



CHINESE CHURCH SUPPORT MINISTRIES

CHINA PRAYER LETTER



OCTOBER 2021

Private Education Law

You may be surprised to hear that one in every five students in China attends a private school. In fact, over the last twenty years Chinese parents have been scrimping and saving to get their children into them. Why? Because private schools are perceived to give students the best chance to score well in the *Gaokao*, the national exam that determines which tertiary establishments will accept them.

Private schools generally have smaller class sizes, higher quality teachers, quality facilities and prestige. Admission is not dependent on exam scores but on ability to pay the fees. In addition, the *hukou* (household registration) restrictions that prevent children attending public schools beyond their registered zone do not apply to private schools.

In 2020, there were 186,700 private schools in China, making up over one-third of all schools in China.



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There are nine years of compulsory education in China usually beginning at age six (K-1 grade) and ending at age 15-16 (K-9 grade). Private education is a significant cost to families and a deterrent to the government's current goals of encouraging larger families.



While developing China's economy, state policies have favoured urban areas in distributing resources to public schools. But, not wanting to be left behind in the field of education, China's rural population favoured the better equipped private schools, despite the higher costs.

There are a number of different school ownership and licencing models – Some are 100 % Chinese owned, others are built with funds from foreign investors, some are government owned and contracted to private business to run. Some schools are not-for-profit, while others operate for profit demanding hefty fees of USD\$30,000 to \$40,000 a year for their superior services.

In 2017, China reined in the rapidly expanding industry. They banned for-profit schools from teaching core curriculum. Though, not-for-profit non-public schools were still able to teach

core curriculum subjects providing their school fees were set by the state. Outside the compulsory education years, (i.e. preschool, and senior highschool through to adult education) curriculums and fees still enjoyed more flexibility, subject to the discretion of Chinese investors and education providers.

One subset of the private school sector is the International schools, which offer bilingual education programmes. From grades 10 to 12 they could offer a foreign or international curriculum, allowing students to take exams such as the British A-levels or the IB Diploma. In the case of Sino-foreign cooperative schools, other countries agree to recognise the student's APT and *gaokao* scores and simultaneously award successful students an international qualification. A number of public schools also operate an international division.

And of course there are the SCFNs (schools for the children of foreign nationals), which are not allowed to take on local Chinese students. However, many astute and affluent Chinese do manage to obtain foreign passports for their children and enroll their children.

Now, on the heels of the recent Dual Reduction Policy which devastated the USD\$100 billion private tutoring industry, more new laws are rolling out. On September 1st 2021, 'Regulations for the Implementation of the Promotion of Privately-run Schools' will halt the teaching of foreign curricula in schools

from kindergarten to grade nine (K-9) and prohibit the ownership or control of any private K-9 schools by foreign entities. All decision-making bodies at private K-9 schools must be Chinese nationals and must include representatives from the regulators. These and other changes indicate that Beijing wants tighter control over what is taught in its schools, and it is particularly taking aim at for-profit private junior and middle schools. The K-9 schools will no longer be able to organise entrance tests or recruit in

advance. Online educators must obtain the required licences and systems, and not-for-profit private schools are not entitled to provide preschool education.

The Financial Times has reported that, since August, over a dozen private school owners had relinquished their schools to the state without compensation. By levelling the playing field with public schools, the more expensive private schools know they will struggle to draw customers.

Early Rain

The CCP is continuing its relentless campaign against Christians who do not join their State-led church.

China's house churches and family churches were estimated to have numbers as high as 100-150 million believers before the February 2018 Religious Regulations came into effect, but within a year they were all forced to either join

the Three
Self Patriotic
Movement (TSPM)
or forego meeting
together.

Chengdu City's Early Rain Covenant Church (ERCC) is perhaps the best known and most publicized victim of these regulations as its senior pastor,

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Wang Yi spoke out strongly against state oversight of the church. He received a nine year prison sentence after being charged with “instigating subversion of state power” and “illegal business management”.

The Church’s property and buildings were confiscated but its members have chosen not to join the TSPM. The cost of being unable to reconcile their faith with the State Church has been high. As they attempt to continue meeting together, even in small groups, they are constantly raided, their leaders are regularly detained, members are followed, surveilled and harassed. Today Wang Yi’s wife is still under 24 hour surveillance.

