



CHINESE CHURCH SUPPORT MINISTRIES

CHINA PRAYER LETTER



SEPTEMBER 2022

News Briefs

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

Signs of Reopening

Great News!! Some Chinese universities have signaled that they will be accepting foreign students again in September. International flights are slowly beginning to resume, albeit with conditions. Flights with a certain percentage of positive Covid cases will face a one week suspension.

About To Go Negative

According to the World Population Prospects 2022, issued by the Population Division of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, China's population shock will begin next year as the nation enters negative population growth. So far, the 'carrots' offered to families to procreate are not succeeding, and even the lockdowns do not appear to have spawned a baby boom as some thought they might. China is not alone in facing this



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syndrome....in fact over 20 countries are experiencing negative population growth fueled by abortion, birth control, smaller family size, later marriage and longer life spans. Migration is also a factor in some countries. This trend will increase pressure to introduce Euthanasia in order to lessen the burden on the health system. The trend will especially place financial pressure on the poor.

Pelosi Statement

2022 is an era wherein words are taking on a very fluid meaning. The terms “freedom”, “democracy” and “one” are the latest words to join with the word “woman” in losing any concrete definition. After a recent and highly controversial visit to Taiwan, USA Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi gave a statement declaring China one of the “freest” societies in the World. “Don’t take it from me,” she said, “that’s from Freedom House.” She also stated that China is a “strong democracy” and affirmed America stands with China on its One China Policy.

Language Deconstruction

The volleys of censorship warnings that now interrupt the flow in live streams on online social media platforms such as Douyin and Wechat have moved citizens to voice their frustration. In order to navigate the ever-growing list of words banned by social media platforms, live streamers are having to resort to the use of homonyms and intentional misspellings.

Some words and phrases

do not invoke a warning, but their use will limit the traffic and views a video receives. Therefore, content creators self-censor. Concerned netizens have raised the point that deconstruction and reinvention of language using internet jargon and creative wordplay could soon have a profound effect on China’s language development as a whole.

Taking A Preacher Under Your Wings

Wang Xiaohong, a close ally of Xi Jinping, was appointed public security minister on June 25th. One of his first campaigns in office has been “100 days of Action” , designed to strengthen political security and social control nationwide. The campaign has already seen 72,000 suspected criminals arrested. In the province of Xinjiang, State Media divulged that the criminals targeted by the campaign there were specifically Uyghurs deemed to be “religious extremists”, “separatists”, “terrorists” and “two-faced persons”. “Two faced people” can be interpreted as those disloyal to the party or its ideology. The charge has been used against Uyghur officials who hold to their religion or cultural traditions. One police officer in the region’s southern oasis town of Hotan, said that authorities there were focused on “operations against evil forces”. He went on to explain, “Here our main targets, in eliminating evil forces, are those who took people who preached religion illegally ‘under their wings’, protecting them from being prosecuted.”

[Source: RFA RadioFree Asia 6/8/2022]

Increasingly Interconnected

Paul Hattaway is an author whose writing has been both a challenge and an encouragement to Christians to get involved in sharing the gospel to Chinese. His most profound contribution to missions has been the book “*Operation China*”, which catalogued 490 distinct people groups living within China. It highlights the extent to which most remain unreached or do not have scriptures in their first language. It portrays the urgent need to continue the work of evangelising every tribe, nation and tongue.

The enormous diversity among the groups in language, dialect, culture, beliefs and experience could never be met by one-size-fits-all evangelism. However, for governmental purposes, the hundreds of groups have been amalgamated and classified into just 56 officially recognised minorities.



Operation China provides an estimated percentage their ‘Status of Evangelization’. It concludes that of the 490 people groups identified, 438 were “unreached”, or less than 5% Christian. Many were estimated to have no believers at all.

During his 10 years of research in preparing this valuable text, Hattaway

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compiled many stories of the men and women, both foreign and Chinese, who laid down comfortable lives to go, overcoming fears, learning new languages and cultures, enduring hardships and risking all, to reach those with no awareness of the gospel.

Lack of roads and infrastructure or just simple neglect by missionaries stalled the introduction of the gospel to some people groups. *Operation China* reveals how one tribe or people group might accept the message readily, while another living adjacent could be fiercely resistant - “rocky soil”, not being ready to hear. The reader will also observe that workers who were dedicated to a people group, and self-sacrificial in their labour to them, often bore fruit. People such as James Fraser, A.B. Cooke, John and Isobel Kuhn and the Morse family found good ground, and their “seed” has multiplied to hundreds of thousands of souls today.

Operation China was published in the year 2000 and much change has occurred since that time.

