



CHINESE CHURCH SUPPORT MINISTRIES

CHINA PRAYER LETTER



JULY 2022

News Briefs

What's been happening in China in the last month? Here are some summaries of key events...

More Than A Health Code?

Hundreds of thousands of customers of four rural banks in Henan province have been unable to withdraw funds from their accounts. The accounts have been frozen since April, and customers were initially told it was because the banks were updating their internal systems. It was later revealed the banks are under investigation for illegal practices.

Thousands of desperate customers traveled to Zhengzhou where the banks were located, hoping to withdraw their money. When they were unable to access their funds protests erupted, with a large demonstration on the 23rd May.

Many customers reported that their Health App



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code had changed to red when they entered public transport, hotels or buildings, meaning they (and their close contacts) were unable to travel and had to quarantine for 14 days. To apply to regain their freedom to move around they must obtain two negative Covid tests within three days. Some reported their app returned to a green status as they returned home.

Observers say the app appears to have been repurposed as a tool for local officials to prevent protests. The situation has raised concerns about the potential of the Health app to be exploited for furthering political control and to be used beyond its stated purpose of pandemic prevention.

Back To the Countryside

This year has been very difficult for young people seeking employment. China is suffering its highest ever unemployment rate of 18.2% in its cities, for those aged 16 to 24. In an effort to address the problem, regional officials are being asked to attract graduates to village official positions, social work stations and community services. In addition, tax incentives, one-time business subsidies and guaranteed loans will be made available for students who start business in either rural or urban communities, as well as incentives for existing businesses, institutions and social organisations to hire college graduates.

China only
surveys

rates of employment in its urban areas, so it is unclear how this reverse migration policy will impact the rural areas. It has been compared to Mao Zedong's "Up to the Mountains and Down to the Countryside Movement," of the 1950s to 70s, which 'sent-down' around 17 million youth to remote country areas to learn from the rural population. In that campaign it was generally the oldest child in a family that was exiled to the rural extremities. Many of that generation lost the opportunity for higher education.

In many respects, this current 'Down to the countryside' campaign is very different from Mao's campaign which became mandatory.

First Visit in 17 Years

Now for the first time in 17 years, a UN High Commissioner on Human Rights has visited China. Catherine Bachelet's 8-day visit from the 24th May, coincided with the release of the "Xinjiang Police Files"*¹, hacked files pertaining to the Xinjiang reeducation camps. They included camp training drills, police training powerpoints, and top internal documents containing directives on Xinjiang, and personal data from over 300,000 people. Shocking the world, were 2,800 high quality images of detainees from two counties, along with their blood type, ID numbers, DNA, voice data, location and reason for detention. The youngest was a girl of 15 and the oldest was 73 years old.

Bachelet was presented with a book titled,

“Xi Jinping on Respecting and Protecting Human Rights” during her investigation in Xinjiang. Critics called it a ‘staged visit’ hangstrung by covid restrictions that inhibited free access and adequate media coverage.

Although the reeducation program has predominately affected the Muslim community, a handful of Christians are known to have been taken. Whatever actions or inactions follow the delivery of Bachelet’s long-awaited report, it will not

change the fact that the Uyghur, and other arbitrarily detained ethnic minorities in Xinjiang, have suffered greatly. And significantly, this suffering can be attributed to “deradicalising” their faith - irrespective of whether they had committed a crime or not.

(* <https://xinjiangpolice.files.org>)

Riding the Covid Rollercoaster

What a series of highs and lows the people of Chinese have endured over the last month.

The most notable ‘high’ was the release of China’s most populous city, Shanghai, from a gruelling 65-day lockdown. On July 1st the city of 25 million was “unlocked”. Shanghai has China’s largest and busiest port and is a key trading district between China and the world.

Freedom for residents was not complete... or long lasting. Around 650,000 remained confined in “sealed off” zones while cinemas, museums and gyms remained closed. There were restrictions on leaving town as well as quarantines for returnees. Rigorous testing continued. Without a negative P.C.R. test taken within 72 hours, and a green health code on their smartphone, people were not to leave their compound, travel on public transport or

International Short-Term Teams

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gain entry to malls or many other public places. A positive test takes around 12 hours to appear on the phone app. Just eight days after ecstatic citizens poured onto the streets to celebrate freedom, new coronavirus cases pushed parts of Shanghai back into lockdown.

