



# CHINESE CHURCH SUPPORT MINISTRIES

## CHINA PRAYER LETTER



DECEMBER 2020

## Swedish Mission in China (Part 1)

The Swedish nation has played a significant role in bringing the gospel to the people of China. But the precious message early Swedish missionaries conveyed was coupled with personal sacrifice, hardship and loss. During the terrible period of the Boxer Rebellion, in 1900, Hudson Taylor counted 188 Christian missionaries that lost their lives, and one third of these were Swedes. They included 40 adults and 16 children.

Swedes were also notable for their missions among the Muslim Turkic Uyghur people in Xinjiang Province (called East Turkestan at the time). They risked their lives on the perilous mountain journey into the region, and endured numerous violent attacks to their mission stations, workers and converts. They persisted to open orphanages, schools, hospitals and translate scripture. Over two hundred Uyghur accepted the message of salvation before the Swedes were forced to leave in 1930.



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It was a Swedish man named Erik Folke who was a pioneering missionary to the Shanxi Province. Folke left his hometown, Gothenburg, and travelled to study language in London before intending to make his way to Shanghai. He had no pre-arranged employment in China, but while in the UK he met a woman who had been sensing God's prompting to support a missionary. She became a generous sponsor of Folke's work and a great help in establishing the mission.



He arrived in China in 1887 and with assistance from the China Inland Mission he decided to settle in Yuncheng in the south of Shanxi Province where he opened an opium shelter. Two years later, the first Chinese believer at Yuncheng was baptised. The Swedish Mission in China (瑞华会 Svenska Missionen i Kina, (SMK)) was formed in 1888 and took the role of fundraising, promoting and praying for the work from Sweden.

Over time other missionaries were sent to join Folke and by the turn of the century, there were 30 SMK missionaries working in China with 74 supporters back in Sweden. The work expanded

into the Shaanxi and Henan Provinces and more opium shelters were built. Numerous Chinese gained both Christ and freedom from addiction through these asylums. The mission opened schools and branched into medical work.

In 1898, smouldering anti-foreigner sentiment, stoked by political bullying from foreign imperial powers and a severe drought, violently erupted as the Boxer Rebellion. While lives were being lost in the north, the SMK missionaries were able to flee to the coast, some even warned and assisted by local authorities. Thankfully, none of the SMK missionaries were among the slain and they were soon able to return to their stations. However, many Swedish, British and American missionaries working with other mission organisations, such as the China Inland Mission, were not so fortunate. Neither were many Chinese converts.

The SMK mission stations oftentimes became a place of refuge for those fleeing fighting during the 1911 demise of the Manchurian Qing dynasty. And in fact, their seminary was converted to a hospital to serve the wounded.



The Swedish Mission in China was a very successful mission. They nurtured and trained the churches in their diocese to stand on their own feet, teaching them to take on the responsibility of the work themselves and not to lean on the foreigners. They respected the concept of a uniquely Chinese church.

# Swedish Mission in China (Part 2)



The bloodshed of the Boxer Rebellion seemed to increase the awareness of foreign churches to the multitudes in China who were still waiting to hear the gospel. It was on the heels of that anxious time, in 1903, that the missionary Verner Wester emigrated to China and began his life at the Swedish Mission to China's Yuncheng station. Arriving so soon after the Boxer Rebellion, he would have known well the risks, animosity, and hardships he was likely to face. And indeed, during his lifetime he did experience great loss. Four children and both his wives succumbed to diseases such as typhus, meningitis and dysentery. His one surviving son was sent back to his grandparents in Sweden. Verner was largely separated from him until a school was built for Swedish mission children in China. This now meant that finally Father and son could

be together at least in the holidays. Later, further unrest saw them separated again and the beloved son sent back to Sweden.

Verner lived his life for Christ and the Chinese people, and he and his family were buried in a plot he purchased for them at Heizhou, south of Yuncheng, in their adopted homeland. Like many other missionaries that packed their belongings in a casket for their trip to China, they committed themselves to long term service, without looking back. Verner Wester's experiences have been documented in a book titled, "My Grandfather in China" by Mick Lidbeck. The book has been published in Chinese and Swedish. It recounts that at the end of Verner's first year in China there were 34 missionaries in the diocese and two local co-worker evangelists. There were 20 women who taught the Bible. There were

## International Short-Term Teams

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234 members in the church, 80 of whom were baptized that year, and there were 61 students in the school.

