



CHINESE CHURCH SUPPORT MINISTRIES

CHINA PRAYER LETTER



MARCH 2021

Divided Families

Goodbye, Year of the Rat!
Hello, Year of the Ox!

Last month, between the 11th and 17th February 2021, the Chinese celebrated the Spring Holidays, their seven-day national holiday. This 'Golden Week' signifies the end of winter and is a time for families to come together and celebrate Chinese Lunar New Year, which was on the 12th of February this year. The season's festivities continue till the Lantern Festival on the 27th February, which marks the end of the New Year celebrations.

But January had seen new coronavirus outbreaks erupt across the country, especially in Hebei province and around Beijing and other northern provinces. Authorities locked down a number of northern cities and advised migrant workers not to travel home. Incentives were offered to stay in the cities and work over the holiday, and some rural areas imposed quarantine periods further discouraging travel.

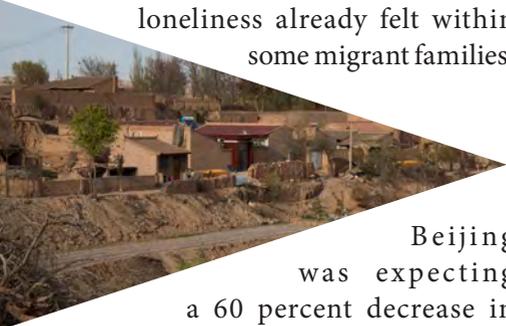


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Seeking to serve, strengthen and support the church and the people of China

This was particularly sad for China's migrant workers, many of whom only see their family once a year during this holiday period. And equally sad for those children left behind with grandparents in their rural villages while their parents had 'gone out'. Reunions had to be replaced with phone calls or video chats, compounding the emotions of guilt and loneliness already felt within some migrant families.



Beijing was expecting a 60 percent decrease in passenger numbers and 40 percent decrease in flights compared to the same period in 2020. Nevertheless, many Chinese still made the journey home despite the infection risks and pressures not to travel.

New Year is a major opportunity for Chinese believers to share their faith with their families. For those that heard the gospel in the cities, the good news they bear may be the first opportunity relatives or friends in distant villages have to hear. New Year is also a time to catch up with mentors and deliver encouragement, bibles or Christian material to believers in the countryside.

However, there are serious challenges to be faced in sharing the gospel

with family at Chinese New Year. Despite China being officially atheist, many families still practice ancestor worship and make offerings to household deities. One such god still worshipped in some households and acknowledged at Lunar New Year is the Kitchen God. He is said to travel to heaven on the 23rd or 24th day of the 12th lunar month to report on the moral status of the family and ask for Heaven's protection, returning to the household on Lunar New Year's Day.

The eldest male is expected to take a leading role in deity and ancestor worship in his family. For a new Christian, stepping away from these responsibilities can create tremendous friction in a family. A family that holds to the belief that the spirits of deceased ancestors look after them and influence their health and fortune, will be very afraid if the head male offends their ancestors.

On the other hand, stepping away from participating in these activities may open opportunities to explain their faith.

Pew Research estimated in 2010 that there were around 700 million religiously unaffiliated people in China, made up of atheists, agnostics and people who do not identify with any particular religion in surveys. Of these 7% of Chinese unaffiliated adults had a belief in 'God or a higher power' and 44% said they had worshipped at a graveside or tomb in the past year.

Gods Are Expensive

Part One of Kwan Kwan's Story



Kwan Kwan was born in Dong Guan, in Guangdong province of Mainland China in 1945, a period of turmoil and unrest.

Her mother was the first wife of her father and a strong-willed woman. Just ten days after Kwan Kwan's entry into the world, her mother left for Hong Kong. She had accepted work as an Ayi, a nursemaid, for a wealthy family. Kwan Kwan was left behind in her father's house to be raised by her father's parents.

Three years later, they also migrated to Hong Kong, travelling on foot. But the little girl was not to be returned to her mother's arms.

