



# CHINESE CHURCH SUPPORT MINISTRIES CHINA PRAYER LETTER



FEBRUARY 2022

## Olympics with a Shared Future

Visitors to the 2022 Winter Olympics have opportunity to use the new Chinese digital yuan to do their shopping. The e-CNY app first became available for Android and iOS users on the 4th January 2021 but will initially be limited to 12 pilot locations, including Shenzhen, Suzhou, Chengdu, Xiongan, Hainan, Changsha, Xi'an, Qingdao, Dalian and Shanghai as well as Beijing and Zhangjiakou, which are hosting the Olympic Games.

In fact, a variety of crypto-wallet-equipped gadgets, including smartwatches, bracelets, e-certificates, badges and cards can be used for making purchases. Or if preferred, a pair of winter gloves is available with the “digital renminbi wallet module” installed. Just wave



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your hand to make a transaction! Furthermore, no internet connection is required because their NFC (near field communication) technology works offline.

However Bitcoin and other digital currency's cannot be used in China. China knows well that he who controls the purse strings, controls the future.

The Olympics will be an opportunity for China to showcase its amazing new technologies, its 5G network, driverless vehicles, and every robot you could possibly dream of - yes, even ones that make your coffee!

Ant Group's Alipay and Tencent Holdings' WeChat Pay payment platforms also offer the ability to pay with the digital yuan, however users must first transfer currency from their e-CNY app into their digital wallets for Ant's MyBank or Tencent's WeBank. Millions of Chinese users have already downloaded the e-CNY app but department stores have reported shoppers are slow to make the change to the new electronic fiat.

To coax uptake, banks and merchants have issued vouchers, and lotteries have been held with digital yuan giveaways. Some city's have even given away the currency in red packets to encourage the transition.

The motto for the upcoming Beijing 2022 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games is: "Together for a Shared Future." Unfortunately, the neverending pandemic is still an annoying hindrance to this 'togetherness'. China has done its best to keep the Olympic venue in a 'bubble', safe and secure from the virus, and has exercised a stringent zero-covid policy nationwide.

Despite their best precautions, on the 19th of January, Beijing reported cases of the Omicron variant and immediately stopped ticket sales to its public.

The only Chinese visitors to share China's Winter Olympics experience will be nationals who meet "specific requirements". The rest of the world will be able to watch via 4K to 8K ultra high definition video transmission, or can put on goggles to view virtual reality and augmented reality live broadcasting of events. Competitors and their support personnel, media and volunteers will need to be vaccinated or else submit to a 21-day quarantine upon arrival in Beijing.



# Family Education Promotion Law Passed

The Family Education Promotion Law (previously titled the Family Education Law in its first draft) came into effect on the 1st January. The initial draft indicated that parents would face punishments such as financial penalties and detention for failing to fulfill their responsibilities toward family education or for their child's misconduct. The final draft did not include those punishments but does require community workers and officials to admonish and encourage such parents to accept help from parental education services.

Parents are required to establish a "correct conception" of family education, implementing a scientific conception and methodology, and to conscientiously study information specific to their child's stage of development - from womb to high school.

Among the general population the law has been met with mixed opinions. Some are concerned they will be burdened with roles that teachers should provide. Others welcome the help that will become available to parents struggling with children addicted to gaming or other behavioural problems. The law will also help to address parents who place excessive academic pressures on a child.

Family education will become a community affair. Article 9 of the Law states that, "Labor Unions, Communist Youth Leagues, Disabled Persons' Federations, the Science and Technology Association, the Working Committee for the Care of the Next Generation, as well as residents' committees, villagers' committees, and so forth, shall actively carry out efforts on family education together with their own efforts, to provide social support for family

## International Short-Term Teams

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education.”

Recently there has been a drive in education centres, even at pre-school level, to teach children to be wary of xie jiao (evil cults), and there is good reason to teach children about the dangers of cults. Unfortunately, some unregistered churches that refuse to stop meeting have been added to the government’s cult list. Pressure on children to believe the atheist views held by the Party has become intense.

Family education, as opposed to School education has been defined as teaching “moral quality, physical quality, life skills, cultural accomplishment, and behavior habits”. The next few months will shed more light on how the law will be worked out in practice.

