



CHINESE CHURCH SUPPORT MINISTRIES

CHINA PRAYER LETTER



MAY 2021

MOOCs

Plagues, Witches, and War: Worlds of Historical Fiction... The Science of Everyday Thinking..... Was Alexander Great? Whether you have an inquiring mind, or want to upskill in your career or just fuel your passion for learning, there is very likely a MOOC to meet your needs.

MOOC stands for **Massive Open Online Course**. A MOOC is not just any online course, but one provided over a purpose-built content delivery system. These are specially designed platforms that can present pre-recorded lectures, download homework and assignments, and provide interactive forums and social media whereby students can interact with each other and tutors. Virtual reality, augmented reality and other evolving technologies are rapidly being developed to work within MOOC courses.

Today, we see far too many overqualified university students struggling to find workburdened with loans for years to come. The vast majority of MOOCs are targeted and



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affordable short courses (some are even free) offering a certificate of completion or competency. They are scalable and can cater for large numbers. MOOCs may be offered internationally, being presented in foreign languages, or by using subtitles or dubbed translations.



It's not surprising that this less expensive education option is a rapidly expanding market. Businesses also recognise the advantage of MOOCs. Employees can be trained and upskilled in precisely the areas needed. Quickly and economically. There are literally tens of thousands of courses available from numerous sources around the world and China has been 'blending' them into school and tertiary training for a number of years now. They offer the means to provide top quality education to remote rural schools and broaden the topics available in smaller institutions.

In the year 2000, the Chinese Ministry of Education began launching farsighted online education projects with the focus on raising rural education to a level comparable with urban standards. Heavy investment was made into communications infrastructure, education networking, shared education resources and training in online teaching and administration.

By 2012, many Chinese universities were joining **MOOC platforms** (initially Coursera – a USA based company, EdX – founded by Harvard and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Future Learn owned by UK's Open University; but today China has platforms of its own, such as iCourse, Zhihushu and XuetaangX among others.

Take note that MOOCs are generally 'courses' only. Worldwide, there are very few 100%-online MOOC diplomas, degree or postgrad programs. It is not a simple task to provide the quality of teaching and mentoring expected from a prestigious university, on platforms impervious to cheating, privacy leaks and security breaches. And furthermore, many programs demand hands-on learning, so in order to bring them online, complicated virtual simulation systems need to be developed – requiring the eLearners to acquire the costly devices needed to interact with them.

However, the profound effect of Covid is advancing online education. On the back of it, China has taken the lead role in the global development of MOOCs. The 'Global MOOC Alliance' was officially launched late last year at the 2020 Global MOOC Conference, jointly hosted by Tsinghua University and UNESCO. A group of 17 universities and 3 online platforms, issued the Beijing Declaration on MOOC Development. Calling themselves "pioneers of MOOC" and "promoters of global education reform"

they stated their aim was to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) to ‘ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all’ by 2030. The alliance pledged to “Explore and leverage various measures such as law, ethics, supervision, and technology to regulate the opening, sharing, using and managing of MOOC; jointly promote the setting of international technical and curriculum standards for MOOC and online education; safeguard privacy and intellectual property rights; and address issues brought about by the development of MOOC and online education.”

Globalising and centralizing education and OER (Open Education Resources) will indeed create a new frontier in education. Some experts have predicted that campuses that either do not rise to meet MOOC standards in the future, or that do not offer an exceptional ‘on-campus experience’ could face difficult times ahead.



Don't Spoil the Party

This is a special year for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and China. On July 1st they will commemorate 100 years since their founding, and they would love to share with the world just how much they have achieved. The people are proud of their hard work to end extreme

poverty in the nation. China has met its goal to become a ‘moderately prosperous society’. The CCP is proud of its handling of the pandemic, its achievements in the space race, advances in clean energy, and its substantial economic and diplomatic power. And China does

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have much to be proud of. The nation will be remembering the journey in operas, films, tv dramas and much more.

Only a few things could possibly spoil the celebrations at a time when the world has its eyes on China. There are groups who want to subvert the state, reveal its flaws, claim injustices or use the celebrations to line their pockets.

As is its usual custom, the government has taken a proactive approach in preventing anything from spoiling its party. On March 20th, 2021, no less than twenty-two government departments held a teleconference to initiate the deployment of a nationwide campaign to eradicate “illegal social organizations”. It is targeting five types of ‘illegal’ organisations:

1. fraudulent groups engaged in economic, cultural or charity activities in the name of implementing national strategies; organizations using the words “China,” “Zhonghua,” or “National” in their names pretending to be subsidiaries of state organs.

2. those who deceptively join

forces with legal organisations.

3. those organising competitions in the name of celebrating the 100th anniversary of CCP.

