



**CCSM**  
Chinese Church  
Support Ministries  
中国教会支援使团

# China Prayer Letter

DECEMBER 2022

## Renewal in Thinking (Part 1)

PREACHING BY NUMBERS

In August 2021, CCSM wrote about the Chairman of the Three Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM), Rev. Xu Xiaohong. Three things stood out - his patriotism, his passion for sinicisation, and his plan for 'theological reconstruction'.

Xu studied under Bishop Ding, who coined the term 'theological re-construction'. However, Ding's efforts in the 1990s to peddle it to the Chinese church were not well received due to the erroneous doctrine of "justification through love".

Later, Xu resurrected and amended the concept, blended with 'reality', progress-of-the-times, and sinicisation, and described



his new theological re-construction as 'renewal in thinking'. Since 2021, it has become required learning for religious leaders, clerics and lay leaders, and its study is necessary to acquire a clergy card (also introduced in 2021).

Just before the 20th National Party Congress, Rev. Xu Xiaohong's published a report reviewing 10 years of sinicisation. The report gives glimpses of what could be included in the next Protestant 5-year plan (2023-

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2027). The title, 'Ten years of sharpening a sword: Continuing to advance the sinicisation of Christianity' indicates there is more 'sinicisation' to come.

Xu states that the core of sinicisation of Christianity is guided by the core values of socialism. He provides a slogan, the "three natures of sinicisation", namely the contemporary nature, the leading nature and the cultural nature. Regarding the 'leading' nature, Xu reports some success: "It has become the consensus of Chinese Christianity to make due contributions to the realization of the 'two centenary goals' 1. and the Chinese dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation."

He extols the work

achieved by the NPC (National People's Congress) and CPPCC (China People's Political Consultative Conference) saying they "have strengthened the work of the Chinese Christian preaching group" and, "We have not only optimized the personnel, but also recruited a group of young, energetic, participative and highly motivated teaching staff, and demonstrated them through regional exchanges, preaching directly to believers, and achieved good results."

Sermons from these seminars have been compiled into 5 volumes and published.

Copying this lead, churches across the country have hosted seminars, symposiums, and preaching activities

and competitions. Topics vary, covering scripture, pastoring, church management, social services, hymns, architecture etc., but they all weave in themes of localisation, indiginisation and sinicisation of Christianity. The two councils (CCC&TSPM) of most provinces and municipalities have established preaching groups.

He points out, "The key to the church's guidance of believers is the pulpit message. Behind every sermon, there is a certain amount of theological support. It is an important task to convert theological thinking and the results of the seminars on the sinicisation of Christianity into the pulpit message."

Xu adds that they have

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### A little about CCSM...

"Be a reporter for us," said a house church leader to Ross Paterson (CCSM Founder) on his first trip to China in 1983. Ross took that as his initial mandate from the Lord – to raise in the West awareness of China's needs and to prompt intercessory prayer. At this time very little was known about the church in China.

A further plea came on that same first visit to China. "We desperately need books and sound foundational teaching."

Today CCSM is adapting to the times to meet this call and continues to work closely with Chinese believers to meet the needs of such a rapidly growing Church. There are still millions of people in China who have never heard about Jesus.

# Renewal In Thinking

## (Part 2) Breaking the Bottleneck



*It was Bishop Ding Guangxun, former Chairman of TSPM<sup>1</sup>, President of the CCC<sup>2</sup>, and Principal of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, who coined the term 'sinicisation' of Christianity.*

*Rev. Xu Xiaohong, once a student of Ding, and now current Chairman of the TSPM, is an ardent proponent of the policy.*

In an October 2022 report, Xu laments that there has not always been a positive response to the two councils efforts to promote sinicisation to the church. He complains

that religious groups are "hot at the top and cold at the bottom". Leader's enthusiasm is not matched by the grass-root teaching staff and believers.

He says, in the future, the two councils must innovate their work ideas and methods.

He itemizes four actions to solve Chinese believers hesitance to be sinicised. Pay attention because these are likely to be incorporated into the next CCC&TSPM five-year work plan (2023-2027) and approved by the United Front Work Department.