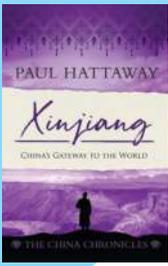
Historically, China has offered only small windows of opportunity to witness the gospel. The China Inland Mission and other mission societies made good use of their time in the late 1800’s to mid 1900s, but foreign missionaries were driven out of China in 1950. They cautiously began to flow in again with the opening up in the 80’s. But, after 2013 the window began to incrementally close again with progressive restrictions, and finally,

a pandemic largely isolating the nation.

Many foreign mission-focused people have become disheartened at the slim prospects of sharing the gospel freely in China again. One wonders how many labourers will be prepared and ready when and if another window is opened, however briefly?

And though minority cultural expressions are being nurtured for tourist enterprise, religious expression within culture is increasingly suppressed. Infrastructure and roads are rapidly being developed, even to the remotest locations, and literally millions of poor have been relocated. Now, the 490 people groups are becoming more and more interconnected. China’s minorities have been shifted away from bi-lingual schooling to strongly prioritize Mandarin. At this rate, it may be that many first hear and read God’s Word in Mandarin, before the task of translating it into every tribe and tongue in China is complete.





XINJIANG: China's Gateway to the World

Book Review

The sixth book in the China Chronicles series has now been released! This inspirational series by Paul Hattaway, is described as “an ambitious project to document the advance of Christianity in each province of China, decade by decade, from the time the gospel was introduced to the present day.”

Paul goes well beyond just documenting past events...he brings characters and history back to life and provides fresh fuel to edify, motivate, and encourage the church to continue in the work it has been given.

The latest addition in the China Chronicles series, titled XINJIANG: China's Gateway to the World, focuses on the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), the far western province that has been in the news frequently since 2016 due to the plight of the Uyghur people and other Turkic minorities there.

Despite adversity from both communism and Islam, Xinjiang is estimated to have around a million Christians today. The vast majority of these are Han Chinese who arrived in recent decades as part of a mass influx of migrants from other provinces. The focus of this volume, however, is predominately on efforts to bring the Good News to the largely

unreached Uyghur and Turkic minorities in the area.

Christianity is not new to the region and Paul takes the reader back 1400 years, recounting the often heroic work of past generations to bring the gospel to the region... Nestorians, Catholics, Swedish Missions and individuals such as George Hunter and Percy Mather. And the contribution of intrepid women missionaries such as “the Trio” from the China Inland Mission. You will meet the workers of the Back to Jerusalem Evangelistic Band and the Northwest Spiritual Band and labourers that strived to bring the Uyghur a Bible in their own language. This book is a wonderful tribute to great men and women of faith, both Chinese and foreign, many of whom gave their lives or freedom to provide Uyghur an opportunity to know the saviour.

Paul Hattaway was New Zealand born and spent 30 years as a missionary in China. He is the founder and director of Asia Harvest and author of the well-known book Operation China. Other volumes in the China Chronicles series feature the rich Christian histories of the Shandong, Guizhou, Zhejiang, Tibet, and Henan provinces. To purchase this book or another in the series you can visit the the Asia Harvest website. Kindle versions are also available.

Prayer Requests from China

It is the leaders that risk the most for their flocks, and often pay the highest price. Requests have been sent from two Chinese churches for prayer for their pastors and elders...

Church of Abundance

In August, the Church of Abundance (Fengsheng), a house church in Xi'an, sent out requests asking for prayer support after police raided homes of some members and took them in for interrogation. Questioning was particularly focused around donations.

Church funds were confiscated, and the church fears that authorities plan to charge their pastor and elders with fraud. Only registered government affiliated churches are allowed to gather and collect donations or tithes. One police officer told believers that illegal collection of donations makes the church a xie jiao or a “cult”.

Leading an organisation designated as a cult, and collecting ‘illegal’ tithes both incur heavy penalties and prison sentences.

Before 2018, churches that adhered to correct, orthodox and Biblical doctrine were not considered xie jiao, even if unregistered or underground. However, as a means to justify arrests, the term is increasingly being applied to Christians that practice their faith

outside the boundaries of the state-controlled church.

Golden Lampstand Church

Another call out to the international church for prayer has come with concerns for one of the pastors of Golden Lampstand Church.

Many readers will recall the dramatic images of the destruction of the Golden Lampstand Church, in Linfen, Shanxi Province, in January 2018 (*see the image below, credit: ChinaAid*).

