



CHINESE CHURCH SUPPORT MINISTRIES

CHINA PRAYER LETTER



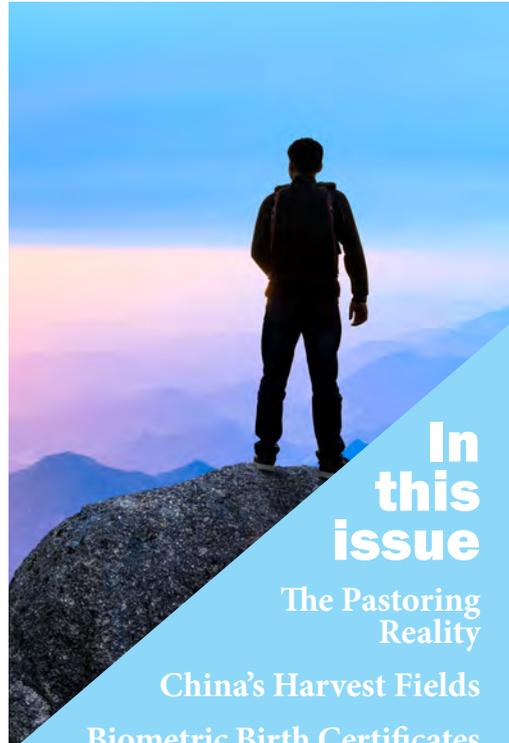
FEBRUARY 2021

The Pastoring Reality

Have you wondered what life is like for a Chinese Pastor today? Pastor Aaron looks after a family church in North West China. ('Family Church' is one of the names given to a church that chooses not to register with the official state-run Three Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM)). They now meet in secret and with care.

Despite their caution, Pastor Aaron has recently been called into the Police Station three times for a "cup of tea" and his wife intimidated at her public facing work.

Aaron is a good friend of CCSM though he has never heard the name of our organization! He meets regularly with some of our leadership and has arranged and hosted a number of outreach summer camps which our overseas workers led at his venue.



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

From his own words, here is a glimpse into the reality of serving the Lord in China:

“I live in a small 3rd tier city in north-west China with a population of about 500,000. I am married with one son.



I have served as a full-time pastor for 9 years and part-time for 5 years before that. My congregation of twenty are mainly young – many of them university students. I also look after 10 elderly folk who are unable to travel to church.

Most of the ministers I know in my area are around 40 years of age (like me). Most are the first believers in their families. This is good because they don't bring too much “religious” background to their church, but the problem is that most are not well trained and equipped. It is difficult to guide and shepherd a church with poor knowledge and resources. They also struggle to find co-workers to help them meet the needs of their people and share the load. Many of our pastors in China burn out and leave the Ministry.

Most of us have very limited incomes. In my city the

average salary for a pastor is 2000 –3000 RMB per month (US\$300 –US\$450). In country areas it is even less –around 1000 RMB (US\$150.) We don't get any medical insurance or any of the other benefits most employees now receive in China. So, a life after retirement will mean no pension and no savings. Not something to look forward to and only bearable because we trust God to meet our needs.

Low income brings many challenges. We can't go to bigger cities where we might be able to get theological training. It is a struggle to educate our children. Our wives have to work so we can survive. Housing is also a problem and few of us would ever be able to afford to buy a house.

All of these financial pressures bring stress to marriages and there is almost no support for looking after our spiritual or marital needs.

Working for a family church is a high-risk career in China!

Pastors receive low acceptance from society and we are always under threat of having our meetings disrupted, being arrested, fined or worse.”

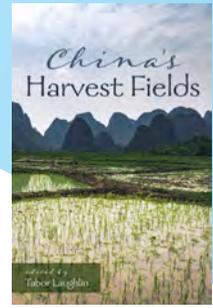
Note: CCSM will be adding a new programme in 2021 to provide support to pastors especially in the rural areas. We will let you know more about this soon..

Book Review of:

China's Harvest Fields

Edited by Tabor Laughlin.

Published by Resource Publications, 2020



As a new book published in 2020, this book will be likely to interest many of our supporters who have a heart for China.

It is a collection of contributions from 11 authors arranged in 12 chapters.

The aim is outlined (p xiii) 'The book aims to look at the current ways that missionaries and local Chinese believers can minister in China, while also highlighting ways for the Chinese church to be stronger and able to sustain and flourish long-term apart from help from missionaries.'

The book is up-to-date, at least since 2018, which is very helpful. As usual with books on China, not everything said applies to everywhere in China,

and some people may have slight disagreements with some of the observations and suggestions, but that does not detract from the overall book.

The book is in 4 sections:

1. Impacting Urban and Influential Chinese: Much of these chapters covers what is now 'normal' in China, increased surveillance, tighter religious laws and the need for foreigners to have one identity, at home and in China and not to try and maintain a fictitious identity in order to remain in the country.