Her father had other relationships and children, but Kwan Kwan was never accepted by her father like his other

children. And even though her Dad was considered a man of means and influence ...some even calling him the 'mafia' of the vegetable market, Kwan Kwan was not to benefit from his prosperity. His last wife, her 'step mother' was close to her own age and antagonistic toward her. At age 13, she was asked to move out and stay with an aunt.

So, what was supposed to be a secure and loving childhood for Kwan Kwan was to elude her. As she grew up, she heard that her mother was living in luxury, caring for other people's children, while her life looked very different.

Yet, there was a tenacious spirit in Kwan Kwan. She had no education, and could neither read nor write. She decided hard work was the way ahead. She had

International Short-Term Teams

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

watched
her aunty
using a knitting
machine she had taught
herself how to use one. She
earned enough money to enrol in
night school, attending after work.

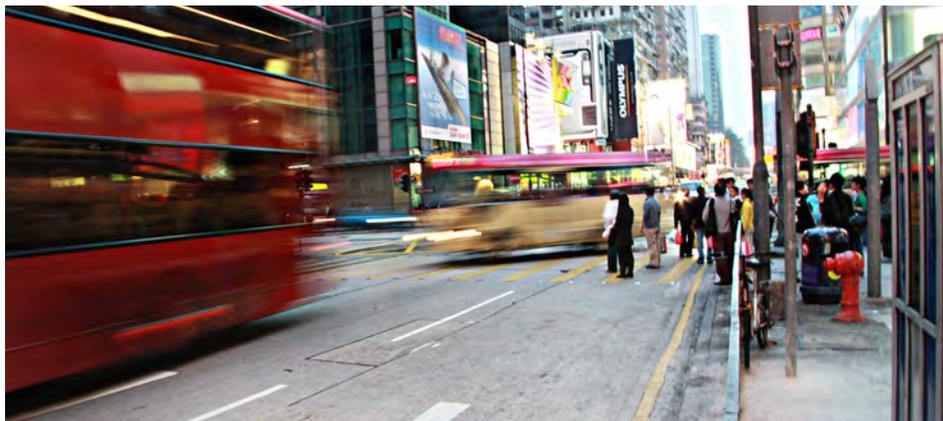
She also began to collect idols - buddhas, deities and guardians. Perhaps the gods would have mercy and change her luck. Visits to the temple always cost money; three joss (incense) sticks per statue, candles for prayers, paper money to burn, amulets and donations for long-burning incense for prosperity and health. Gods were expensive!

Later she married and had three children. Her husband worked as a tailor but still, life remained a struggle. She earned extra money selling jeans and putting together electronic devices. A small break came when she was accepted for a job with the UK Police in Hong Kong. Her night school had paid off and she could now

complete the forms and do the basic office work the job required. She worked there while the children were at school. It meant she could pay into their pension plan. It would furnish her with a small amount in her old age...even though it would not nearly be enough to live on.

When they grew up, one by one, her children found the Lord. Kwan Kwan was furious! She raged, "How can you follow this foreign God? Why do you tithe to Him? You should give that money to me!"

In 1996, tragedy struck. As she stepped out of a minibus she slipped, falling under the wheels. Her knee was crushed. In hospital, they announced the grim news that if blood did not return to her lower leg by 4pm it would need to be amputated. Her children prayed, and called on other Christians to pray too. God answered their prayers at 3.55pm. With minutes to spare, blood flow was restored to the damaged limb.



My God Is Free

Part Two of Kwan Kwan's Story

Kwan Kwan had received a miracle. Although she did not worship this foreign god, it seemed He had answered her family's desperate prayers to save her leg. Despite the severity of her injury, she would walk again.

After her accident, the ambulance had brought her to a Christian hospital and as she lay recovering in the hospital bed looking out over Hong Kong city she listened to the Christian songs and the messages on the radio. "I feel peaceful and I feel good" she told her family.

Two years on, and after the Hong Kong handover, she called her daughter, who was living in Australia. As she was not far from retirement age they discussed the difficult question of whether she should accept retirement and claim her small UK pension or take a job with the Chinese government. Her daughter urged her to retire and place her trust in God. Kwan Kwan retorted, "What makes your God different from all my gods?" Her daughter paused a moment, then replied, "Your gods cost you money, My God is free. He will only cost you your heart."

