



# CHINESE CHURCH SUPPORT MINISTRIES

## CHINA PRAYER LETTER

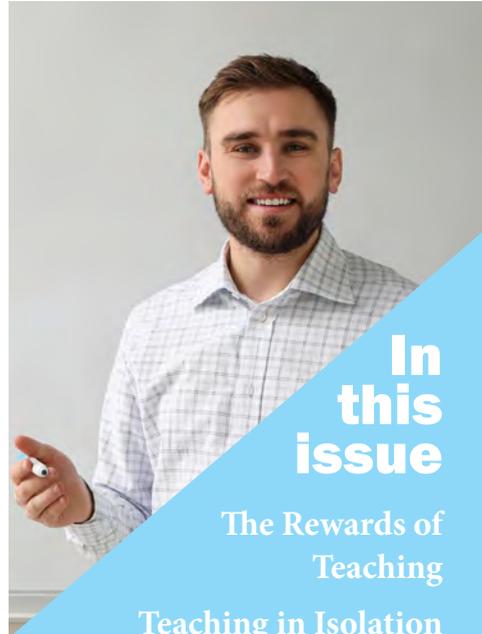


JANUARY 2021

## The Rewards of Teaching

Generally, teaching in China allows for a comfortable, but by no means opulent, lifestyle. The pay for a foreign native English-speaking teacher working in China may be slightly more than a Chinese teacher would make, but those that send money back to their homelands are likely to be faced with exchange rates not in their favour. Moreover, a teacher may need to take on extra work to be able to realise their holiday and weekend travel aspirations.

If it's not for the money, then why do English teachers choose China? Some go for the opportunity to experience new places and cultures, some go for adventure and challenge, others go because they have friends living there. Then there are those who want to immerse themselves in the language and gain understanding of the culture, possibly as a step in career building. And, of course, there are individuals that are simply attracted by beautiful women



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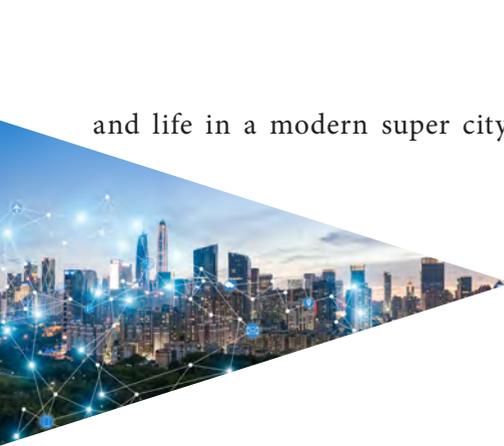
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Seeking to serve, strengthen and support the church and the people of China



and life in a modern super city.

All of the reasons above have one thing in common. They seek their rewards outside the classroom. But at the heart of every truly great teacher is genuine concern for each young life in their schoolroom. One English language teacher, who we will give the pseudonym 'John', explained:

“The joy of teaching derives not from the paycheque at the end of the month, but from the shaping and moulding of young minds, by guiding them through crafted lessons to awaken their creative side, to question the status quo, to encourage them to seek, to learn how to think, and to speak with confidence, regardless of whether their grammar is correct, but for the simple joy of communicating with someone from a distant part of the world.

Christian teachers, even though silenced about their faith in China's education system, have an important role that goes beyond textbook learning. As one of the 2.3 billion\* Christians worldwide they have the dual role of representing both Christianity and the

West. It's possible the teacher may be the first Christian or westerner a student has come to know. They are a human interface of cultures in a modern world being smashed together by globalism and technology. Quite a responsibility!

John sees it like this:

“It's my view that guided exposure to the English language and culture via a Western Christian teacher acts as a stimulus and role model for these aspirant young adults seeking to forge their own identity in a society vastly different from that which their parents inhabited.”

Teaching can be an emotional rollercoaster. John admitted, “Saying goodbye at the end of the year is hard - but seeing those ex-students continue on their own, like fledglings that have flown the nest, winning awards in public speaking competitions, and acquiring their dream job because of their improved confidence, is the enduring reward.”

He added, “The other less-known rewards are from providing a listening ear to young students (via WeChat) who are grappling with feelings of inadequacy and sense of identity. These, and other opportunities like them, provide a natural fairway to share my faith, give advice and encourage.”