2. Social Impact on Chinese Society: In common with the rest of the book, these chapters emphasise that the roles of social service are now very much in

International Short-Term Teams

Email CCSM at
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the hands of Chinese believers and have shifted away from foreigners leading the way. Despite all the change and pressures, God is still a faithful God and will preserve his church in his way and enable it to serve. There is however a continued place for those outside of China to encourage and support Chinese believers.

3. Impacting Chinese House Churches:

An interesting series of articles that highlight the need for Chinese owned theology and partnership across the world. Also including challenges of contextualisation, working within the Chinese state and accreditation of Chinese theological training. The last chapter is a very personal one that makes an appeal for discipleship and growth to 'go slow, go small, and go deep' to help people grow in full spiritual maturity and faithful discipleship –perhaps not what is often

heard in church growth discussion?

4. Other Key Components in China's

Harvest Fields: The first two chapters look at motivation and vision, and the hope that the Chinese church will avoid some of the mistakes the Western church has made including growth and expansion on the back of economic growth and world influence. The final chapter reads a little out of date with what has been happening in the Northwest of China in the last 18 months, perhaps the call to serve in this area can start now with a response in terms of heartfelt prayer for this region, if living there is not possible.

We hope this gives a flavour of what's between the covers of this, the sections allow the reader to dip into chapters without reading it cover to cover, but the whole book has many thought provoking passages. At the very least we hope it provokes more prayer for China.

Biometric Birth Certificates Battle Trafficking

In a manoeuvre promoted as a powerful advance in the war against child trafficking, all babies born in China are to receive an electronic birth certificate. Their parent's biometric

data (including DNA and facial scans) will also be required. The change is not unique to China and a host of other countries are following suit.

There are no official figures on abducted children in China. In 2013, The Voice of China, the flagship channel of China National Radio, mentioned that 200,000 children go missing every year. Other news sources parrot a figure of 70,000 as being the number of children abducted annually. Over the four years between 2009-2012 35,662 children were reportedly rescued. Shockingly, if these figures are accurate, this would indicate that less than five children in every hundred were returned to their families.

What is confusing is the loose delineation between children trafficked into slavery or the sex industry, those that are runaways or abandoned, those that are missing and those that are illegally adopted. Certainly not all illegally adopted children are sold or abducted. Surrogacy also plays a part in this black market and is illegal in China whether or not money is involved.

What is surprising is that most 'trafficked' children are not snatched off the street or kidnapped from their cradles. They are either abandoned, given away or sold by their family.

It's hard to imagine the torment parents must go through when driven to give up a child. Some may have exceeded the population planning quota. Others may have suffered emotional or financial crisis. In 2013, researchers at the People's Public Security University of China found that in more than half the illegal adoption



cases they reviewed the children had been given away by their birth parents.

The good news is that child trafficking cases have plummeted due in large part to the concentrated efforts of China's Action Plan against Human Trafficking (2013-2020). In 2018, Chinese authorities successfully cracked 606 child trafficking cases, far fewer than the previous years.

86% of abducted children were under six. How devastating for parents to lose their children and never see them again. Among the infants taken the majority were boys between two and four years of age, reflecting the standing Chinese place on male heirs.

In China, childless couples must wait till they are over 35 before

the law allows them to legally adopt. For some this wait is just too long to bear. They look to alternative ways of securing an heir or a child that might later care for them in their old age.

Illegal adoptions create a demand for counterfeit birth certificates. In China a 'Medical Certificate of Birth' is issued by the Ministry of Public Health through the hospital or facility where the child is born, but China also has a second 'Notarial Birth Certificate' released by a local Notarial Office. Even though rules were tightened in 2004, introducing security features such as electronic watermarks, bar-codes, UV and typographical features, foreign embassies still claim that counterfeit birth certificates are frequently seen. And notarial birth

certificates are often unverifiable.

Without either of these birth certificates a child cannot obtain citizenship, household registration, an ID card, a passport or the right to work legally. They will have problems accessing education, medical care, buses, trains and air travel. They won't be able to open a bank account or inherit property. They are stateless and vulnerable to exploitation.

The new electronic system will be rolled out nationwide by the end of 2021, and is expected to stop criminals from illegally attaining a birth certificate. How this will help those children trafficked for the sex or slave industry is questionable as their unscrupulous abductors would never bother to furnish their victims with a birth certificate.

The Silver Halo



China is scrambling to address the aftereffects of its one-child policy (1980-2016). The shrinking working population is now faced with supporting a disproportionate and increasing number of elderly. China desperately needs to rebalance the population model and allay the impending crisis. The only problem is – the nation's current child

bearing generation are not enthusiastic about restocking China's nurseries.