The first recommendation is no surprise, it is essentially to scale

up propaganda and indoctrination around socialist core values, patriotism and loyalty to the Party. He says the TSPM must, "strengthen our studies, improve our political position, insist on running education in accordance with laws and regulations, and continuously strengthen the "four Consciousnesses", "four self-confidences", achieve "two maintenances", support "two establishments", focus on strengthening the "five identities", and actively adapt the church to socialist society.

*(See [ccsmglocal.org/deciphering-the-numbers](http://ccsmglocal.org/deciphering-the-numbers) to understand the jargon).*

**Xu complains that religious groups are "hot at the top and cold at the bottom".**



His second recommendation may be slightly more concerning.

It uses strong language, saying, “we must have the courage to break the bottleneck and seek breakthroughs in theological thinking” and “we need to establish Chinese Christians’ views on the Bible, God, Christ, Man, and Church, and gradually form the theological ideology of the Chinese church. Such a system is in line with the Catholic tradition and the principles of the religious reformation...”

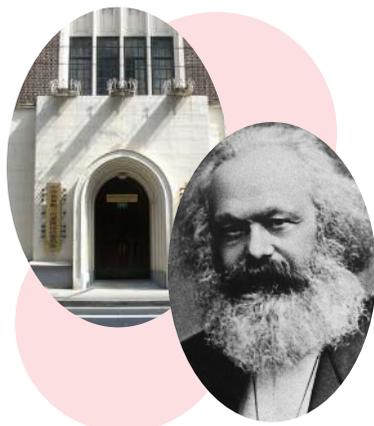
Bear in mind that Catholic tradition for centuries, taught salvation through works among many other errors and kept the masses from reading the Bible for themselves, or even from hearing it in their own language.

Thirdly he says, in order to make Christianity go deeper into 'reality' ... “It is necessary to strengthen

the supply and guidance of information from the pulpit, to use various forms of propaganda for the sinicisation of Christianity, to increase sinicised expressions in rituals, festivals, and sacraments, and to make interpretations in line with the development of the times in terms of teachings and canons.”

The fourth is to prioritize training. He referred to the “Three Teams”, which were a “major project” initiated by General Secretary Xi Jinping at the 2021 National Religious Work Conference. The three teams he asked to be cultivated were

- 1) party and government cadres who are proficient in Marxist religious views and religious work,
- 2) representatives from religious circles who are politically reliable, religiously attained, morally convincing and able to function in critical times



and 3) a religious research team with Marxist religious views, skilled in innovation, and firm in their political and ideological views.

Karl Marx held that people need the comfort of religion because of their economic and social alienation – thus, a socialist revolution would naturally put an end to religion. So far, his theory remains far from 'reality'.

<sup>1</sup>TSPM - Three Self Patriotic Movement (state church)

<sup>2</sup>CCC - China Christian Council



**“We must have the courage to break the bottleneck and seek breakthroughs in theological thinking”**

## FROM THE FIELD

### News and Events from China...



### *Welcome Home Good and Faithful Servant*

After a long season of service in China, one of our long term missionaries, whom many have been faithful in praying for, will be returning home to South Africa for good.

We will refer to him by the code name 'Darius' for reasons of security. Darius' call to China began firstly by him giving financially toward someone going to China on a short-term team missions trip with CCSM, and then secondly him joining our China Prayer meetings. From there Darius in 2006 himself went out on our short-term team's programme. So he, in a sense, was the epitome of the Praying, Giving and Going believer!

In 2007 he felt the call to serve fulltime with CCSM and so then participated in our 2008-2009 Antioch

School of Missions in China, learning language and living in the culture.

He went back to South Africa in 2010 to study Theology and returned in 2011 to China. All in all, Darius has been involved with China for 16 years, 12 of those uninterrupted.

His tenure has now come to an end. Re-entry is not an easy event and we know well that the effects of reverse culture can floor a person. Re-building relationships with friends and family, including his home church, can be challenging too.

After much prayer, Darius has a strong sense that God is leading him to another area of service/ ministry and has plans to pursue that calling.

### *Shanghai Restarts English Services*

China Christian Daily reported, on 16th Nov 2022, the reopening of some foreign language-speaking churches. Entry to the service was subject to a green Shanghai Health Code, their itinerary code, as well as a temperature check.