Throat swab testing has become routine for all Chinese in major cities where testing stations have been erected every 15 minute walking distance. That equates to more than 10,000 booths in both Beijing and Shanghai.

The lockdown ended in Beijing on the 6th July. There had been less strict, suspending some public transport, placing some into quarantine, and enforcing work-from-home in much of the city. But only days after measures were eased in Beijing to allow a return to dining out, the entertainment venues were again closed.

Tossed in the wake of these extended lockdowns are small businesses and startups. Many have not been able to survive.

In locked down cities, most schooling has been conducted online, even after cities reopened. For the senior students, the all-important Gaokao exam began on the 7th June. It is the culmination of years of intense study for students who are competing for entry into the country's best universities. Acceptance into a premium university is a life-changing prize that only around 2%

of candidates will attain. The rest will have to settle for lesser institutions. Covid-19 piled complications on top of normal exam stress. Students were directed to different testing sites based on their covid and contact tracing status. Temperature checks, masks and negative P.C.R. test results were the basic prerequisites. Some test takers were discouraged from leaving their homes for two weeks before the exam. Others had to travel to testing sites in specially arranged vehicles from their homes in locked-down areas. Shanghai, postponed the exam till July.

Elsewhere in the country other covid hotspots have flared up. Erenhot, a county-level city in Inner Mongolia, was moved into citywide lockdown. Earlier, in mid May news struck that North Korea, China's neighbour, had imposed a national lockdown announcing a "fever of unknown origin" and finally admitted its first official Covid death. The mystery sickness, widely suspected to be Covid, rampaged throughout the country with over a million said to be suffering from the illness. In Liaoning province, the coastal city of Dandong was locked down in mid April. The city of 2.19 million is separated from North Korea by the Yalu River, and has had unexplained covid cases - apparently among those with no recent community contact.

Entry to the country remains restricted, with visas difficult to get and few international flights, making it costly and hard to get a seat. Anyone who does enter has to quarantine in a hotel, usually

for two weeks. Chinese generally can't leave the country unless it is for work or study and foreign nationals are only able to enter China for work or emergency

humanitarian needs. For now, China is committed to its zero-Covid policy and remains behind its 'Covid curtain'.

Better To Suffer for Doing Right



Xiao Luobiao is a member of the unregistered Early Rain Covenant Church (ERCC) in Chengdu. It is now nearly four years on from the forced closure of Early Rain, and still many of its members continue to meet in small groups as best they can, despite ongoing surveillance and harassment from police.

The ERCC is a Calvinist-leaning church and one of many church groups that will not join the Three Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM).

Early Rain was one of the first churches to be forcibly closed after the 2018 religious regulations were introduced. It was famously raided on the 9th December 2018 with over 100 congregants being arrested. Leading up to this, their Senior Pastor Wang Yi had given sermons that clearly aimed to prepare the members to remain faithful to the gospel in the face of persecution.

Since that event, Xiao Luobiao, a youth leader, and his wife and children have

been routinely followed, intimidated and threatened. He has been summoned to the local police station several times, once for "illegal proselytization." Police entered his home to prevent him and his wife attending online worship on Christmas day. Then, last October he was summoned to the police station on suspicion of "organizing an evil cult".

On May 12th this year Xiao Luobiao was again taken to the police station. This time he was taken from a fellow Christian's house where several teenagers from Christian families were studying. Although Xiao Luobiao was not officially charged it seems clear that the police do not intend to leave this family alone, any time soon.

During one of his 'visits' to the police station Xiao Luobiao said he recited 1 Peter 3:17, which says, "After all, if it is the will of God, it is better to suffer for doing right than for doing wrong." He said, "This sentence comforted me greatly, and I would like to share this with my dear brothers and sisters."