Christians who wish to educate their children to know the Lord already find this task very difficult as teaching religion to children under 18yrs is illegal in China. This new law makes it clear that parents “must not coerce, induce, incite, enable, or use minors to engage in activities that violate laws, regulations, and social mores”. It can be expected, therefore, that children found to be attending any Christian gathering could see their parents pushed into “parental education”.

It will be interesting to see how this law affects Christian parents and what opportunities it opens in the area of community family education services, family education guidance agencies and parent schools. According to Article 36: “Natural persons, legal persons, and unincorporated organizations may lawfully establish non-profit family education service establishments.”

## Shenzhen Reformed Holy Church



In late 2019, a group of 60 Christians belonging to the unregistered Shenzhen Reformed Holy Church (SRHC), fled China to seek asylum on South Korea’s Jehu Island. Their desperate hope of achieving asylum in Korea had been very slim as traditionally very few

Chinese Christians have had requests granted.

The church has placed China and South Korea in an awkward situation. Of course, China does not want its citizens fleeing across its borders. It would only inflict loss of face on the government and their policies. South Korea, on the other

hand, does not wish to deal with the consequences of upsetting its powerful neighbour and trade partner. Nor does it wish to cope with an influx of asylum seekers, encouraged by others who have made a home in their free country. So unfortunately it is not surprising that the Shenzhen church's application was rejected.

In China, the lack of freedom to practice their faith, and the level of harassment from authorities attempting to coerce them to join the state church or give up meeting altogether, had become unbearable. Now that their application has been rejected, their situation has become very grave according to Bob Fu of China Aid. He warned, "They were called traitors. This is the

highest political crime, worse than the subversion of state power." According to Fu, "If they get deported back to China by Korean officials, every member of this church will face extreme punishment like torture, arrest, and forced disappearance." It is hoped that South Korea will allow the congregation to remain in Jehu.

An American private Christian School in Dallas has been providing online schooling to the children, and they are raising funds to assist the church. ChinaAid is seeking a diplomatic solution from the U.S. government for their resettlement, and has asked the wider church to intercede for them.

## The Disappeared Church

One by one, Chinese authorities have been adding regulations that make normal church life and online expression of faith utterly impossible for anyone, without them being identified, registered and recorded as a religious person into the government data system. After March this year, everyone who preaches, teaches or participates in religious information - whether online or offline - must be registered. Religious conversation is about to disappear from the broader internet - it will only remain on approved sites, permitted for



religious internet services.

In a matter of four years, Xi Jinping has effectively driven the unregistered church back underground to be neither publically seen nor heard.

This is not the first time the church has been “disappeared” from public life. When in different circumstances the church was silenced during the Cultural Revolution, it miraculously mushroomed in numbers. The world will have to wait and see how God will use this persecution to build his house this time.



Since the 2018 **Revised Religious Affairs Regulations** were released, with devastating impact on China’s prolific and vibrant family and house churches, all unregistered venues have been forced to close and their members prevented from gathering. Unapproved religious events faced fines of 100,000 yuan to 300,000 yuan. When this began, the family and house churches were estimated to have at least 100 million members. Some estimates were as high as 150 million.

physical gatherings, but their virtual gatherings also. The revised regulations decreed that ‘engagement in internet religious information services shall be upon the review and consent of a Religious Affairs Department’. And of course, this consent was denied to churches operating outside the government-led Three Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM).

Officials were generally unsuccessful in efforts to redirect the unregistered, “underground” congregations into the Three Self state church, which itself has had to deal with significantly more government interference, surveillance and control since 2018. As Cov-19 hit, in-person meetings of the TSPM churches were also stopped.

Churches moved to virtual meetings. Some underground churches also continued to meet online despite the risks. One example of this would be Early Rain Covenant Church’s Elder Li Yingqiang, who was detained for “disturbing social order” on 24th December 2021 as police attempted to stop him preaching at the church’s online Christmas Eve service. In many cases, smaller WeChat groups were used to try and avoid attention from the authorities.

Next came the 2020 “**Administrative Measures for Religious Groups**” decreeing that “religious organisations conducting internet religious information services should improve their internal management systems...”

Doors were not only closed to their

# PRAYER POINTERS

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## Olympics with a Shared Future

Pray that the church will be prepared when the digital currency is fully adopted, as with it will come the full force of the social credit system against unregistered brothers and sisters.