The sprawling city of Chengdu is the capital city of Sichuan Province. In September, the Province’s Ministry of Civil Affairs, included ERCC in its list of “illegal social organisations” and police there now refer to the group as “*xie jiao*” (translated “heterodox teaching”) a term often incorrectly interpreted as “cult”. It is hard not to smile at the irony of an atheist government deciding what is

an orthodox religion.

If Early Rain has been added to an official list of *xie jiao*, it will have consequences for its leaders. Establishing a *xie jiao* or illegally holding *xie jiao* assemblies are crimes punishable by three to seven years of imprisonment “or more”. Congregations of over 50 followers will attract even longer prison terms.

Ren Ruiting was a member of ERCC, and a seminary student there at the time Pastor Wang Yi was arrested and the crackdown on the church began in earnest. She and her family managed to flee China, and eventually got to America with the help of ChinaAid. In [her story](#), which was published on Sept 9, 2021 on World Magazine’s website (wng.org), she tells of the frightening events in the wake of the initial raids.

Ren recalled, “police urged her to sign a paper saying she would stop attending Early Rain worship services, stop engaging in a cult, and agree to participate in the government’s correction work, which she believed referred to re-education classes.” She was not allowed to leave the police station until she agreed to add them to her WeChat account as a means of tracking her location and contacts.

Moving tales of families’ repeated evictions have reached the media, showing neighbours and landlords appearing to be increasingly hostile. One ERCC member shared how apartment

building guards had called the police to a gathering she attended.

Weddings and funerals have become rare events whereby church members have been able to reunite, and even then, the leaders have been detained to prevent them from attending.

But everything is not doom and gloom for Early Rain. According to the World article, believers reported drawing closer to God in their trials, and another ERCC leader reported “tremendous” growth since the crackdown!

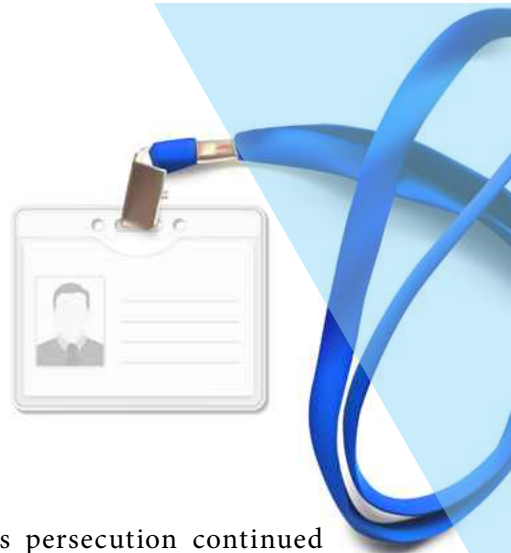
Wang Yi had made a point of preparing his church for the persecution he saw coming. The small group leaders are caring for the scattered members, restoring leaders after their time in prison, breaking into still smaller gathering sizes and training for more church planting. Although many children are forced to attend state schools, incredibly the Christian school continues, with classes divided amongst different homes.

The signature of this church is its resilience, its determination not to give up communion or meeting together, and their love for one another.

October Briefs

What’s in a name?

The names of China’s Christian assemblies have changed over time to reflect their situation. With the cruel and brutal persecution experienced by Christians during the Cultural Revolution churches were all driven into hiding and collectively became known as the “Underground Church” (*dixia jiaohui*). After the Cultural Revolution the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) became established, and churches became known as “registered” (*dengji jiaohui*) or “unregistered churches” (*meidengji jiaohui*) - the former also called the “official church” or “state church”. All denominations in the TSPM, were designated Protestant.



As persecution continued to ease during Hu Jintao’s era (2003-2013), people began calling the independent networks and congregations “house churches” or “family churches” and the smaller ones, “house gatherings”.

But recently, ChinaSource reported a new designation titled *tizhinei* (“inside the system”) being applied to registered churches and *tizhiwai* (“outside the system”) to unregistered churches. They raise the point that the new term could generate greater negative perceptions against unregistered believers. The term does not differentiate simply between the two groups within the church population, rather it separates the unregistered believers from those in the general population. Effectively making them “community outsiders”.

Casting nets



As fishers of men, it's natural to feel frustration at being barred from our favourite fishing grounds. Rising geo-political tensions, screeds of new regulations and Covid-19 travel restrictions have certainly erected “no fishing” signs next to many waters that previously brought in abundant harvests. But fishing on the ‘other side of the boat’, or maybe just closer to home, is still a great option.