In 2006, Early Rain Covenant Church planted a church in Deyang, a city in Sichuan Province. The new church was made up of small groups and was

called the Early Rain Qingcaodi Church (ERQC). This became an independent church in 2008 and a separate member of the Western China Reformed Presbytery. One man, Hao Ming served as an elder for more than ten years before he retired in March 2021. Then he and his wife served Chengdu Early Rain Covenant Church. Elder Hao Ming was one of those who signed Wang Yi's "Joint Statement: A Declaration for the Sake of Christian Faith," in 2018.

Just three days after the Early Rain Covenant Church was raided, police also broke into Qingcaodi church and expelled the worshipers. They posted a notice on the gate stating the church was banned, issued by the Religious Affairs Bureau and Civil Affairs Bureau. And in March of 2021, the Sichuan Province Civil Affairs Department published a list of banned illegal social organizations. Deyang Qingcaodi Church and Chengdu Early

Rain Covenant Church were both on that list. Later that year, on November 17th, Elder Wu Jiannan and Elder Hao Ming for both arrested with a fabricated charge of 'fraud'.

Their legal cases are significant because if they are sentenced with this fabricated charge, then a precedent would be set that could allow all house church preachers to be similarly charged.

On top of this, Hao Ming is 65 years old and is suffering with Hematochezia. He has not been permitted to leave the Deyang City Detention Centre for medical treatment because of its COVID-19 lockdown. His lawyer, who was permitted to visit for the first time after five months, reported that his client was very poor.

[Sources: China Aid and International Christian Concern]

What is Formalism?

It's hard to keep up with all the latest "isms" being churned out of modern society. And so, after hearing of the recent student demonstrations proliferating in China, some may struggle to understand the meaning of the term 'formalism' being chanted by the student protestors.

Fudan University (Shanghai), Peking University, China University of Political Science and Law and

Beijing Normal University, and Tianjin and Nankai universities held protests in April and May. These universities house the elite of China's young academics. Video footage did manage to reach international news but most seems to have been effectively censored. Even posts shared on Twitter quickly vanished.

The catch cry ringing out from the student crowds at Tianjin was,

PRAYER POINTERS

JULY 2022

News Briefs from the Nation

Give thanks that the Lord is ruling over all. [Zech 7:9 NET]

As financial security, justice, and peace are all being shaken, pray that Chinese believers will be able to lean on Christ and present His light to the World.

Pray that the Lord will give the Christian graduates favour and they will be sent exactly where they are needed.

Riding the Covid Rollercoaster

As the authorities of this World continue to keep people separated and divided, afraid and uncertain of the future, give thanks to our God who gives His people unity in His Spirit, peace that passes understanding, and the confident hope of the blessing through Messiah Jesus. (Psalm 133).

Pray that God's people in China will be quick to look to Him for help.

In nothing be anxious, but in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus. (Philippeans 4:6-7)

Better To Suffer for Doing Right

Please lift up Xiao Luobiao, his family and others in China who are struggling to meet for fellowship.

Pray that the detained elders will have peace, be comforted and can bear witness to the Lord.

Pray that Elder Hao Ming will be able to receive the medical care he needs.

Pray that the Lord will grant the lawyers wisdom and safety.

Pray that the pastors will not be found guilty of fraud and that the Lord will defend their cases. (Luke 20:25)



PRAYER POINTERS

What is Formalism?

Financial hardship, loneliness and suffering can move people into a dark time in their lives. But from there they can better see the light. Pray that the light of Christ shines brightly through China's Christian students to draw others to Christ.

Pray for families that have been kept apart for prolonged amounts of time.

Pray for Christians who are in a place of authority or responsibility in China.

News Briefs from the Church

Pray that Chinese believers will spend more time devoted to face-to-face discipling.

Ask the Father to help believers to meet together safely.

Pray for the pastors and church administrators that must work within increasing government restrictions and requirements.

The Xinjiang Police Files

"The LORD who rules over all said, 'Exercise true judgment and show brotherhood and compassion to each other.