(\*Pew Research estimate)

# Teaching in Isolation



The COVID lockdown commenced on Chinese New Year, January 26th 2020, and for the first two weeks we (the residents of my complex) underwent strict egress control, with mandatory mask-wearing and spraying with so-called disinfectant. Supermarkets took a big hit the first few days as people stocked up, but soon returned to normal. Every citizen in the country had to download a QR code to their smartphone, making our movements trackable; without it, admission to public transport, and public buildings was impossible.

Friends and colleagues who had gone home for the winter vacation in January were unable to return, so loneliness became the norm for the next 8-months. Schools and colleges suspended classes until the end of September and taught online. Before start-up, I

felt adrift, without purpose. My only communication with people was thus via the internet window, and brief encounters with a cashier at the supermarket.

Solitude has never bothered me; in fact, I relish it and found myself spending many hours in devotional readings, exploring Christian websites, listening to sermons and studying the Word. The enforced isolation led to times of increased prayer and sensing the presence of the Lord in a deeper way. However, the Book tells us that man was not meant to be alone (Genesis 2:18). I missed face-face meetings with friends, to eat with and chat to them. Likewise, I missed my students, not being able to interact with them and serve out my calling.

Teaching English online works just fine if you have a small number of students

## International Short-Term Teams

Email CCSM at [teams@amccsm.org](mailto:teams@amccsm.org) to find out what we have on offer.

and  
are able  
to see their  
faces, and they yours.

My classes comprised of approximately 30 students. I used the Zoom platform to teach as all the setup instructions were in English, and it offers chatrooms where one can divide the students into smaller groups for discussions. However, when the teacher is conversing with one group, the other groups are unobserved....

Most students joined the zoom sessions from their smartphones, via wifi, so communications were dependent on their (and my) wifi signal. Some days, the session dropped out several times and had to be restarted, which was frustrating and time consuming. Because the students were all on wifi, they did not have their cameras on, so I was unable to see them (it uses more bandwidth), and they were only required to switch on their microphones to answer questions. Unless I asked some of them directly, I would never hear a word from them the entire session. Of those who responded to questions, some were forced to type (text) because they lived close to an area where noisy (disruptive) roadworks created too much background noise for them to convert via their microphones - and that noise would obviously interfere with our lesson.

I was aware that some students were otherwise preoccupied during the lesson,

either watching a movie or engaged in other activities in their homes.

The only students who benefited I would say, were those whose language ability was in the top 10%. The weaker students 'hid' in the crowd never venturing to participate, but merely showed up for the lesson to attain an attendance grade.

The workload also intensified. All my previously prepared lessons had to be modified for teaching online, plus I took it upon myself to post a preview of each lesson in a group-chat, that highlighted all the keywords, along with all the discussion questions we would be working through during the lesson. And, I had 20-hours per week of these classes, sometimes with classes running consecutively, with no time for a breather.

Was I glad when it was over? You bet. I learned a great deal: about the technology, about preparing online lessons and about patience!

Would I want to do it again? No way.

One cannot correct pronunciation, or interact in any meaningful way with a student who is having issues, and there is no way they would express their distress in a group situation such as we had. I'm overjoyed to be back in the classroom again, face-to-face, mask-less, invigorated, and thankful to be doing something I enjoy.

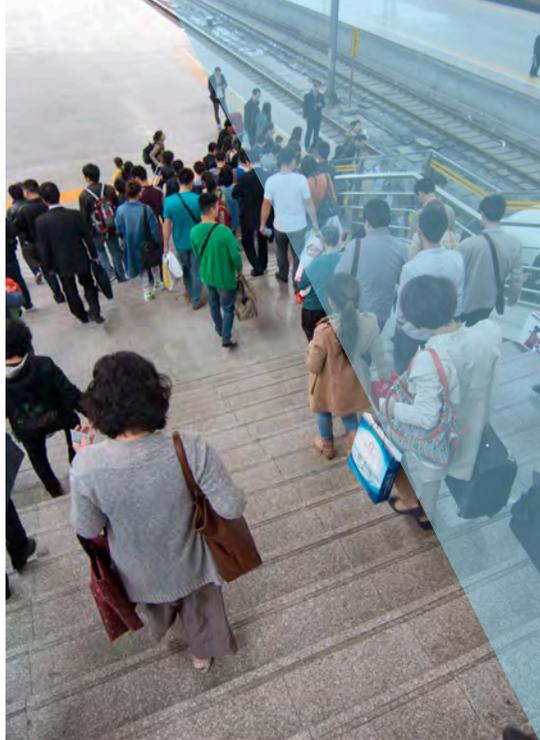
# Where are they now?