### *Planning For Exodus*

Shanghai is home to many of China's most wealthy. This year the megacity has seen a deluge of luxury second-hand homes hit the market as the "Common Prosperity" campaign squeezes the wealthy. Taiwan News reports that overall, 30% more houses are listed this year compared to last year and high end housing has dropped

up to 40% of its value as owners rush to flee the economic turnaround and the extreme Covid measures. Many are selling up in order to migrate or to divert some of their assets overseas.

### *Persecution Unabated*

Yang Jianxin, is a Reformed house church pastor in Lingbao city, Henan. He has been kept under surveillance for several years due to his refusal to join the

TSPM. BitterWinter.com reported that at the beginning of 2021, Yang decided his congregation needed Bibles, and contacted a local printer. He was quickly detained for “conducting illegal business operations” and “printing and purchasing illegal publications.” He will serve 5 years and 6 months in prison.

Unregistered churches and seminaries continue to be closed down and leaders arrested. During the month of September, Berea Church in Fujian

Province was banned, Wenzhou Canaan Theological Seminary was closed down, and the “Yangguangzhijia” Reformed Church in Changchun City, Jilin Province, was banned. Preacher Chen Lijun of Luoyang, in Henan province has been in jail since August for purchasing Christian books online without authorization. His wife is struggling to support the family and two elderly parents with cancer.

[Source ChinaAid.]

## The Implications of the October CCP Meeting

*In October 2022 the Chinese Communist Party held the first Plenum of its 20th Central Committee. The Economist commented that as a result “Xi Jinping is the most powerful person in the world.”*

Stratfor summarised the meeting this way:

“Chinese leader Xi Jinping secured a new term and a

thoroughly loyal cabinet, which will enable him to carry out his nationalist policy agenda over the next five-to-ten years.... Xi will remain the leader of the CCP for the next five years after gaining another term as General Secretary. ...Xi still has no designated successor.... At 69 years old, Xi is also advanced in age...yet Xi appears likely to take a fourth term in 2027.”

What will this mean for

the next five to ten years? Four years ago Elizabeth Economy summarised Xi's policy direction in three ways.

1. “Xi has moved away from Deng's consensus-based decision-making and has consolidated institutional power in his own hands.”

Following the disaster of the Cultural Revolution under the sole leadership

**continued page 8 >>**

bolstered support to ethnic minority areas with a shortage of teaching staff and border areas. But rather than strengthening scriptural knowledge or funding pastors, his support is in the form of ideological training to ensure national security and religious harmony.

He declares, "to improve the political position of teachers, students and teaching staff, it is necessary to strengthen the study of the "three loves", "four histories" and "five identities" <sup>1</sup>. To conduct education in accordance with the regulations, to strictly manage education in an all-round way, to implement "four advancements" work, to continuously enhance the awareness of the community of the Chinese nation, and to strengthen national identity.

Should Xu's theologically re-constructed preaching teams or volumes of 'preaching-by-numbers' sermons ever move toward becoming a mandatory establishment in churches, they could drive some believers to exit the TSPM. Being registered Christians, they will need to be extra careful if they wish to connect with other Christians 'outside the system'.

*(1. For help understanding the political jargon, see [ccsmglobal.org/deciphering-the-numbers](https://ccsmglobal.org/deciphering-the-numbers))*



## Rewriting of the Bible is an abhorrent act to any Christian.

By definition, rewriting the Bible is not simply another translation, required in order to bring the vocabulary in line with modern vernacular. Rather it is changing the very meaning and intention of the original words. In the last few years, concerns that this could occur in China, have become increasingly more realistic.

In November 2019, Wang Yang, Chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, stated that religious authorities must follow President Xi's instructions and interpret the ideologies of different religions in accordance with 'the core values of Socialism' and 'the requirements of the era'. This 're-evaluation'

of religious books was to prevent 'extreme thoughts' and 'heretical ideas' from eroding the country.

The statement gave rise to fears that 're-evaluation' would equate to gross mistreatment and misinterpretation of God's Word. And sadly, these fears were further fuelled on the 22nd September 2020, after a UCA News (Union of Catholic Asian News) article reported that a distorted version of a Biblical narrative had been published by the government-run University of Electronic Science and Technology Press, aiming to teach "professional ethics and law" to the students of secondary vocational schools.