You must not oppress the widow, the orphan, the foreigner, or the poor, nor should anyone secretly plot evil against his fellow human being.' [Zech 7:9 NET]

Pray that the Xinjiang Police Files will evoke compassion.

Pray that they will be used to make good and positive changes in China, rather than to harm China.

Pray for peace, healing, restoration and reconciliation for the people of Xinjiang.

Pray for broken and seperated families.



Chinese Church Support Ministries

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

“Down with formalism. Down with bureaucratism”.

Most people would feel sympathy for the students frustration with bureaucracy. But what is this ‘formalism’ that the students were protesting?

In the West the term refers to a type of literary criticism used to investigate a text by excluding all influence from beyond the passage itself. For example, formalism would exclude reading a text from a feminist, political, ethnic, or any other such slant that the reader might possess. There is also ‘legal formalism’.

However, in China the term relates to something quite different. This Chinese ‘formalism’ has been defined by some experts as ‘situations or events that are prearranged for a certain outcome’. Others describe it as “doing things for the sake of doing them, or ‘going through the motions’ for the sake of



appearances, rather than for the sake of the results.”

The students’ grievance was that during the coronavirus lockdowns and safety measures had been too difficult to bare. The universities had effectively fenced students into their dorms, meanwhile the prices of food had risen. The procedures to apply for permission to return to their family homes was overly rigorous and exhaustive. They felt that the authorities and local administration had an attitude of indifference toward them.

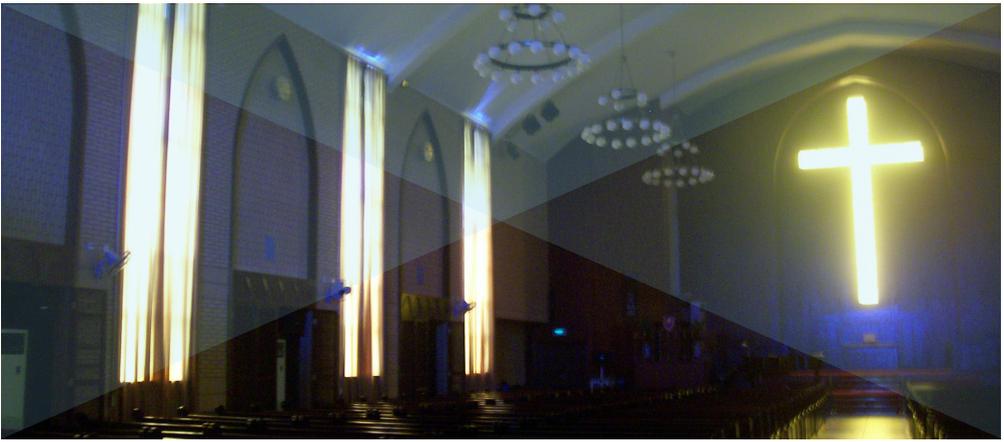
News Briefs from the Church

What’s been happening in China’s Church recently? CCSM look at some key events...

Increased Government Oversight of Churches’ Finance

Another law affecting faith communities came into effect on June 1, 2022. This latest is titled “Measures for the Financial Management of Religious Activity Sites”,

and in article 45 it states that “A religious activity site shall accept the guidance, supervision and inspection of its financial management by the Religious Affairs Department, the Financial Department, and relevant government departments. There are overall 55 articles that clarify Government supervisory responsibilities and



the rights of financial personnel, religious clerical personnel, donors and religious citizens. The January 11, 2010 “Measures for Financial Supervision and Administration of Venues for Religious Activities (for Trial Implementation)” promulgated by the State Administration of Religious Affairs were repealed at the same time.

Religion on the Internet

Christians worldwide are watching to see how Chinese online platforms will enforce new laws governing China’s internet religious information services, that aim to heavily restrict religious visibility and speech on the internet. ChinaChristianDaily.com reported on one Christian woman’s experience. Her account on DingTalk, a popular, all-in-one app for the workplace, has been blocked on several occasions for periods of between three to 28 days. It was upon making a complaint she was told that religious content contained in

her messages was deemed ‘illegal’ and violated the platform’s rules. The laws came into effect on the 1st March 2022.