By 1919 members had grown to 1189 people in Shaanxi Province, 578 people in Henan Province, 521 people in Shanxi Province. ChinaAid reported that by the time the Swedes left China there were over 60 churches and 6000 members.

Verner worked in the roles of a pastor, a preacher and evangelist, and oversaw the construction of many buildings. In addition to the churches and a seminary, the mission operated opium shelters, free hospitals and schools. In Henan, the mission cared for abandoned children and pregnant women, work that later followed up with job training programs.

By 1911 there were eight boys' schools and five girls' schools in Yuncheng with 328 students. During the early 1920's terrible famine, a product of the nation's unrest, caused widespread suffering. At a time when families were selling wives and daughters rather than starve, the mission organised community kitchens to feed rice porridge to the



public. Verner worked with the government, village leaders and reliable believers to provide relief in over 500 villages, assessing the needs of more than 160,000 people. In 1924 terrible floods destroyed 48 villages and swept through the town. Verner was again commissioned with assessing the relief needs.

Through willingness to suffer hostility and hardship, Verner and the other SMK missionaries made a significant difference to the lives of a great many Chinese. So, the question remains, "Was the hardship worth it?"

At the heart of the ministry was not a gospel of works, prosperity, or social justice. The labour and service of Verner Wester and the other mission workers were just tools and by-products of the real message they brought; being that Jesus also gave His life in our stead, to save us from judgement on the last day. Perhaps this is why so many of the early Chinese believers were opium addicts and those that really knew about bondage, suffering and judgement.

The number of believers greatly multiplied during Verner Wester's time in China. Illness took him in 1930 and was laid to rest next to his 6 family members in Heizhou Cemetery. 800 people attended his funeral.

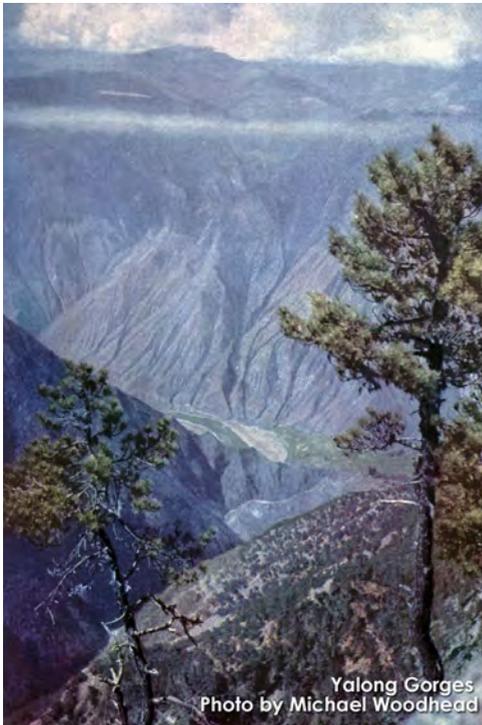


## Zhaba

The Zhaba people have lived for centuries in the high and

secluded river canyons of the Hengduan Mountains some 450 kilometres west of Sichuan's capital city Chengdu. The majority reside in the counties of Daofu and Yajiang.

Officially, they are listed under the



Yalong Gorges  
Photo by Michael Woodhead

Tibetan Minority group, but they speak a Qiangic language distinct from their Khampa Tibetan neighbours. They call themselves “Buozi”. Without having a written language the story of how they came to live in this remote location has been given to speculation and theories.

Although their dress and customs set them apart, it is their marriage conventions that have most defined them.

Zhaba men practice what is known as “walking marriage”. When their affections are captured by a woman they meet, perhaps at a local market or a festival day, they will attempt to snatch a token from her. This may be a scarf, a trinket or an item of jewellery. If the man is not to her liking, she will run away from him, or ask for the item back. But, if he finds favour with her, she will leave her window open for him that night so he can return it in person.

Climbing in the window of a Zhaba house is a challenge in itself. The sturdy houses, made of rubble, are part house and part tower, and the tower part can be 3-5 stories high. As the residents live in the upper story, “climbing the house” at night can be quite strenuous and requires a certain level of climbing skill. If the

man, who might have walked many miles to get to the house, makes it through the window, the “marriage” can begin. The next time, he may enter through the door.

In the morning the man leaves and returns to his mother’s house. He does not live with his chosen partner and takes no part in raising his own children. A Zhaba household is matriarchal. It is headed by the mother and she and her daughters raise the children in addition to working in the fields. The men take an “uncle” role in their mother’s house. They decide on major family matters, outside affairs and help raise their sister’s children.