Some may be surprised that the U.S. has granted Chinese student visas at pre-pandemic levels. In fact, the U.S. Embassy in Beijing said it had

issued 85,000 student visas since May.

The language debate

Did you know that there are 275 indigenous languages of China? Around half of these are either under threat or nearing extinction as Mandarin is increasingly used as a tool to unify the nation. At least 70% of Chinese speak Mandarin, but by the time this generation finish their schooling the proportion will likely be closer to 100%. Unlike the Babel event when languages were confused, we now have a nation containing one fifth of the World’s population, nearly all speaking one language!

Questions and debate are now being raised in China as to why English should be taught as a core subject in primary and junior secondary schools, and why it should be compulsory in the university entrance exam, the *Gaokao*. In August, Shanghai forbade local elementary schools from holding final exams for the English language. The purpose was to lessen the pressures on students and parents, but there is also a growing nationalism in China that is pushing back at all things foreign. After all, even Xi Jinping, China’s paramount leader, doesn’t appear to speak English.

It has also been pointed out that ethnic minority children struggle to master two other languages in addition to their mother tongue to gain access to educational and economic resources. This can be to the detriment of their

PRAYER POINTERS

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Private Education Law

Give thanks that China is seeking to address the pressures and high costs parents are paying to school their children.

Pray for the private school teachers, staff, owners and investors affected by the changes.

Pray for our co-workers, that they will know God's peace, leading and purpose.

Pray for the private school boards and decision making bodies, as they adjust to the changes.

Pray for China's children that they will not grow up without opportunity to know the Lord.

Early Rain

Praise God that he has promised never to leave or forsake his church.

Praise God that he is continuing to draw people to himself through the faithful testimony of ERCC.

Pray that the church in China will uphold the integrity of the Gospel of Peace with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Pray for Wang Yi and for other Pastors and followers of Christ in prison.

Pray that families who have been evicted will find better accommodation.

October Briefs

Praise God that we can come boldly to the Father and make our requests known to Him in Jesus name.

Pray for believers who face increasing mistrust and intolerance from neighbours.

Pray that the Lord will show us where to cast our nets.

Pray that God will send labourers into the field prepared to invest in the Chinese language.

Pray that language learning will remain open as a way to reach out to Chinese.



Chinese Church Support Ministries

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

PRAYER POINTERS

The Assassin's Mace

Help us all to recognize the power we have through prayer to make a difference in China.

Let us resolve to take up the "Assassin's Mace" and use it against spiritual strongholds to God's glory and for His purposes.

Thank you for the privilege we have to be able to pray for China and the missionaries who work there – local and foreign. Through our prayers we can bring hope and life to a people desperately seeking both.

The English Doctor

Praise God that the Holy Spirit can use a simple song to touch and change a heart.

Praise God for the many who have served in mission, seemingly anonymously, yet whom God has used to touch lives through the generations.

Pray that God will raise up more seemingly ordinary workers who will do extraordinary things like Dr. Li.



Shepherd boy, Golok, Amdo, Tibet, by tsemdo.thar, Flickr (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

own mother tongue and even to their culture. This is a great sacrifice if they are one of the vast majority of Chinese who will never have an English conversation again after leaving school. Especially as electronic devices now are wonderful at translating documents, websites, and even emails.

For decades, English has been considered vital to climbing China's career ladders, to studying-abroad, gaining access to information and connecting with the world. So, could it that now its days in China are numbered? A recent online

survey with about 40,000 respondents revealed that 85 percent agreed that students should continue to learn English. For now, English is still the international trade language.

Certainly, historically, the most effective missionaries have been those that learnt the language of those they sought to reach. Like the Chinese, they invested in language, knowing there would be rewards in the future. Perhaps now is a good time to consider the Chinese language.

The Assassin's Mace

In ancient Chinese folklore, there is a legend about a hero confronted by a more powerful enemy. Stronger than a giant and armed with the most expensive weapons of the day, the enemy was feared by all. But the hero did not shrink from challenging this mighty enemy in a fight to the death, because the hero had a secret weapon. Hidden in his wide shirtsleeves was a short lightweight, spiked club capable of splitting a sword – or a skull. On its own, the club – or mace as it was called – did not appear dangerous, but in the hands of the hero it could be used to knock out an enemy with a single blow.