Over the next twenty years, her idols slowly began to disappear. Her daughter recalled with a shudder, "Oh my gosh,



there was even an idol tower. There were idols in the windows, idols in the kitchen corner, the toilet even! But in the end, they were replaced with a cross."

In her youth, Kwan Kwan had longed for family. Because both parents abandoned her, she tried so hard all her life to keep her family. Kwan Kwan even reached out to her mother and father in their later years, proving more faithful than any of the other children. She insisted, "family is family" and she gave her best.

Then in Kwan Kwan's old age, both her legs slowly began to give out. She was told by the doctors that within two years she would no longer be able to walk. Now in her seventies, she began to worry about dying. She knew her memory was also beginning to

fade. Her daughter called up a favour from a friend, a social worker. “Can you please help us get Mother some support?” She also requested her friend invite Kwan Kwan to go with her to church. Kwan Kwan decided to go.

The church held services that were good for old people and had a calling to work with the elderly. Kwan Kwan enjoyed the service and afterwards they joined others to stay for Yum Cha. The following Sunday the friend offered to take her again. But she did not want to go. Looking down, she explained, “Yum Cha costs money.” When she found out she did not have to stay for that she decided to return. Kwan Kwan did not need anyone to go with her to church. She took herself.

Now she is seventy-six years of age. Her daughter rejoiced, “In the last year she really found peace. My brother bought her a Bible and she signed up for a baptism

course, which involved months of study. She passed the course and now wants to be baptised”. Even though she has been in Covid lockdown this year, she learned how to use zoom and keeps in touch with her family on WhatsApp. “It was a very special day for me on Boxing Day. She was singing worship songs!”

“We hope we can be together for a huge baptism celebration – bigger than our wedding!”

But the outlook for her family travelling to Hong Kong for the event appears tentative. Some suburbs continue to be in lockdown, gatherings are restricted to just two people in public places, East-West international relations are still shaky, and the Hong Kong churches are nervous about what the future holds. For Kwan Kwan, she now rests in the assurance her future is secure, she has found her Father - she is accepted and greatly loved.

Book Review:

James Hudson Taylor: Called by God Into the Heart of the Dragon.

by Ruth Broomhall, Published by CWR, 2018

Many of our readers will have read biographies about James Hudson Taylor, the man who founded China Inland Mission and who was so

influential in modern mission practice. So why review another biography?

PRAYER POINTERS

MARCH 2021

Divided Families

In Luke 12:52 the Lord speaks of divided families. But praise God that we have family and an inheritance in Him.

Pray that God will protect and recompense those that chose to return home with the gospel, giving up financial incentives to stay in the cities.

Pray that the Father will water the seeds that were sown during Chinese New Year.

Pray that new believers will be well disciplined and that they will know the council of the Lord.

Gods Are Expensive - Part One of Kwan Kwan's Story

Praise God, our Father in Heaven, who knew us before we were born, and knows all our struggles.

“Even if my father and mother abandoned me, the Lord would take me in.” [Psalm 27:10. NET]. Thank God that He is a good Father and we can find our security in Him.

Pray for fathers in China who lead their families in a land hostile to Christ, that they will lean on the Holy Spirit and not on their own understanding.

But if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care for the Church of God? [1 Timothy 3:5, NET] Pray that the Lord will raise up righteous leaders for His Church family in China, such as in Timothy Chapter 3.

My God Is Free - Part Two of Kwan Kwan's Story

Praise God for He longs to restore His family.

Praise God who has paid the price for our restoration with His blood.

Like the gold nose ring and bracelets offered by Isaac's servant to Rebekah, demonstrating the master's riches, Kwan Kwan received a sample of her Heavenly Father's riches when she was healed [Genesis 24:22]. Pray that the Father will send out servants with the His gifts for the Chinese people to testify of His riches and promises.

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

PRAYER POINTERS

James Hudson Taylor: Called by God Into the Heart of the Dragon.