To those that do not know, the Golden



Lampstand Church is part of Sola Fide (meaning in Latin “by faith only”), a large housechurch network with some 50,000 members, that gathered in over 30 locations. Due to its size and rapid growth, the network was targeted for persecution. It first came to the World’s attention in 2009, when a factory where the church met, was raided by a contingent of 400 police. The factory was looted and then demolished. Over 100 church members were injured during the raid. In the aftermath, pastors Wang

PRAYER POINTERS

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News Briefs from the Nation

Pray for a complete reopening of China.

Pray for wisdom and good solutions as China navigates through negative population growth.

Pray for the peace of Taiwan.

Pray for the Chinese people who are wearied by the ever expanding restrictions.

Pray for the Uyghur Christians in prison, forced labour, or living in fear of detainment.

Increasingly Interconnected

Thank God for windows of opportunity. Pray that a fresh window will open soon.

Pray that Christians will fill their bags with seed and be ready when the Master gives them a field to sow.

Pray that those who have had no opportunity to hear the gospel will not miss out.

XINJIANG: China's Gateway to the World

Praise God that he desires that none should perish and that all should come to the knowledge of truth.

Pray that he will make a way for Uyghurs to hear the message of salvation and to access His Word.

Pray that God will raise up more labourers with a heart to share the gospel with Uyghurs.

Pray that God will protect and encourage workers among the Uyghurs.



Photo Credit: Chris Pawluk, Flickr

PRAYER POINTERS

Prayer Requests from China

Pray for the members of the Church of Abundance and Golden Lampstand Church who are facing very serious charges.

Pray for the police officers, lawyers and other officials who are involved in these cases. Pray that the Lord will provide the right words for His people to speak to them. [Luke 12:11]

Pray for the medical and physical needs of the detained church members.

China's Influence on Religion Spreads Beyond Its Borders

Praise God, who has by far, the most superior blueprint for peace.

Please pray for Christians sharing the gospel along the Vietnamese and Chinese border. As restrictions tighten on both sides there is a sense of urgency.

Pray that the Holy Spirit will show Christians how to witness to the Hani people, and that they will be receptive to hear the Gospel of Peace. [Eph 6:15]

Cui Maohu 崔茂虎

Give thanks that God has given China leaders that are working to help the poor.

Pray that Cui Maohu will find the Way, the Truth and the Life, in his time as head of the NRAA.

Pray for the Three Self Church, and especially its leadership who must work with atheist oversight.



Photo Credit: Monsterliza, Flickr



Chinese Church Support Ministries

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

Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

[Romans 8:35]

Xiaoguang and Yang Rongli (Wang's wife) sought to petition the government for justice but were jailed for "illegally occupying farmland," and "assembling a crowd to disturb traffic order." They were fined and given three years and seven years respectively.



Yang Rongli (Wang's wife). The following month seven were charged with 'fraud' and formerly arrested; they are awaiting trial.

Just a few years after their release, in January 2018, and three weeks before the infamous Religious Affairs Regulations came into effect, police used dynamite and bulldozers to demolish the Golden Lampstand's newly built, central worship facility in Linfen. The startling image has become a symbol of the ongoing religious crackdown.

Then, last year, on the 7th August, 2021, police arrested nine church members - including Pastors Wang Xiaoguang and

Grave concerns are held for Pastor Yang Rongli (67)

who requires medication daily for severe diabetes, but family members have not been permitted to send it. In addition to the couple, Li Shuangping, Zhao Guoai, Dong Yongyong, Huo Zhuangping, and Wu Linge are detained at Linfen's Yaodu District Detention Centre. It is reported that they are not receiving adequate food and visits have not been allowed. Feng Junying, Chen Qinglan, Li Qin, Wang Xianfeng, and Yang Hongzhen have been released on bail pending trial.

[Source: ChinaAid.org]

China's Influence on Religion Spreads Beyond Its Borders

The Chinese Communist Party's impact on religion is spreading beyond its borders. Encouraged by its success at home in crushing threats to national stability, China has been projecting its

blueprint for ethnic and religious peace and harmony out to the world. And it appears to already have some willing disciples, especially among its communist neighbours.



Vietnam is placing its steps to religious control in the footprints of China's religious policies. Like China, Vietnam has a constitution that promises freedom of religion. However, in 2016 the socialist republic adopted a Law on Belief and Religion (LBR). It requires all religious groups to register with the government and to report on their religious activities. Like China, the State dictates which religious traditions are officially recognised.

In June this year, two draft religion decrees were published for comment. They amend and supplement the unpopular earlier decree (No. 162/2017/ND-CP) which laid down implementation guidelines for the LBR law and the remedies and penalties for violating it. It has already been nicknamed the "Punishment Decree".