4. those that plan activities pretending to promote health or sinology, and mysticism.

5. those that hold gatherings in the name of religion.

The last item encompasses all banned, unregistered and xie jiao (cult) religious groups. The CCP classifies the house church movement into this category. How far respective authorities will extend the crackdown is yet to be seen. But on March 25th the Sichuan Daily published a list of 84 illegal groups, specifically naming many Christian groups including the already heavily persecuted Early Rain Covenant Church of Chengdu.

Radio Free Asia Mandarin service reported that a circular had been issued prohibiting enterprises and institutions, social organizations, Party members and cadres, and the news media from being associated with or participating in or promoting and reporting on “illegal social organizations”. It also states that that “various public service facilities and places”, “Internet enterprises” and “financial institutions” should not facilitate the activities of “illegal social organizations” and said it would “further increase the financial penalties of illegal social organizations”.

Perseverance in Trials

“If we are faithful to GOD in little things, we shall gain experience and strength that will be helpful to us in the more serious trials of life.

(J. Hudson Taylor. A Retrospect. Philadelphia: China Inland Mission, n.d., 20).

The little news currently filtering out from China on its beleaguered underground church is encouraging. But not because persecution is easing. In fact, the opposite is true. We are encouraged because we are hearing there are people of faith who have not shrunk back despite their trials.

Since the 129 crackdown (Dec 9th , 2018), on the Early Rain Covenant Church (ERCC) in Chengdu, state security agents have routinely targeted its church members pressuring landlords to evict them, calling members in for questioning and keeping them under tight surveillance. The east campus of Fountain of Life Church, one of the earliest founded urban house churches, belonging to the southwest parish of ERCC, had been meeting at Elder Zha Changping’s home. They were there on the morning of March 7th, when police raided the service. Officers seized and transported Elder Zha, his wife, and three other Christians to the police station releasing them after interrogation. Elder Zha has already been summoned



Early Rain Covenant Church 秋雨圣约教会

multiple times for interrogations but continues regardless to faithfully disciple his flock. [Source: [ChinaAid](#)]

In mid-March, BitterWinter.com reported that Ren’ai (Love) Reformed Church, was meeting in Room 1702 in the commercial part of Wenzhou Hotel in Guiyang city, Guizhou Province when police arrived and arrested several church members. Elder Zhang Chunlei, in a display of courage and love for his brothers and sisters, decided to go to the police station to negotiate their release. He too was thrown to the floor, arrested, refused a lawyer, and placed under criminal detention. As is common in these cases, the believer’s houses were searched for religious material, phones and computers that might offer leads to other ‘illegal’ Christians.

In a particularly disturbing report, a member of a Christian house church

in Sichuan province, who asked to be identified by the pseudonym Li Yuese, told RFA ([Radio Free Asia](#)) that he had been held for 10 months after a raid on his church in 2018. Apparently authorities have been detaining Christians in secretive, ‘transformation’ facilities, set up in mobile buildings and basements, to make them renounce their faith.

“They threaten, insult and intimidate you. These were United Front officials, men, women, sometimes unidentified, usually in plain clothes. The police turn a blind eye to this,” Li said. “You have to accept the statement they prepare for you. If you refuse, you will be seen as having a bad attitude and they will keep you in detention and keep on beating you.” Li also spoke of fellow inmates who had been arbitrarily detained in these brainwashing facilities. Most had been released on bail during

criminal detention for taking part in church-related activities. They hadn’t done anything that could trigger any criminal prosecution, so police sent them to the “transformation” facilities instead. [Source: Li Nuo of RFA’s Mandarin Service on April 1st, 2021.]

On April 6, 2021 [ChinaAid](#) reported a police raid on the Yanjiao Abundance Church, a small, 40-member evangelical house church, in Hubei Province. Although they were not meeting at the time, all their guitars, speakers, communion supplies and other property were confiscated, and their landlord was forced to cancel their lease. A tattered remnant of a ripped-down poster was remained on the wall of the room. It read, “...and will come again to judge the living and the dead.”

What a Difference 30 Years Makes

Our former Director of Literature writes about how the CCSM literature programme got started in 1990...

“I remember on my early trips that we used to carry books and Bibles across the border into China because most of our books were printed outside. I used to dress in a suit and tie and go into China as a businessman. I would carry a suitcase and holdall, and these would be filled with books and bibles. I even put small books down my socks to try to

maximize each trip across the border! We would do many border crossings and take the books to a hotel where they would be stored until we had enough to move on to other parts of China.”

[The literature border crossings – which over the years were done by countless foreign volunteers - were accompanied by amazing miracles and very few

PRAYER POINTERS

MAY 2021

MOOCs

Thank God that education is now widely available to all Chinese citizens in all corners of the nation.

