang provinces with buildings being demolished and temple artifacts and belongings being destroyed. The local officials and village committees were threatened that they must carry out the orders or lose party membership and their jobs.

Christians in China are by no means unaccustomed to this type of treatment. But the newest drive to extinguish Christianity in China is particularly heart breaking. On the 16th July, 2020, Bitter Winter reported that, "In April, the government of a town administered by Linfen, a prefecture-level city in the northern province of Shanxi, called officials from all villages under its jurisdiction for a meeting. The participants were ordered to remove crosses, religious symbols and images from the homes of people of faith who receive social welfare payments and replace them with portraits of Chairman Mao and President Xi Jinping. The officials were instructed to annul the subsidies to those who protest the order."

Other locations also appear to be



Church cross demolition in Zhejiang Province, July 2020 - picture China Aid

enacting this policy. A disabled Christian living in Jiangxi Province had their minimum living subsidy and monthly disability allowance similarly cancelled. Another account from Jiangxi described a Three-Self church member in her 80's who uttered, "Thank God" after receiving her monthly 200 RMB subsidy. She was removed from the government aid list. Another believer in Henan, a widow with two boys in her care, refused to sign a statement renouncing her faith. Her allowance was stopped. Another elderly woman in her 70's, also in Henan Province, had her living allowance and poverty alleviation subsidy cancelled after officials saw an image of a cross on her door.

## Eziza's Choice



Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, is home of the Uyghurs, and is three times the size of France. Since 2016, up to three million Uyghurs have been extra-judicially sentenced to "re-education".

Xinjiang is a key bridge between China and Europe in Beijing's new Silk Route, and in this might lie a clue to the roundups. Many Uyghurs long for their own homeland and look longingly on the other side of the border, at the 'stans' all of which have gained independence during the past 25 years. Uyghurs are predominantly Muslim and observe their religion with varying degrees of piety. Some fled China to join forces with ISIS in Syria, and although the numbers were very small, this has not endeared the Uyghur to the Communist Party and their countrymen, subsequently they are all tarred with the same brush in the eyes of an atheist government.

But nothing really explains the draconian drive to "sinicize". President Xi Jinping has made it his mission to

repress not only Islam, but every religion, with a severity and determination not seen since Mao. Not only mosques, but churches and Buddhist temples have been torn down throughout China, leaders imprisoned and congregations forced to recite atheist slogans and propaganda as they worship.

All Uyghurs were deprived of their passports and travel rights in 2016, and those who managed to flee, did so via Muslim countries which quickly fell under Beijing's spell. Orders to repatriate Uyghurs were carried out brutally, often separating families and children. Those who escaped, fled to third countries overland or with false passports, some scooping up abandoned children as they went.

Many are now in Turkey or sympathetic European countries, traumatised, depressed, rootless and stateless. They talk incessantly about the homeland, the children, wives and husbands they have left behind and with whom they can no longer communicate for fear

of the danger it would bring on their relatives. Knowing someone in Turkey, or one of any of the 26 banned countries for Uyghurs, is enough to earn a spell in a camp; but communicating with them could put you in prison for life.

Eziza, now living with 50,000 other Uyghurs in Istanbul, made a heart-breaking "Sophie's Choice" when she fled Xinjiang in 2018, after her husband was rounded up. She knew she would be next. Eziza fled with her two daughters who still had passports but was forced to leave her seven-year-old, who had no passport, with neighbours. Her daughter was soon taken by the government to an orphanage. She knows she will never see her, or her husband, again and sits in agony fingering the one tiny picture that she has left of her little girl. All photos and videos disappeared from her phone after her number was requisitioned back in the homeland.

The heartbreak for Eziza is endless, but she is not alone. This is life for most Uyghur exiles severed from their roots and their lifelines.

## The Long Walk

In late June, in the middle of the night, a lorry driver spotted an elderly man walking along the side of the mountain highway. The man signalled to him and the kindly truckee, Mr Liu, stopped. Soon he had discovered the man's sad plight...

Chinese government oppression continues apace in Xinjiang. Since 2016, up to three million Uyghurs have been extra-judicially sentenced to "re-education".

Of those who have been released, the majority have been sent to factories to make clothing or components for big name Western companies. Some of these companies knowingly employ Uyghur slave labour and many are as yet unaware.

With the bio data of every single Uyghur now on a data base, human rights activists and of course the entire Uyghur diaspora, fear for the safety of their families and friends at the hands of a government that has had no qualms about requisitioning the organs of political prisoners.

For Eziza, and thousands like her, the torment continues and there appears no end in sight.



smartphone, and therefore did not have the government-required health app to prove he was Covid-19 free. Without this he was not allowed on public transport. He had no children to help him, so he set out to walk the distance.

The journey would take a car 10½ hours to travel, but the old man, whose surname was Ge, had nearly completed the 950-kilometre (590 mile) journey on foot. He had been walking for half a month.

The truck driver drove the man to a noodle shop for a meal and then offered to drive him to his relative's residence. But the gate of the food market where they lived was locked. The elderly man did not want to cause the driver any more trouble, so he declined his offer to stay at his house and his offer to help check into a hotel.

Rather he insisted he would sleep in a nearby



park. Mr Liu had no choice but to leave him there after giving his phone number.

Ge's saga became the topic of much discussion across China after the driver uploaded video footage of the meeting to social media. Tens of millions saw his story and many expressed concerns for the elderly and those like Ge who were unable to afford or use a smartphone. His story brought to light the very real struggle elderly have with technology and the need for a workable solution, especially as health apps look to have become part of the new normal.

As for Ge...a neighbour recognised him from the social media video and was happy to inform netizens that the traveller had been picked up by his family from a local police station and returned to his home in Anhui.



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