On WeChat, no Christian website can be found when the keyword “gospel (fuyin)” is typed in.

Abbreviations and pinyin (using a Romanised alphabet rather than Chinese characters for Mandarin) are being used by the Christian community to avoid censorship.

Don’t Stop Meeting Together

On April 17, 2022 Huang Lei the leader of “Yueyang Lou District Rock Bible House Church organised a gathering and 180 people turned up. Unfortunately so did the police.

Because the gathering was without authorization and at a non-religious venue, Nanhu New District Qingkui Yuan Research and Learning Base, Huang Lei was detained for 10 days

and fined 500 yuan. The meeting was also in violation of the ban on gathering during the pandemic restrictions. [Source: ChinaAid]

No Travel Foreseeable

It was announced back in May that China would be restricting all “non-essential” foreign travel during the pandemic. However, what was deemed ‘necessary’ or ‘essential’ travel remains uncertain. Some Christians have complained that they are

being refused permission to apply for, or renew, passports on the basis they practice religion. According to International Christian Concern, several families in Zhejiang and Jiangsu provinces said that immigration officials had questioned the purpose of their passport applications, and later rejected the applications after discovering their religious adherence. Whatever the reason for the rejections, they are particularly disappointing for young Christians seeking higher education offshore.

The Xinjiang Police Files

For six years now we have heard stories coming from China’s Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. Is there anyone who has not seen an account of millions of Uyghur and ethnic minorities that have been taken by night, incarcerated in camps, and subjected to indoctrination, cultural transformation and forced labour?

Underlying China’s rebuttal to the global outcry has been their argument that it is a “human right” to live without poverty or fear of people with terrorist tendencies.

Foreign Minister Wang Yi explained in 2019, “The truth is the education and training centres in Xinjiang are schools



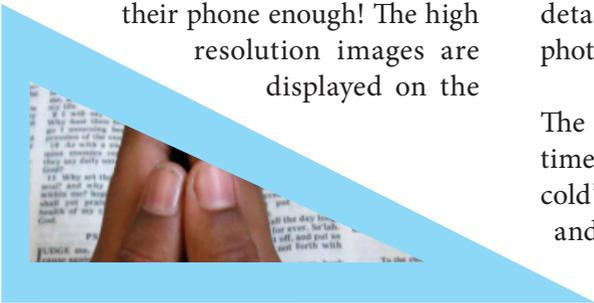
that help people free themselves from extremism.”

Earlier this year, on May 24th 2022, some significant information was released to the public that painted quite a different picture. A huge cache of hacked information from an anonymous source was obtained and published by the U.S. - based Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation. The files, known as the ‘Xinjiang Police Files’, include documents and video detailing prisoner shackling procedures,

information on the facilities, evidence revealing the use of watch towers, machine gun posts, snipers, strike teams, tear gas, tasers and armed guards who were instructed to “shoot-to-kill” any inmates that attempt to escape.

Mugshots are also included in the cache and show the faces and personal details of 2800 people taken from two counties. Overall there is data from over 300,000 people along with more than 23,000 detainee records.

Of concern were the lengthy sentences (up to a decade) for things such as listening to “illegal lectures” on a cell phone, or having encrypted apps installed, but also for evading surveillance by a flat battery or being out of credit, or not using their phone enough! The high resolution images are displayed on the



xinjiangpolicefiles.com website.

Any inference that the camps are “free” vocational education centres or that they are voluntary, is further shattered by a number of speeches included in the collection. They are by high-ranking Party officials and give light to the mindset behind the policies. They also point to the people responsible for the policies.

The BBC said that it did not publish its report on the hacked files until after an investigation was undertaken to verify their authenticity. A consortium of 14 media organisations from 11 countries was able to authenticate significant elements of the Xinjiang Police Files. Relatives have also been able to identify detained family members from their photos.

The Bible warns us that there comes a time when, “the love of many will grow cold”. Certainly it seems that empathy and compassion for the Uyghur’s plight has been scanty.



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