Pray that Chinese seminaries will be given the opportunity to offer scalable courses online, making them more affordable and widely available.

Pray that the Lord will raise up those that will defend the Biblical integrity of their teaching and resources.

As in 1 John 2:26, Pray that China's believers will abide in Christ, being filled with His Holy Spirit who will teach them concerning all things, and protect them from doctrines of error, that Christ warned about in the 'Last Hour.'

Don't Spoil The Party

Praise Jesus who himself experienced persecution in His own country. He knows well the trials of the Chinese church.

Pray that the Chinese Church will patiently endure. Pray the Father will provide for them so they can continue sharing His gospel of salvation. Pray they will hold onto sound doctrine with the help of the Holy Spirit.

We pray for the authorities in their endeavours to bring peace, stability, righteousness and justice; and look forward to the return of the Messiah because we know no human construction has the power to deliver these things.

Perseverance in Trials

Thank the Father for shepherds who are persevering under trial for the sake of their flocks.

Ask the Lord to hide His workers and multiply all that they bring Him.

Pray for the children of families enduring persecution. Pray that they will be comforted and strengthened in the Lord.

Pray for opportunities to offer God's message concerning repentance, redemption and the coming judgement.

Give Praise to the Lord for His faithful promise to return

PRAYER POINTERS

What a Difference 30 Years Makes

How sweet are Your words to my taste, Sweeter than honey. [Psalm 119:103]

Thank You Lord for your Word that directs our steps, gives understanding, comfort, wisdom, promises and life.

As intrigues, conspiracies, wars and rumours of wars increase, pray that the love of the church will not grow cold for their brothers and sisters under the shadow of persecution.

Pray that we will not grow discouraged or weary of fishing, but that the Lord will show us where to cast the nets.

New Frontier For Mission

Pray for vision and wisdom for the Chinese church as they take up the mantle of front line missionaries to the world.

Pray for organisations like FeildPartner and OMF who are mobilizing to provide support.

Pray for a rich harvest through the Silk Road and Africa as we enter a new season of mission.

News From CCSM UK

Pray for the Christians in China to regain 'favour' with their neighbours and local communities

Pray that there will be a new sense of God's peace and closeness that will encourage and embolden the Christians

Pray for the authorities to see the positive impact Christians have and be willing to accept them as 'good citizens'

Pray for churches still struggling to gather together, that they would know encouragement from God and a renewed unity in worship



Chinese Church Support Ministries

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



deliveries did not make it through.]

“In that first year we printed twenty thousand books but later this would grow to one and a half million in one year!

This was only possible because we started printing inside China.

I remember those early days of meeting our contacts as we handed over the bags of books. On one occasion a young student girl had travelled hours to meet us. She looked so small when we met her outside the hotel that we wondered how she would get them back to her hometown. But when she saw the books, she was overwhelmed. She wept and thanked us over and over again. I will never forget this reaction, though as time went on it happened many times over.

By the way, she got the books safely back to her hometown.

On another delivery trip our contact was a street cleaner. We arrived at his home around midnight under cover of darkness.

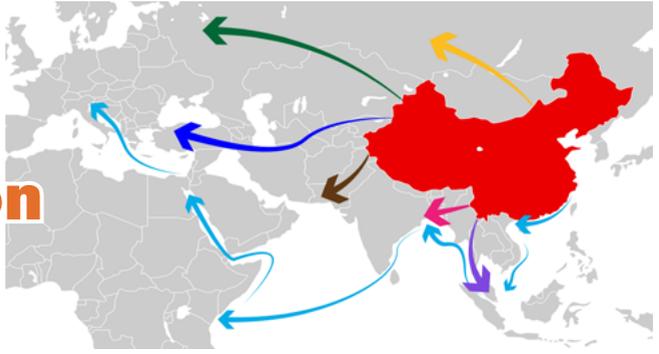
We took the bags of books into his house and helped him store them in cupboards and under the beds. As we drank tea together, he asked us if we would do a Bible study with him and his wife. This was in the early hours of the morning and he had to be up at 4am to go to work. Such was his hunger for the Word of God!”

In 1990 we had just 40 book titles. In 2021, through our SD card and app, we now offer over 1000 book titles. Through this same microchip technology, we can now provide on the same card audio tapes, videos with preaching teaching and praise and worship etc.

- We no longer need to courier large bags of books across the borders
- Much has changed but some things haven't.
- Believers in China still treasure the Bibles and the literature we provide them.

And the hunger for God's word is still apparent. The young girl and the street cleaner have many counterparts today!

New Frontier For Mission



Christians are familiar with the Back to Jerusalem movement. Its aim is to send Chinese missionaries to all the Buddhist, Muslim and Hindu people who live between China and Jerusalem.