Pray that the love of the Chinese church will not grow cold toward brothers and sisters who are either inside or outside the system.

“I give you a new commandment - to love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are to love one another. Everyone will know by this that you are my disciples - if you have love for one another.” [John 13 NET]

Pray that Christians will gain a deeper understanding of the future promised to us in Christ, and the reason we need salvation. Pray the Holy Spirit will help Chinese Christians find boldness to share this Good News.

## Family Education Promotion Law Passed

Thank the Heavenly Father that the Family Education Promotion law will help reduce the excessive pressure that has been placed on Chinese children to perform academically.

Ask the Lord to assist believers to start, and successfully run, Family Education non-profits establishments.

Pray that these establishments will be able to effectively help and reach out to parents in the community.

Pray that the Lord will guide and protect Christian parents to raise their children to know Him.

## Shenzhen Reformed Holy Church

Pray that a resolution is made for the church that does not cause friction between South Korea and China.

Pray that families will not be separated.

Pray for wisdom for those involved in decision making and assisting the church.

Pray that funds will come in where needed.

Thank God for those who have reached out to help with the children's education, legal aid and other assistance.

# PRAYER POINTERS

## The Disappeared Church

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” [Phil 4: 6-7].

Pray for both churches in China as they face an uncertain time.

Pray that they will use this time to grow deeper in the Word.

Pray that the Lord will work out His purposes in his church.

## A Glimmer of Hope

Give praise to the Lord who is ultimately in control and working out His plan.

Pray that the Lord will not ignore the suffering of the Uyghur, Kazakh and others in the reeducation camp system, or those undergoing forced or coerced labour.

Pray that Uyghur overseas will hear the gospel message, and that the changes in leadership in Xinjiang will soon permit them to unite with their families in Xinjiang and share the Good News.

Pray for peace in Xinjiang and the spread of the gospel there.

Pray for the new leaders that they will govern with kindness and compassion for the people they serve.



**Chinese Church Support Ministries**

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and support the church and  
the people of China

Building on this, yet another law, the 2021 “**Administrative Measures for Religious Clergy**” instituted a national database of all authorized clergy. Anyone claiming to be a pastor without being registered was guilty of a crime. Article 51 placed the onus on clergy to ensure the entrances to religious places of worship were regulated through strict “gatekeeping, verification of identity, and registration.” Bear in mind that the only way to buy a paper bible or Christian book is through the door of a TSPM church.

And now, due to kick in on 1st March 2022, are the “**Administrative Measures for Internet Religious Information Services**”. A permit must now be granted in order to disseminate religious information. Without the permit, one cannot ‘proselytize online, and must not carry out religious education or training, publish preaching or repost or link to related content, must not organize the carrying out of religious activities online, and must not broadcast religious rites such as obeisances to Buddha, burning incense, ordinations, services, mass, or baptisms, through means such as text, images, audio, or video either live or in recordings.’

So what is permitted? According to Article 15, ‘Religious groups, religious schools, and temples and churches that have obtained Internet Religious Information Services Permits may have religious professionals and teachers from

religious schools preach on online platforms, applications, and forums and so forth that they have established themselves, and interpret religious doctrine and rules with content conducive to social harmony, the progress of the times, and healthy civilization, leading religious citizens in patriotism and compliance with laws.

The most significant thing about this new law is the additional requirement that, ‘Those providing internet religious information broadcast platform services shall sign agreements with the platform’s registered users and verify users’ real identity information.’ [Article 20]

It is questionable whether every church will be able to apply for a license as the permits will require the applicant has trained reviewers, secure management systems and facilities and funds to support these. Foreign owned or managed organisations cannot apply.

Wider internet laws (not specific to religion) are also being put in place will place the onus on all internet providers to ensure that religion is not seen or heard on sites that do not have a permit. Whether this will effect personal email accounts is uncertain.



## A Glimmer of Hope

In 2016 Chén Quánguó(陈全国), one of 25 members of the Politburo, was appointed Communist Party chief in Xinjiang. Chen had served five years in Tibet as Party Secretary and was credited with restoring security in the restive region through surveillance and control.

Chen massively increased police numbers and recruited Uyghur for security personnel, police assistants and grid “social management” positions - cleverly saving money on fully trained police and significantly boosting Uyghur employment. Although many of the other measure he applied drove away business for both Han and Uyghur.