The legend is similar to the Biblical story

of David and Goliath but instead of the underdog being saved by God, he is saved by a secret weapon called *shashoujian*. Translated into English it roughly means 'The Assassin's Mace'.

The Assassin's Mace is a trump card that ensures victory over a powerful opponent.

This phrase is widely used these days especially in China/US relationships. It refers to something that appears inconsequential but is capable of paralyzing the most powerful foe. Governments desperately seek such a weapon.

In the face of seemingly



insurmountable challenges, Christian workers in China know that they too have such a weapon.

To the uninitiated, to those who do not know God, it seems to have little merit or value. But to the Christian, it could be said that the Assassin's Mace is PRAYER.

And not just the prayers of those on the front line but even more importantly the prayers of you, our faithful friends, who read this Letter.

Hudson Taylor knew this to be true. He said: "Pray for those you send, shield them by prayer."

JO Fraser, missionary to the Lisu people said: "Christians at home can do as much for foreign missions as those actually on the field. . . ."

Fraser urged his prayer partners to assume a greater role. "I am not

asking you just to give 'help' in prayer as a sort of sideline, but I am trying to roll the main responsibility of this prayer-warfare on you!! "

CCSM asks you who read this Prayer Letter to take up the "Assassins Mace".

In Chinese folklore it brought down powerful foes.

In Christian history when David went into the battle field, he said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel."

When we all pray in the name of the Lord of Hosts we have the "Assassin's Mace" in our hand. As we pray through the prayer points in this Letter we can break down strongholds and bring down powerful foes.

The English Doctor

[The writer is a Mainland Chinese believer who has lived in the West since 1995.]

I am often asked: “When did you become a Christian?”

Many Chinese become believers in Jesus after they come to the West. They often have amazing stories to tell about walking into a church out of curiosity and finding God! Some experience random acts of kindness and hospitality from Christians who model Christ’s love.

But that’s not my story. I’m a 4th generation believer from an extended family of Christians who lived (and some still live) in South China’s Guangdong Province.

You will not find the details of our family journey written down anywhere and there are no photographs. Yet the story has been told and retold through the generations. I have heard it literally hundreds of times from my own Mum as well as from my uncles and aunties.

The story began sometime between 1890 and 1900 and it started with an English lady. We have never seen photos of her. We can only imagine what she looked like. We know nothing of how she came to China. All we know is she



was connected to a Medical Mission in Shantou and her Chinese friends had given her the name, Dr. Li (黎)

She had come one day with two local colleagues to my great grandmother’s village deep in the Guangdong countryside. She spoke fluent Chinese but did not preach. She did not go door to door. She and her two friend strolled through the village and the fields singing a simple chorus – still sung in China today:

Come to (believe) Jesus,

come to (believe) Jesus,

come to (believe) Jesus now.

*Now come to (believe) Jesus, come
to (believe) Jesus now*



Great grandma asked her who was this person they were singing about. Dr. Li told her.

“Was He stronger than the gods we worshipped at our local village temple?”

“He is God above all gods - the Creator of the Universe.

“So why should I continue to follow lesser gods” she asked herself and she made an immediate decision.

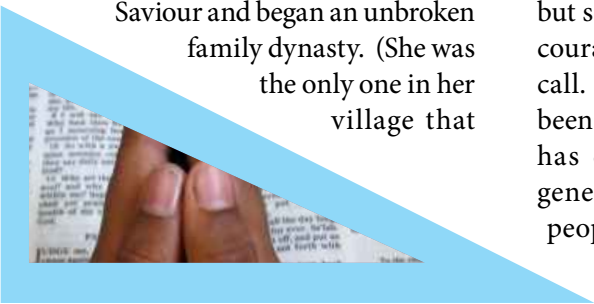
That day she received Jesus as her Saviour and began an unbroken family dynasty. (She was the only one in her village that

day who made that commitment.)

How real was this conversion? Very real! That same day the village leaders dug a grave just outside the village. “If you do not return to the temple and worship our gods you will be thrown in and buried alive” they told her.

Dr. Li quickly escorted my great grandma to Shantou where a new life of blessing and service began. A story for another day that stretches to 2021 so far.

My family know nothing about Dr. Li but some things we are *sure* of! She was courageous. She was obedient to God’s call. She had great faith. No books have been written about her but her influence has continued down through many generations. Who knows how many people’s lives were forever changed by this faithful servant.



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