Restrictions due to Covid-19 have given me time to reflect on the things I have seen God do in my life over my past 20 years as a helper with Chinese Church Support Ministries (CCSM), and on the many Chinese believers and Pastors I have had the privilege to meet and engage with.

I would like to tell you of one memory that left a deep impression in my heart, affirming to me the importance of the work of CCSM.

I was leading a courier team in China, carrying much needed Christian books and Bibles to house church leaders in central China. We had collected about 400 bibles on this occasion for distribution at 5 different locations. This memory took place at our second 'stop'. We were to meet a pastor of a medium sized house church (about 200 members in total). I met him in the hotel lobby and asked if he had travelled far, he told me he had come on a train journey of 8 hours. I then brought him to my room, where a team of about 10 people were waiting to meet him. We had prepared 2 bags of Bibles to give to him. They were nothing special just Chinese Union Bibles with very basic plastic covers. We had them ready for delivery in 'Rice Bags'.

I asked him to be seated and explained that we were here to give him some gifts.



A team member passed over one of the bags we had prepared -containing about 50 bibles. As he looked into the bag, I could see his eyes begin to water and then we could all see tears coming from them, so I asked him if we had upset him in anyway. He replied by saying...

“The tears you see are tears of joy. I have never seen so many bibles in one place all my life. These 2 bags of bibles will totally transform the life of my church.” He said they were very short of bibles and had no means of buying any. They had one bible for every 40 members of his church. The situation was so bad that they let people have one of these copies for two weeks at a time, during which time they set about copying by hand portions of the scriptures so they could -in the long term -have

their own copy of the New Testament.”

Then he said he had a gift for me too. He pulled 2 notebooks out of his bag that looked like school exercise books and gave them to me. ‘These are for you’ he said. They were handwritten copies of 1 Corinthians and Mark’s Gospel. These were two that he had personally copied but had brought them with him to give to me so that I could show the church in the west how desperate some churches in China were for the Word of God.

I wished a hole would open up and swallow me, I was thinking of my ‘bible shelf’ at home with about 15 bibles, many different translations, some I hadn’t touched in months and here before me was a man who had painstakingly hand-copied 2 books of the New Testament so he could one day own his own full New Testament. I think it is fair to say that

there was not a dry eye in the room. We prayed for him and his Church and he left the room praising God for the work we had done to help him and the people he served. He also left the room late at night facing his 8-hour train ride home.

I knew after this incident, just how important the work of CCSM was, and I decided that I would strive to serve with them as long as God gave me breath. Today, rather than books, CCSM provide a MicroSD card with an android app on it that holds far more resources than we could have possible carried in those early days. And like the ‘Rice Bags’, each has the power to totally transform the life of a church.

I often think of this pastor, his church and the countless other leaders and pastors I encountered on my many trips into China and wonder, “Where are they now”?

## CCSM Report From the Field



S o m e  
C C S M

colleagues who were  
out of China when Covid hit

have been able to return to their work. For those who weathered the storm on the Mainland, life has slowly returned to “normal.” One teacher reported that it was a huge relief to be back in the classroom after 8 long, lonely months

in a tiny apartment. Others who await clearance to return have found other temporary work to put food on the table but with their hearts and thoughts in China, this is a tough time for them.

For those who teach, the resumption of physical classes has been a real lift. There is less opportunity these days to speak about the reason for our hope, but Christians have influence even when there are restrictions on what

# PRAYER POINTERS

## The Rewards Of Teaching

Thank God for the people He has placed in our lives who have sown good seed and encouraged us.

Pray that the Lord will give His workers in China gifts of wisdom, discernment, and knowledge.

Pray for ability to establish strong foundations in the lives of young people and opportunity to show them on the right path.