According to 2017 information by Adrian Zenz and James Leibold, Chen forced many Uyghurs across Xinjiang to return to their home

regions. Even inside the region, travel required a permit, and free flow of labour was severely restricted. Checkpoints nearly doubled travel times, increasing the cost of doing business. As did heavy security requirements, such as installing metal detectors or even airport-style X-ray scanners at entrances, procuring monitoring equipment, alarms, riot-proof doors, or having to hire private security guards. Itinerant Uyghur shops were systematically shut down.

In his second year in Xinjiang, the “re-education” camps began to proliferate along with their associated factories and housing.

Most have heard of the devastating and ongoing effect that the camps have had on Uyghur culture and families.

Yet, in securing the region, both Uyghur and local Han have been affected by Chen's extreme surveillance and heavy handed measures. Nor is he revered in the international community, being on the list of individuals sanctioned by the United States for crimes against humanity.

Six years on, in December 2021, it was announced that Chén Quánguó would be replaced by Ma Xingrui(马兴瑞) the governor of the economic powerhouse, Guangdong Province.



He was, prior to that, the Communist Party Secretary of the special economic zone, Shenzhen.

Ma has a

background in the aerospace sector and has held the positions of Director of State Administration for Science Technology and Industry for National Defense (SASTIND), Director of the China National Space Administration, and General Manager of China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation. He was chief commander of Chang'e 3, China's first lunar surface exploration, and chief engineer of the Shijian 5 satellite project. Other notable positions held

by Ma in his career include Director of the China Atomic Energy Authority, Vice Minister of Industry and Information Technology, and Head of the Political and Legal Affairs Commission of Guangdong.

Uyghur have expressed a glimmer of hope that Ma Xingrui's appointment as Xinjiang as Party Chief could be a step toward reopening the region to the world. He has been described as having an innovative mind, and being a "straight-talking man of principle" His experience in Guangdong and Shenzhen will be useful in guiding Xinjiang's economic development, and addressing labor and human rights concerns which have been causing trading partners to avoid the region.

A new governor has also been appointed for Xinjiang, Erkin Tuniyaz(艾尔肯·吐尼亚孜), who was formerly vice governor of the region.



Although ethnic Uyghur himself, he has earned notoriety for his vociferous defense of Chinese policies toward

the Uyghur.

In his own words: “On the basis of implementing the UN’s Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, we took preventive counterterrorism and deradicalization measures and established the vocational education and training centers according to law.

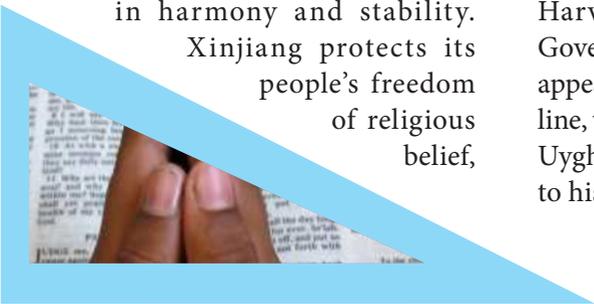
In his February 2021 video address to the United Nations, Tuniyaz said: “All trainees of these facilities had graduated” by October 2019 and now had “stable jobs and are living a normal life.”

Unfortunately, Tuniyaz’s views are not echoed by the voices coming from the Uyghur community. Neither are they agreeable with his statement that in Xinjiang, “Various religions coexist in harmony and stability.

Xinjiang protects its people’s freedom of religious belief,

fully meet the faithful’s needs for their normal religious activities. Islamic classics and popular books have been translated and published, infrastructure conditions for religious venues markedly improved and the public service level continuously upgraded. All these have won wide praise and support from the religious believers.”

Tuniyaz has a masters degree in economics and served as deputy head of the Organization Department of Communist Party of China Xinjiang Committee and deputy Party secretary of Hotan before becoming vice chairman of Xinjiang regional government in 2008. He studied law at the Party School of the Communist Party of China Central Committee between 2009 and 2011 and was a senior visiting scholar at the Harvard’s John F. Kennedy School of Government in 2012. Although Tuniyaz appears to passionately support the Party line, there is a glimmer of hope that, being Uyghur, he may also act with compassion to his own people.



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