Praise God for the lives of His servants that have gone before us - thank Him that we can watch how they ran their race and can learn and be encouraged.

Ask God to search our hearts today. Are we so focused on God and eternity that to obey God is truly joy in all circumstances?

Pray that God will increase our ability to 'live for eternity – our own and that of others'.

Thank God for His sacrifice that has redeemed our lives.

Thank God that He raises up people for the times and the hour. Pray that God will raise up leaders with the obedience and passion of Hudson Taylor, that will truly be a blessing to the Church and people of China in this day.

Spread Some Happiness

Praise God that He wants fellowship with us and He wants us to be in fellowship with our brothers and sisters.

Pray that Chinese outside the Mainland will boldly share the gospel with friends and family in China and will be willing to walk with those they invite.

Lift up the elderly and disabled to the Lord. Pray that they will not be left without fellowship.

Pray that this time of 'virtual' church will grow people deeper into the Word.

News From CCSM UK

Pray that the Lord will make a way for Chinese gifted in the 5-fold ministry to be able to minister to his sheep, even though they have been scattered.

Pray that the Lord will raise up and send out workers.

Praise God that while He works out His glorious plan, He cares about the helpless and harassed.

Pray that those who feel a calling for China's harvest field will respond.

Pray that CCSM will be shown opportunities, and will respond in God's timing.



Chinese Church Support Ministries

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

This book is full of illustrations, photographs, maps and visual interest. The story is written clearly, and in a more modern style than some of its predecessors, which makes it more accessible today. The clarity of the layout and the many photographs will draw many readers in to discover, or rediscover the story of how the interior of China was reached for God.

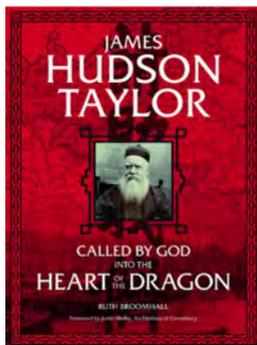
The author; Ruth Broomhall, acknowledges the great honour to write this biography of her great-great-uncle, James Hudson Taylor.

The book follows the usual chronological pattern of Hudson Taylor's grandparents, parents and his upbringing, and the history of his calling to China. Then it depicts the work in China and the growth and challenges along the way. For those who appreciate an overview, there is a Timeline at the end of the book, which fits dates against all the main events in his life, providing a useful abridged summary.

One feature of the book is that at the end of each chapter, there are three sections: Reflection; Think; Respond.

These help to highlight an aspect of the chapter as a modern Reflection, encourages us to Think about any implications and to Respond before God in the light of

what he has revealed. In this way the book can be used as a devotional aid and could be used with a group to consider how we should listen and obey God.



The story is an encouraging one, as many of you know, but it bears re-reading and the Reflections and suggested Responses add a personal focus. Throughout the life of Hudson Taylor we see his love of God, his faithfulness to God's call on his life and his obedience. Not only in what may be seen as 'great missionary work' – preaching,

travelling through China but also in the less glamorous but essential work of managing staff, appointing councils to run the work, deflecting and defending the work they did against those who criticised what they did and how they did it.

Towards the end of the book we are reminded that Hudson Taylor said 'I never made a sacrifice' in his life. Despite seemingly choosing a life of hardship and often suffering, he never considered he had sacrificed anything as he was simply being a servant of God, obeying what God had told him. This bears reflection ourselves, are we so focused on God and eternity that to obey God is truly joy in all circumstances.

The book's final 'Think' section concludes with 'Do you live for eternity – your own and that of others?'



Questions around outreach that often arise today are “should we as overseas believers speak about Jesus openly to Chinese on social media?” and “will we be censored and cut off from our family or friends in China if we bring Christ into the conversation?”

In a recent conversation with Chinasource.org titled “3 Questions: Using WeChat for Gospel Outreach” a Chinese born woman who now lives in America told of her experiences. She was a fairly new Christian, having been baptised three years prior, and like many new Christians had been confidently sharing the gospel with her family back in China via WeChat video calls. She also sent them Christian material through WeChat Moments.