The textbook rehashed

**continued on pg 11 >>**

of Chairman Mao, it was mandated that no one man would ever again hold total power in China. That was very much Deng Xiaoping's desire. Xi has totally reversed that policy.

*"The amendments to the Party constitution include pledges to uphold the 'Two Establishments' and 'Two Safeguards', Party jargon that declares Xi as the core leader of the Chinese Communist Party and deems "Xi Jinping Thought" as the foundation of governing China in this 'new era.'" Xi is, in effect, chairman of everything.*

The man most likely to succeed Li Keqiang as Premier, Li Qiang, was the Shanghai Party Secretary and has no experience with central government duties. His rise to power may be based on his loyalty to Xi in his quite ruthless implementation of Xi's zero-Covid policy in Shanghai earlier this year. The entire seven-person Politburo Standing Committee,

effectively Xi's cabinet, is now composed of loyalists who either owe their careers to Xi's patronage or whose views align with his policy agenda.

2. *"Xi has driven the Chinese Communist Party more deeply into Chinese political, social, and economic life, while constraining the influence of foreign ideas and economic competition."* There is, in effect, a return to the thinking of the late chairman Mao in the famous analogy of the cat. Does the cat need to be pure red in colour, its colour being more important than its ability to catch mice (Chairman Mao)? Or is it relatively unimportant what colour of red the cat is, as long as it is good at catching mice (Deng Xiaoping)?

*"Beijing's regulatory scrutiny in tech, entertainment and beyond will grow as Xi attempts to mould the economy to best achieve his views for China's*

*'national rejuvenation'".*

3. Xi has abandoned Deng's low-profile foreign policy in favour of one that is ambitious and expansive. *"Chinese foreign policy has been transformed in recent years. China is poised to become a true global power. These trends demonstrate an unprecedented level of confidence. This is a significant change from the Chinese foreign policy defined by Deng Xiaoping as 'Lay low, never take the lead, and bide our time.'" China wants to lead the world. The next five years will show numerous ways in which Xi aims to do so.*

My China-loving friends are rightly proud at China's amazing rise to power. But, if I may, I need to ask them a question - are these trends good for the ordinary Chinese citizen in the street and on the farm, or just for the CCP?

[Source: Fieldpartner.org]



# Prayer Points

DECEMBER 2022

Join us in prayer for the church of China.  
Cut out this month's prayer points and  
keep them in your Bible.



## PRAYER POINTS #1

### PREACHING BY NUMBERS

Pray that the leaders of the TSPM will be faithful to the Word of God as they seek to work with the authorities over them.

Pray for TSPM clergy that they do not become discouraged. Pray for encouragement & leading of the Holy Spirit.

Pray believers outside the state church system will be ready to help any who exit the TSPM, assisting them to find safe fellowship and sound teaching.

## PRAYER POINTS #2

### BREAKING THE BOTTLENECK

Pray that the teams of preachers will rightly divide God's Word, growing in favour with God and men.

Pray that Chinese Christianity's Reconstruction of Theology will be faithful to the complete Word of God.

Pray for God's protection for leaders who must guard against, and challenge, error and mishandling of the Word.

## PRAYER POINTS #3

### FROM THE FIELD

Give thanks for the years that Darius was able to serve faithfully in China and also for God's faithful protection and provision particularly during lonely and difficult times.

Pray that Darius will have a smooth transition and his re-entry will come naturally and with ease.

Pray for a warm reconnection with family, friends and his local home church.

Pray that the Lord will prepare labourers to work among the Chinese departing China.

Pray for church members that have lost their church fellowships.

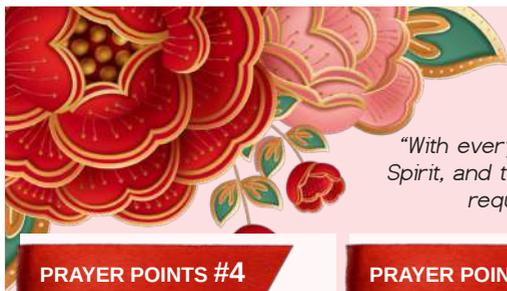




# Prayer Points

DECEMBER 2022

*"With every prayer and petition, pray at all times in the Spirit, and to this end be alert, with all perseverance and requests for all the saints." [Eph 6:18, NET]*



## PRAYER POINTS #4

### THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE OCTOBER CCP MEETING

Pray for Xi Jinping and his politburo colleagues.