In a similar vein to China's religious regulations, these place onerous administrative requirements on organisations. Church activities must be reported and approved a

year in advance and every change to staff appointments must be filed in a timely manner. Interactions with foreigners are limited and their donations must be reported. And, reminiscent of Chinese policy, church clergy are required to study Vietnam's "revolutionary history" and law, and leadership of religious organisations must be vetted and pre-approved by the government.

China watchers familiar with the regime's penchant for vaguely defined laws, will be concerned to see many such rules in the Vietnam decrees. Through their subjective interpretation, they provide authorities with a full quiver of ostensible pretexts to punish protestors, dissenters and those that continue to practice their faith outside the State's confines. Among these are "taking advantage of belief and religion" and "causing social division" and "violating public morality" and "disturbing social order".

The new decrees extend all religious regulation to include online meetings

and activities.

Those following China's deluge of religious regulations over the last few years will recognise the pattern and understand how such laws are used, not to protect people, but to divide the church, criminalize unregistered believers, delegitimize objectors, stifle church growth and attempt to silence God's message of salvation.

Chinese authorities have disseminated anti-cult warnings in villages on the southern border with Vietnam. This is

most likely to counteract Vietnamese Christian evangelists that are reported to be actively sharing the Gospel with their neighbours.

In Vietnam, H'mong Christians in the northwest, are some of those those suffering the most severe harassment from Vietnam authorities. Ethnic Yi and Hani people groups live along and across the border. The Yi minority has traditionally been receptive to Christianity but Hani have been very resistant.

Cui Maohu 崔茂虎

The 20th Party Congress is drawing near and Xi Jinping is wisely using this time to firm up support, shake off agitators and purge challengers to secure his third term. Xi has begun appointing loyalists to important senior CCP posts and one of these new appointments will have an important role over the Chinese Church.

On June 24th, at the 35th meeting of the 13th National People's Congress Standing Committee, Cui Maohu 崔茂虎 was approved by the State Council to replace Wang Zuo'an 王作安 in the position of director of the NRAA (the National Religious Affairs Administration) and he has also replaced him as Deputy Director of the United Front Work Department, a position where he will work closely with Xi Jinping.

Surprisingly, Cui Maohu does not seem to have any background



working with religions. He was born in Yunnan in 1965 and obtained a degree in philosophy from Yunnan University. He entered politics and joined the Party in his mid 20's and later went on to work in the Yunnan Provincial Human Resources and Social Security Department. More recently, in 2019-20 he held the position of secretary of the Lijiang Municipal Party Committee where he collaborated with Baidu, China Mobile Yunnan Company and other companies in the construction of "Smart Lijiang" and its "City Brain" and the "Lijiang Cloud". The city was the province's first 5G test base station to actively explore

innovations and integrated applications using blockchain, 5G and the Internet of Things. Lijiang City was the first province to build a “smart party building” big data command center. Cui seems passionate about developing his region through embracing technology and lifting people out of poverty, especially through culture and tourism.

Cui went on to become vice governor of Yunnan Province (from May 2021) and secretary-general of the CCP Yunnan Provincial Committee (from November 2021).

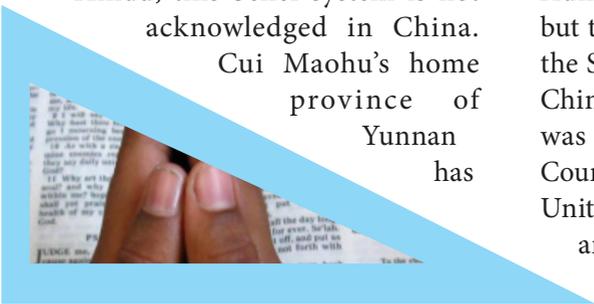
In China there are only five state-approved religions. Buddhism, Taoism, Catholic, Protestant and Islam. Even though neighbouring India is predominately Hindu, this belief system is not acknowledged in China.

Cui Maohu’s home province of Yunnan has

over 200 ethnic groups, most of whom practice folk religions and ancestor worship. However, all religious expression outside the five state-controlled religions is illegal.

China’s Protestant church is overseen by the “Two Organisations”, or Two Councils as they are also known. The first is the CCC, or China Christian Council, which broadly speaking, is the organisation responsible for church theology, training and literature. The second is the TSPM (the Three Self Patriotic Movement) which gives oversight to church management.

The Two Organisations, in turn, answer to the NRAA (National Religious Affairs Administration). This is still frequently referred to as SARA (the State Administration of Religious Affairs) but this English title belies the fact that the State no longer has direct control of China’s religious affairs. In 2018, SARA was moved away from under the State Council to be incorporated into the CCP’s United Front Work Department, which answers directly to the Party’s Central Committee.



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