## Teaching in Isolation

Praise God that He places special people to walk alongside us.

Praise God that He promises to never leave us or forsake us.

Pray that the Father will encourage, strengthen, protect and lead his teachers in China.

Pray that the Father will be glorified through the witness of their lives.

Pray that those who call on the Lord will have someone to walk alongside them.

## Where Are They Now?

Pray for more leaders and men of God like the 'Rice Bag' pastor, who treasure the Word of God so highly.

Ask the Father to bless each MicroSD resource card and multiply it. Pray that they reach the right hands.

Pray that the Chinese church will continue to be able to access the true and complete Word of God and sound teaching.

Pray for the literature work of CCSM – for God's leadership, direction, and protection.

Pray for those who work with, teach, and mentor upcoming church leaders. May God protect and bless their work of discipleship.

# PRAYER POINTERS

## CCSM Report From the Field

Thank God for periods of shaking and isolation that deepen our relationship with Him.

Pray that our co-workers in the Mercy programmes will be able to meet not just the physical needs of the children in their care, but that they will also be able to grow those in their spiritual care.

Pray for deepening relationship and opportunities to sow good seed, life and truth.

## News and Insights in Brief

Pray for Chinese people who are seeking freedom, acceptance, security and prosperity. Pray they will be granted the opportunity to find these things in Christ.

Thank the Lord that despite a rapidly changing world, we have peace and a sure inheritance in Him. "LORD, you alone are my portion and my cup; you make my lot secure" (Psalm 16:5, NIV).

Pray for those that are overwhelmed by the rapid changes. Pray that the Lord will draw His people into that quiet place, grant them rest and allow them to see His glory.

Pray that the Lord will lead His Chinese family as they daily work out the great commission.

## News From CCSM UK

Pray for God to be revealed to many more people across China, and that the antagonism towards Christians will actually lead many to seek Jesus.

Pray for clear guidance about travelling to China, re-starting Teams and enabling those who work in China to return.

Pray that the turmoil of 2020 will encourage believers to re-evaluate their priorities in life and that this will lead to increased service abroad including China.

Thank God for his faithfulness and all the answered prayer and finance given for his work.



**Chinese Church Support Ministries**

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



they can say. They are often role models and many of our workers report that some students stay in touch and share their lives with them long after they have left school to enter the workforce.

One teacher recently received a surprise boost. A former student had successfully applied for a high-level job after our teacher had provided extensive online coaching and interview practice.

The resumption of classes has meant the return of other activities such as Speech competitions and English Corners – all valued opportunities to speak into student’s lives.

Other workers involved in various businesses have been busy as local tourism has increased and the economy continues to recover. One long serving family has struggled through the loss of many friends who for various reasons have had to return home. Loneliness remains a key issue for all of those who

serve away from home. This family remain focused on their key priority –in their own words, “our heart is that God’s light will shine and blind eyes be open.”

For others in China, involved in mercy work, there remain ongoing challenges. Without visits from helping hands and the assistance they have enjoyed in the past, staff must shoulder all the work without a break. In fact, in one programme the staff must stay fulltime with those in their care as Covid restrictions still do not allow them to return to their own homes. Other programmes have seen a return to varying degrees of normalcy. For example, a programme with special needs children and young adults has been able to resume meeting together for craft and other activities. Others continue to do on-line programmes. In a more remote part of the country, our colleagues are providing the most basic of needs with daily meals for students. As is always the case they too pray daily for the salvation of the young people who benefit from their love and care. One worker wrote:

“Please pray for us as we share the love of Christ through our lives.” Covid has only increased the needs of vulnerable children and youth and we praise God that people continue to step up to help and financially support these life-enriching works.