Pray that there will be voices heard that speak about the problems the ordinary man and woman in China faces.

Pray for the church in China which will face stormy waters in the next five years.

## PRAYER POINTS #5

### RE-EVALUATING THE BIBLE

Pray the rewriting of the Bible does not go ahead for the sake of the Chinese Church, for the sake of the people of China who do not yet know Christ, and also for those who would put their hand to such a abhorrent task , placing themselves under the curses referred to in Revelation 22:18.

Pray that God's people, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, will have the ability to discern truth from error.

Pray for a renewed hunger for God's Word in China.

## PRAYER POINTS #6

### NEWS FROM CCSM UK

Pray for the safety of the work to provide SD cards across China.

Pray for the finance to supply SD cards to meet the ever growing need for these resources.

Pray that the Word of God would continue to transform lives in China and have a positive impact on Chinese society.

Serving, Supporting & Strengthening the Church and People of China



the story of Jesus and the woman caught in adultery. This re-imagined version of the Gospel of John chapter 8, shamefully rewrote the story to have Jesus call himself a sinner, then stone the woman to uphold the law!

A vocational school teacher in China was able to confirm the contents of the textbook for UCA News, and CCSM was also able to secure independent confirmation, but without information of books publication date, we cannot say it was a produced in response to Xi Jinping's call to 're-evaluate' religious texts. Nonetheless, this was a clear and disturbing example of the regime's disregard for historical

accuracy and truth.

Anyone following events in Xinjiang Province, would be aware that, in 2017, Muslims in the region were ordered by Chinese authorities to hand in all Qurans and holy books published more than five years earlier (prior to 2012) due to "extremist content". [source: RFA]

Meanwhile, the World was stone cold silent, even those nations that shared their faith. Of course, this could only increase Xi Jinping's confidence to continue his campaign against other major religions, especially those that have been critical of his religious policies.

Apprehension over

tampered scriptures is a genuine worry for believers in China, a nation that now controls and limits the Bibles and versions available online, in apps and in print. Just as cash is close to disappearing forever in the Mainland, the Xinjiang event reminds us that the Party holds more than enough power to remove all hardcopy Bibles from circulation.

What would remain? Digital Bible versions available through a convenient government-approved app, leaving Christians wondering when they will see the notice, "This version will expire in 1 day. Please update to the latest version as soon as possible."

## News from CCSM UK

"Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called — one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."

[Eph 4: 3-5, NIV]



We serve the Church in China in many ways and one of the reasons for doing this is that we all belong to the Body of Christ.

Many times this year I have received expressions of delight and wonder that we can send Micro SD cards into China containing thousands of resources.

These resources include Christian books covering many aspects of Christian life and commentaries on the Bible that help individual Christians and pastors of churches live

their lives in a Biblical way. The training resources, both audio and video, help Christians dig into the Word of God and help them apply the Bible to life. Some resources give ideas and suggestions of how to plan lessons and talks. Some of the resources act as a daily devotion to help draw nearer to God. Essential for each Christian and those seeking to know God is the Bible, and each SD card contains several, including more than one version and with or without footnotes and references.

As buying a Bible or a Christian book in China has become very difficult, these SD cards have become more and more valued. Not only for growth as a Christian but also to safeguard against cults and false beliefs.

So join us in giving thanks that this way of serving has been able to continue, even through the pandemic and lockdowns in China. Please pray that each SD card will be used by God to bless,

to encourage, to challenge and to extend the Kingdom of God.

Pray also that the finance will come in to allow us to buy more SD cards and send them into China.

Many of you know about the Teams we have sent to China and some of you have had the experience of being on one or more of those Teams. We are still unable to go into China as no tourist visas are available and very few student visas. Please pray with us for the renewed opportunity to take Teams in and also to weigh other options to serve and engage with Chinese people outside of China. If you have Chinese students or other Chinese communities near you, please consider how to engage with them especially through your church.

Richest Blessings,

Martyn Wells  
Director, UK



**CCSM**

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