Lifelong commitment is not a feature of a “walking marriage” which can be amicably terminated whenever the parties decide. But there are rules – partners cannot be with a blood relative to three generations, and men who enter a window without a token will face the wrath of the community.

The lack of a stable and faithful family unit has its dangers. A 1950s survey of the Sichuan’s Garze Province found the rate of venereal disease was 40% among the peasant areas and 50.7% among the pasture areas.

Isobel Kuhn, a 20th century missionary to the nearby Lisu people in Yunnan, said, “I have been a missionary for 27 years, but never have I met a heathen tribesman who was looking for salvation...They

don’t know enough to reach out a hand for heavenly aid. Their eyes look not up but down – down on the earth and upon their bodily appetites.”

But thanks to Isobel and a handful of other missionaries, over half the Lisu people in China follow the Lord today. No workers are known to have lived among the Zhaba, whose beliefs go back to the pre-Buddhist Bon religion. According to Paul Hattaway, in his book ‘Operation China’ published in 2000, there are no known Christians among the Zhaba.

This year, the lives of the Zhaba are being shaken. The Yalong River Basin where they reside is ideal for hydroelectric projects and a large portion of the Zhaba community will soon be underwater. In October, the residents were relocated and this November the dam gates are to be closed for the water to rise.

Walking marriages are also passing away. Children born to parents without marriage certificates invoke heavy fines and are not permitted “hukou,” the all-important household registration document that gives access to health care and schooling. Some get around this by paying strangers or friends to apply for a marriage certificate with them. But increasingly, exposure to the outside world has Zhaba women desiring the advantages of a monogamous unit; a husband’s commitment and assets of their own.

# PRAYER POINTERS

DECEMBER 2020

## Swedish Mission In China - Part 1

Praise God that He prompted Erik Folke and other Christian pioneers like him to come to China, furnishing them with courage and commitment.

Pray that the church in China and around the world will be granted courage and commitment to share the gospel as the days get darker.

Pray that God will direct CCSM and other mission organisations in how to work together with the Chinese Church to reach the millions that still do not know the covenant Jesus has to offer them.

## Swedish Mission In China - Part 2

Thank God for people with the courage, faith and commitment to bring God's message to the Chinese.

Pray that the Lord will continue to build his church, protecting the next generation from gospels other than preached in the Bible.

Ask God that the Chinese will be able to send out missionaries to other lands with a complete and unadulterated gospel.

## Zhaba

Praise God that His ways are higher than our ways and that He is working out a wonderful plan. Although change can be difficult it can bring new opportunities, times of reflection and fresh starts.

Thank God for the opportunities that the hydroelectric dams are bringing to the region.

Pray for divine connections and special friendships as Zhaba families are relocated.

Pray that they will come to understand the need to "reach out their hand for heavenly aid".

Cut out this note and slip it into your Bible to help you remember the December prayer topics for China

# PRAYER POINTERS

## China's Relationship with India

Pray for wisdom for both the Indian and Chinese leaderships in their handling of relationships with each other.

Pray for both of these great nations, India and China, to find a fruitful and productive role as superpowers, especially in the region.

Pray for the soldiers involved on both sides in the stand-off on the Line of Actual Control, as they face very difficult conditions in the extreme cold of winter, that Christians amongst them might be able to bring their fellow soldiers to faith and hope in Jesus Christ.

## HK Security Law, Everywhere

Pray that students from Hong Kong and China attending foreign universities will be discipled in The Way, The Truth and The Life.

Praise God because His surveillance is far above that of any worldly power. He sees into the heart and always knows where to find us.

Pray that Christ's family in Hong Kong will be able to walk in the shoes of the Gospel of Peace.

Pray that the Lord will help the Chinese and Hong Kong governments to maintain peace in Hong Kong.



**Chinese Church Support Ministries**

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the people of China

# China's Relationship with India

China and India are two of the major regional powers in Asia. They are the two most populous countries and among the fastest growing major economies in the world. Growth in diplomatic and economic influence has increased the significance of their bilateral relationship. The modern relationship between China and India began in 1950 when India was among the first countries to end formal ties with the Republic of China (Taiwan) and recognise the People's Republic of China as the government of Mainland China.