The working population are made up of pampered 'only-children' who have been drilled from birth to excel academically and in their careers. It is hardly surprising that they are stalling at forfeiting their professional life in favour of raising children. This generation have enjoyed a wealth of material benefits their parents could only dream of. They look back at

PRAYER POINTERS

The Pastoring Reality

These are the prayer requests of Pastor Aaron: -

Please pray for the pastors in China.

Pray for our finance.

Pray for our marriages.

Pray we can be trained and resourced better in the future.

Pray for our safety and the safety of our wives and children.

Book Review of: China's Harvest Fields

Pray for the Chinese Church as they continue their work within in the framework of restrictions and red tape.

Pray that they will continue to grow in their faith as they look to Living Word for leadership and direction.

Pray that God will increase the burden on Chinese hearts to disciple well.

Pray that the Father will provide the daily bread his flock in China require and that He will help those who work to feed His sheep.

Pray that more people become aware of the opportunities in China despite the tightening environment for Christian work.

Biometric Birth Certificates Battle Trafficking

Thank God that he has sealed us with His Holy Spirit for the day of redemption (Eph 4.30). He has paid the price and given his life as a ransom for many. We are free.

Pray that the China's trafficked children would find their place of belonging and safety in Him and that He will lead them home.

Pray that the Lord will grant children to the barren who come to Him in prayer.



PRAYER POINTERS

The Silver Halo

Pray that the Father will bless his senior citizens in China with long lives and sharp minds, and that he will give them a special passion and ability to pass on wisdom and truth to their grandchildren.

Pray that the Chinese Government will come up with good solutions to the population imbalance problem.

Pray that the Church will be able to effectively minister God's love, demonstrate his character and shine his light in the community.

The Danger of Deception

Praise God that He has provided us with His Word, the Bible, to be the benchmark and plumbline of our faith. Pray that believers in the East and the West will increase in their hunger for the Word. Pray that no-one will be left undisciplined.

Pray that the church will not lay down its armour and be unprotected. Thank God that we can put it on daily.

Pray that the Chinese Church will continue to have access to the true and complete Word of God.

Pride often comes before deception. Humbly seek God's protection and discernment.

Pray for believers in China who are feeling isolated, fearful, hurt or abandoned.

The Person I Want to Thank the Most

Give thanks and praise to the Lord for he is good.

Pray that God will help us to have the determination to work 100%!

Thank the Lord, who is our great hope, for the labourers He has sent into the fields. Ask the Father to send more workers into China's fields, who have a heart to serve and a desire to bring glory to your name.

Thank the Lord for providing times of refreshment and encouragement.



Chinese Church Support Ministries

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

the hardships of Mao's era and they look forward to a difficult global economic climate, many with low savings. So, even though the two-child policy is in place, they are not showing any great desire to raise more than one child.

The one-child policy skewed the gender ratio of the population to fewer women than men. In 2016 there were 33.59 million less women than men. And only women can bear babies! The main reproductive pool -those between 20 and 35 - is expected to drop by 44 percent in the next ten years (China Fertility Report released by Evergrande Research Institute in 2019).

The nation must reach an average fertility rate of 2.1 children per family to maintain a population.

It is clear to see that if this generation do not perform their procreational duties the next generation will suffer a financial and logistical burden too heavy to shoulder. There will be no reserves left for pensions.

Many still believe there is a need to continue to reduce the overall population size in addition to rectifying the age imbalance. The Chinese Government's 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) is soon to be released and it intends to implement a national strategy to respond to aging population crisis. No doubt increasing the productivity of the workforce, reproduction management, raising retirement ages and care of the elderly

will be among on the table. And providing a "fertility-friendly society" will likely include more day care centres.

The silver lining of China's looming cloud is that grandparents are already considered a valued and vital participant in the Chinese family model. After retirement, they often have the responsibility of taking the children to school and cooking meals for the working parents to come home to at night. Rural grandparents care for grandchildren while the parents live away as migrant workers in the cities. The one-on-one time Christian grandparents provide will play an important role in raising and strengthening the next generation of believers.

China's two protestant church oversight bodies (the CCC & TSPM) are actively soliciting applications for social service projects from their churches. They are providing sample projects for those churches who undertake similar types of charity work. In keeping with the Protestant Church Five Year Plan (2018-22) they are heading toward institutionalizing and standardizing the training and services delivered. They are establishing professional networks for churches' social services where they can share their experience and resources. The intention is to build a unique protestant social service brand. Care for the elderly has a strong focus in their public charity work.