God’s work continues in China and we are privileged that CCSM has a role to play no matter what is going on around us. *Photos: Ken Marshall, Flickr.com*



# News and Insights In Brief

- On November 1st 2020, China began the two-month process of collecting population data for the 7th national census. With nearly one fifth of all humanity to survey, this is quite an undertaking. For the first time, people's ID numbers will be collected, and respondents are being asked to disclose family members living in Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan or foreign countries. Questions on religious affiliations are not asked in the survey. However, many of the census workers are also grid administrators, and on entering people's homes they are required to report signs of religious belief and in particular, indications of unauthorised religious meetings. In China, religious gatherings of any sort are illegal outside of state-assigned places of worship.
- Following the pandemic and deteriorating relations with UK, Australia and the USA, there has been a huge decrease in the number of Chinese students studying in these nations. In the past, this experience has provided a platform for students to exchange cultural views and hear the gospel.
- In Mandarin, comrade is tongzhi, and its characters mean 'same will/purpose'. Historically, Communist Party members used tongzhi as a form of address that signified 'solidarity, equality and respect' but by the 1980s it had fallen out of use. Since then, the term has been sequestered by the LGBT community in preference to tongxinglian ("same-sex love"). Often connecting via online meeting points, the community has increased to an estimated 70 million today. In 2016, the government decreed that titles and honorifics were to be replaced with tongzhi and the same year initiated a crackdown on "vulgar, immoral and unhealthy" media and online content. The LGBT community dodged negative attention by removing words like tongzhi from their websites, avoiding activism, keeping a low public profile and working alongside the government in healthcare combatting HIV.

- Long-time advocate and legal expert working for the persecuted church in China, Dr. Bob Fu of ChinaAid has suffered death threats, outrageous slander, libel and intimidation from Chinese operatives, and has endured protests outside his home in America. He has been forced into hiding with his family.
- Two new draft laws were released in November 2020. The first, titled “Detailed Implementation Measures on the Administration of Foreigners’ Group Religious Activities in the People’s Republic of China” regulates how foreigners can practice their faith in China and interact with the Chinese Church. As expected, there is strong emphasis is on safeguarding China’s principle of religious independence and self-management and protecting the state from criticism and dissent. It appears

not to introduce any great changes to the existing situation but clarifies the rules, supervision process, procedures and punishments. The second draft regulation, “Administrative Measures for Managing Religious Staff” stipulates the oversight of Chinese religious staff, their qualifications, rights and obligations. The State Administration of Religious Affairs is currently soliciting comments on both proposed laws.

- Robbers and swindlers guilty of bank card and mobile SIM card-related crimes in Guangdong province have been relegated to cash only transactions for 5 years. Rather than fines and imprisonment, they will experience the social embarrassment of being unable to use Alipay and WeChat Pay. The government has reminded business that refusing cash is illegal.

## News from CCSM UK



Happy New Year!

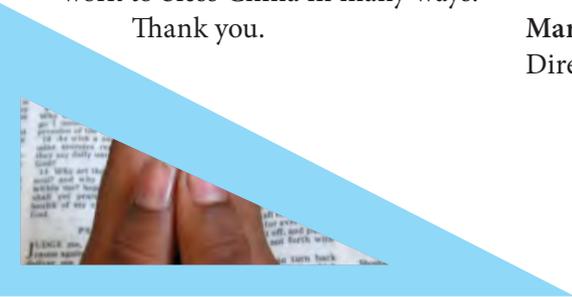
We remember last year for many different reasons, and challenges remain for us, but we look forward to this year – because God is faithful, God is love and God sent Jesus to bring light to the world.

*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it”*  
 [John 1: 1-5 (NIV)]

What does this year hold for us? We don't know! But we enter the year with our eyes fixed on Jesus, trusting that he knows.

Please continue to pray for China, for the Christians, the churches they attend and the millions who know nothing of God. Join with us in praying for the opportunities to send Teams to China again. These Teams really do serve and bless those they go to, but also are used by God to work in the Team members lives to change them for good.

We are grateful for faithful prayer that many of you have been engaged in, we know this through messages, letters and comments received. Thank you. We are also grateful for donations to enable this work to bless China in many ways.  
Thank you.



As we step into this new year, please ask God for ways to draw others in to pray for China and to get involved. We would love to help you pray, individually, as a group, as a church. We would love to speak to anyone thinking of going to China and help them on their way. We will continue to produce the SD cards which bring Bibles and much Christian teaching into China, and donations for these are really appreciated.

So we continue to do what God has called us to, and we hope to also find new ways to serve, strengthen and support the church in China. Join us and bring others with you.

Have a great year and God bless you.

**Martyn Wells**  
Director, CCSM UK



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