But recent events have caused a recalibration between the two super-powers. The most obvious evidence of that is the Line of Actual Control (LAC), which is a notional demarcation line that separates Indian-controlled territory from Chinese-controlled territory in the Sino-Indian border dispute. The issue is a massive one - the entire disputed Sino-Indian border including the western Line of Actual Control is 4,056 km long. In June of this year 20 Indian troops, including a commanding colonel, were killed in hand-to-hand combat between Indian and Chinese troops in Galwan Valley along the LAC. India and China



have each now stationed tens of thousands of troops – backed by artillery, tanks and fighter jets – in the region since the June battle, despite several rounds of talks. Analysts say both sides are digging in for a long, hard winter showdown.

Following the Galwan Valley clash, there were renewed calls across India to boycott Chinese goods. On 29 June, the Indian government banned 59 widely-used Chinese mobile phone and desktop applications. On 19 August, Times of India reported that the ministry of external affairs of India has been told that visas for Chinese businessmen, academics, industry experts, and advocacy groups will need prior security clearance. That is a major change given China's significant involvement in India's technological and pharmaceutical companies. China can be expected to roll out reciprocal measures.

Additionally, India remains

concerned about China's strong strategic bilateral relations with Pakistan, and China's funding of separatist groups in Northeast India, while China has expressed concerns about Indian military and economic activities in the disputed South China Sea.

India is now seeking closer security ties with other countries who are also wary of China's growing military power. Some of the Indian government's recent strategic decisions may be an indication of a wholesale policy change towards Beijing. For a long time, India tended to appease China by taking a sensitive and cautious approach. Now India is considering stronger ties with the US. There was also a recent surprise announcement that

India would expand its trilateral naval exercises with the United States and Japan to include Australia (the group of 4 nations known as the Quad). That action is unusual given Australia's current highly confrontational relationship with China. It was also reported that India was holding high-level defence and diplomatic dialogue with the US.

Experts said, "the winds of policy change might be blowing in New Delhi".

(Article by [www.fieldpartner.org](http://www.fieldpartner.org)  
Sources: Wikipedia; South China Morning Post; ThePress)





## Hong Kong Security Law, Everywhere

It has restored order to Hong Kong but there remain grave concerns about Hong Kong's Security Law. Anyone in the world, no matter which passport you hold, or what nation you call home, could find themselves impacted by it.

Under this law, crimes of secession, subversion, terrorism and collusion with foreign forces are punishable by a maximum sentence of life in prison. If you think that these crimes are committed only by people with violent tendencies or by people hoping to overturn the government then think again. These charges are frequently used in China against people who speak up against religious persecution or social injustice. As in the mainland, the concern about the Hong Kong law is that the definition of the terms above are extremely broad. What exactly constitutes a crime is highly subjective and wide open to misuse.

The Hong Kong security law is policed by the 'Office for Safeguarding National Security'. This body is controlled from Beijing and has been likened to the KGB. The law gives it power to monitor and 'manage' any individual or organisation under suspicion either inside or outside of Hong Kong whether a national or not. Just how they will 'manage' and 'monitor' is open to conjecture.

The law came into force on June 30, 2020 and is not retrospective.

Hong Kong students at foreign universities are now fearful to comment on political or social justice issues that could offend China. And the universities themselves, are also nervous. Many acquire a large part of their revenue from Hong Kong and Chinese students. Universities are now reviewing their courses and

self-censoring. They have an obligation to keep their students safe, and now students who voice or write anything that could be interpreted as ‘provoking hatred’ toward the governments of Hong Kong or China have broken this law. Likewise, behaviour that could be “disrupting” to China’s laws and policies is also illegal. On returning home they could face prosecution and in "complex", "serious" or "difficult" cases could even face trial in China itself.

Due to the law’s vagueness, faculty members are confused as to what topics are safe to cover and what are not. The general consensus is to err on the side of caution when writing course material, guiding group discussions and instructing students on etiquette or safe terminology.

Hong Kong students have expressed worries over who will see their work if it is submitted online.

Some universities have banned recording of seminars and are

allowing students to submit their work anonymously. Other unis intend to keep Hong Kong students separate from Chinese students who could potentially inform on comments they deemed anti-government.

This Law will undoubtedly mute any robust debates of sensitive issues that would help students, from both the East and West, form well-rounded, critical and informed opinions. Freedoms of speech and expression, ideals esteemed in western universities, are kowtowing to China. They have taken a serious blow.

Surrender of Fugitive Offenders agreements (elsewhere called extradition laws) are still in place between Hong Kong and Indonesia, Korea, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Philippines, Portugal, Singapore, Czechia and India. Travel to these nations for a Hong Kong pro-democracy activist would not be advised! A number of other nations have revoked or suspended their agreements with Hong Kong.



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