Above: An example of a CAG promotion for their false gospel, ‘The Word Appears in the Flesh’

The Danger of Deception

“Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” Jesus answered them, ‘Watch out that no one misleads you. For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ, and they will mislead many.’... many false prophets will appear and deceive many. Matt 24:3,11 [NET]

There is no doubt that perilous times are part and parcel of the end of the age (not to be misinterpreted as the end of the world!). Foremost in Jesus’ warnings to his disciples in the Olivet discourse, when they asked Him about the end of the age, was a warning to be alert about deception.

Our brothers and sisters in China have been heavily impacted by *xie jiao* or cults and recently, by one cult in particular. A counterfeit Christian movement called the Church of Almighty God (CAG), also known as Eastern Lightning, has supposedly grown

to millions of adherents, despite having an obviously false gospel and a returned, female messiah.

Two lessons can be taken from the Chinese Church’s experiences with this cult.

Firstly, this cult is clearly targeting the true church. Its vast collection of online videos, websites and literature are professionally made. The cult originated in China but now has its headquarters openly in South Korea. Just a quick search for

‘Almighty God’ in Google will return a page full of results for the Church of Almighty God (CAG), also known as Eastern Lightning. YouTube, Bing and Safari also return an avalanche of CAG results. The CAG claims to be established in many western countries and some nations have even accepted CAG refugees from China.

In China, churches were wise and warned their congregations about the cult. Like China, the western church also has the ability to use this threat as an opportunity to encourage believers to deepen their knowledge and foundation in the Word. The ‘sword’ of the Spirit *is* the Word of God... a powerful weapon against deception. The Church of Almighty God particularly targets Christians who are spiritually weak, isolated, wounded, disgruntled and Biblically illiterate.

Secondly, as awareness of cults rises, so does public concern and anti-religious sentiment. It then only takes one incident

to usher in an atmosphere that welcomes regulation of religions to protect the wider public. For China, such an event was the 2014 murder at a McDonalds restaurant attributed to CAG members.

This year, Chinese authorities are exhausting significant resources campaigning in schools, on the media and in communities to warn against *xie jiao*. The Church of Almighty God is at the top of an official list of around 20 cults. BitterWinter.com reported that in one city in Jiangsu Province, 150,000 anti-*xie jiao* calendars were printed and distributed door-to-door. And across the country, “Rule of Law and Anti-Xie Jiao” posters and signage were being erected in garden parks. Financial rewards are being offered to inform on cult gatherings or followers.

And because unregistered Christian believers are illegal in China, they are vulnerable and tentatively close to being officially labelled with the cults.

The Person I Want to Thank the Most



*Let them give thanks to the Lord for his loyal love,
and for the amazing things He has done for people*

*Let them present thank offerings, and loudly proclaim what He has done.
Psalm 107:21-22 [NET]*

In the beginning of the new year, it is important to have a thankful heart.

CCSM’s Mercy Ministry has received a short composition from a young man in one of China’s welfare

homes. We want to share it with you. His testimony touched our hearts and brings us encouragement.

The title of the composition is “The person I want to thank the most”.

One of the people I want to thank the most is a rehabilitation therapist. If it weren't for him, maybe I would still be in a wheelchair!

When I was five years old, I was taken to a hospital in Beijing for an operation, which was mainly for children with cerebral palsy. After the operation, I returned to my former foster family and sat on the sofa for three full months. Afterwards, the plaster on my legs was removed.

The doctor advised my foster mother, “rehabilitation

is necessary.”

I remember when I first started rehabilitation. In the beginning, I cried often when it hurt, and I didn't understand why he did it. I didn't want to do it.

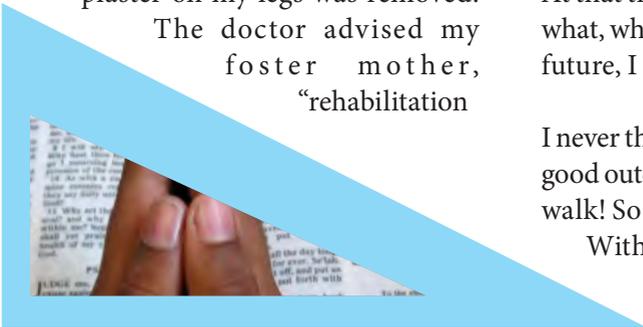
Then, he told me: “I do this for your own good. If you don't do this rehabilitation well, you may sit in a wheelchair for the rest of your life, and you may not stand up for the rest of your life.

Although it will hurt a bit, I believe that as long as you persist, there will be results. **As long as there is 10% hope, you have to work 100%!**”

At that time, I determined that no matter what, whether or not I can stand up in the future, I will work hard at rehabilitation.

I never thought that there would be such a good outcome later on! I can stand up and walk! So now I really want to thank him.

Without his encouragement, I would not know where I'd be today!



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