Their access is mostly along the famous Silk Road - an ancient and now revitalised network of trade routes connecting the East and West.

The Silk Road is named from the lucrative trade in silk beginning in the Han dynasty in China (202BC - 220AD).

Though silk was the major trade item exported from China, many other goods and ideas were exchanged, including **religions. History may repeat!**

In his acclaimed 2018 book (best seller in both the UK and China!) “The New Silk Roads”, author Peter Frankopan describes a new world order centred on the countries of the Silk Road: Reviewing this book the Guardian wrote:

“In contrast to the secessionist drive of Trump and Brexit, Frankopan shows how nations along the old

Silk Road have been busily cultivating cross-border cooperation. A Eurasian Economic Union already reaches from Belarus through Russia to Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, and has engaged in trade talks with Iran. Then there’s “the Bright Road initiative of Kazakhstan, the Two Corridors, One Economic Circle initiative of Vietnam, the Middle Corridor initiative of Turkey, the Development Road initiative of Mongolia” – all echoes, of course, of the biggest connective project of all, China’s One Belt, One Road initiative.”

There is a parallel and related story in mission.

Whilst mission for several centuries has been characterized by the West taking Christianity to the East and to Africa, in the 21st Century this is being turned on its head.

The ready accessibility of China to the countries bordering the Silk Road is a huge missionary opportunity for the Chinese Church to enter almost unnoticed into the Silk Road

nations. The church in China is well aware of this harvest field opening before them.

Similarly, China's expanding presence in Africa provides another opportunity for Christianity to go along for the ride.

Jesse Mugambi, professor of religious studies at the University of Nairobi notes:

“China is now winning contracts to build churches because its corporations are outbidding those from elsewhere.”

So not only is the atheistic Chinese Government building houses of worship across Africa, but it also supplies for example 75% of all bibles in Kenya.

Ironically some of these Bibles find their way into the hands of overseas Chinese and increasing numbers are coming to faith.

Many churches in Africa are reaching

out to Chinese expatriates. Missionaries from Taiwan, Hong Kong and some from the Mainland are serving overseas. Mainland churches hope to increase this figure to 20,000 by 2030.

The Back to Jerusalem movement has an even more ambitious goal of having 100,000 Chinese missionaries working in 51 states along the Belt and Road.

In the West we cannot be front line operatives in these mission ventures. But we do have key roles in prayer and training.

We can all take part in the first. And we can support and encourage specialist organisations such as our colleagues at FieldPartner (Fieldpartner.org) who are seeking through their Chinese programme to offer a full training and support package for Chinese missionaries.

This is the new frontier of mission in 2021!

News From CCSM UK



I was told recently that in a major Chinese city, the climate or attitude towards Christians was ‘cold’. This was in contrast to how it was, maybe 2 years ago. Until the recent crack-down on Christian belief and practice, many churches and individual Christians had steadily gained a good reputation for serving the community and having

good moral standards. This now seems to be challenged and Christians are again being portrayed as ‘bad citizens’, who make bad decisions and who might influence your child, your family, your neighbourhood for the worse. This increases a feeling of wanting to avoid Christians in case they ‘contaminate’ others.

How can Christians in China regain

‘favour’ with their neighbours and the local communities? We read in Acts,

“Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” [Acts 2:46-47]

They ‘enjoyed the favour of all the people’, and this undoubtedly gave them peace and allowed the gospel to be shared more easily. There does not seem to be a simple answer as to how to gain favour. It was something the early church enjoyed – at least for a while before the persecution began.

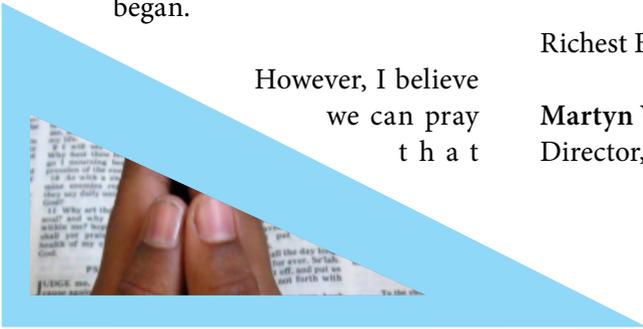
However, I believe
we can pray
t h a t

Christians in China will be seen with favour. That their lives will be a good witness, that their words will be heard and accepted and that they will point others to the Lord Jesus Christ.

We should also pray for the Christians to have a sense of peace and an awareness of God’s presence with them. We should also pray for the churches, especially the ‘house churches’ as many of them still cannot meet together, and the freedoms they had gained have been removed, so they are limited to private meetings, usually in small numbers. Pray that the church leaders will have a fresh sense of God’s calling on their lives and a picture of how they can be ‘salt and light’ to the communities around them.

Richest Blessings,

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