When Covid forced her church to meet online, her church “happiness” smallgroup also met online through a

WeChat group. They invited their family, friends, or anyone who is interested in hearing the gospel to join. They also posted resources, and Zoom links to ask them to join our fellowship, Bible study or happiness group. She remarked that another member in her Church had a WeChat group with about 200 Members, sharing the Word, songs and prayers.

It appears that this church is not afraid to ask people to join and share, and many are coming to Christ because of it.

Line is another app being used but requires a VPN to work in China and that in itself is a risk for Chinese citizens. Anyone caught with an unlicensed VPN is fined \$145. And other penalties could apply if banned sites were accessed or other regulations were broken. Still around 30% of Chinese use a VPN.

In Mainland China, the current church situation varies from province to province. Last month, in China churches Hebei, Beijing, Shanxi, Zhejiang and Guangxi and other places suspended their meetings once again to defend against the January 2021 Covid outbreaks. Churches meet in WeChat groups for daily deliveries from the chief pastor and preachers to lead the Bible reading, prayer, praise, and sharing. Some set a group only for sermons where no one is allowed to post or forward links in the group except for sermons. Some churches offer Bible reading programs. Each has its own way of doing things.

Lamentably, many churches such as a church in Jinsha New Area of Qitaihe, Heilongjiang Province, have not been able to meet in person for over a year, because of pandemic bans. Churches have called on family members to help older

brothers and sisters access the internet so they can join in groups and hear sermons. But there are a small number of elderly and disabled who don't have a smartphone or internet and are sadly missing out on even 'virtual' fellowship.

Those Chinese that come to Christ through a friend or family member in another nation, will at some stage look for human fellowship in their own neighbourhood. As the Bible says, "Do not stop gathering, as those who are used to it, but exhort one another. Even more so, knowing that the day is near. (Hebrews 10:25)". If they choose a TSPM Church they will need to register, giving their ID and details, a daunting thought in a nation increasingly hostile to people of faith. But if they have been well disciplined, they will be able to search out and recognise a Church that walks with Christ and will not fall away.

News From CCSM UK



When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.' [Matthew 9: 36-38]

We come in obedience to ask the Lord God to send out workers into his harvest field. The harvest field is worldwide, and Jesus in the verses above is telling us that the harvest is plentiful – there are many ready to come into the Kingdom of God.

But workers are needed to bring in this harvest. With our and your interest in China, for many a calling to China, we want to pray that workers will be raised up to reap the harvest in China.



It might seem that now is not the time – the borders to China are largely closed, the church in China is under attack, yet in the Bible we see this is often the time when God is at work, he is not limited by politics and world events. Join us to pray that God will send out these workers, from our churches, from Chinese churches to share the Good News.

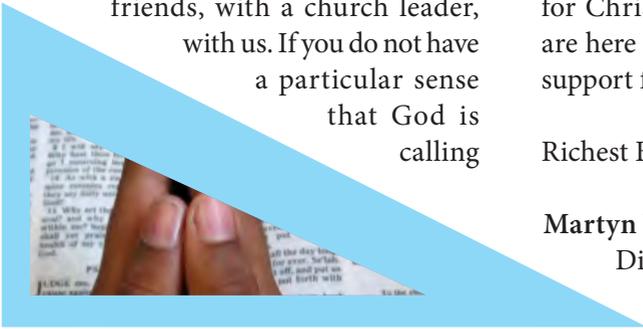
It may be that during lockdowns God has been able to get the attention of new workers he wants to serve him in new ways. If you sense God is speaking to you – act, share this with Christian friends, with a church leader, with us. If you do not have a particular sense that God is calling

you at this time, then please pray for workers to respond to God.

We support the church in China, and right now is a good time to be constantly in prayer, to give what you can and to share the needs of China with your circle of church and Christian contacts. Teams are not going to China right now, but we can pray for the opportunities to open up in God’s timing. We are listening to God for his leading to the best ways to serve right now. If you want more information to help you pray – just ask us. If you want to know more about the situations for Christians in China – just ask. We are here to stimulate prayer, service and support for the church in China.

Richest Blessings,

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