



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

China Prayer Letter

SEPTEMBER 2025

Preparing for **BATTLE**

- **FieldPartner**
Missionary Training.



For over a decade, AM-CCSM ran two schools of mission in China. The China School of Missions trained Chinese house church believers in cross-cultural work, preparing them to reach out to minority peoples within China and to serve in other lands outside of China. The Antioch School of Missions trained English-speaking believers to serve inside China. The classroom and the practical part of both courses lasted for a year. However recent strict religious legislation in China resulted in the closure of these schools, causing us to work in a different way, hence the birth of FieldPartner.

There are two divisions of FieldPartner. Both the Chinese and the English websites host an ever-growing online

collection of missionary training materials, covering the training of missionaries before they go, while they are on the field, and when they return to their homelands; also teaching their sending churches how to support them.

The FieldPartner Chinese division is staffed by a team from China and Taiwan. This team trains Chinese believers in the specialised skills needed for cross-cultural work and also in Business as Mission (BAM), helping prospective missionaries to have a platform from which they can work in the countries to which they go. There are also two training schools, both running twice a year, one online and one comprising of in-person short-term training in a Southeast

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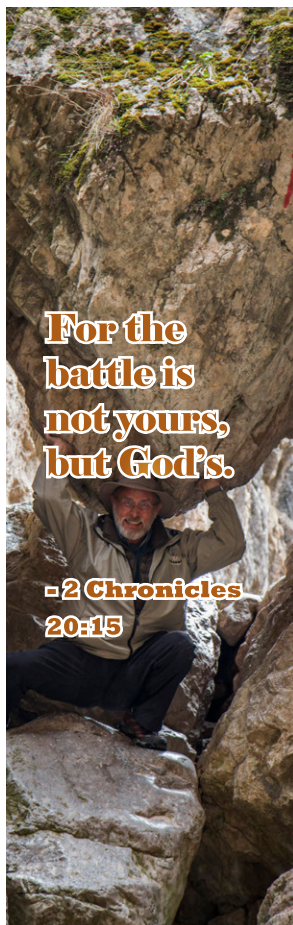
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Asian country. These schools are led by our mainland Chinese Dean of Studies, who is well connected within China.

The FieldPartner English team relaunched last year, focusing on content creation and on raising awareness through webinars. They began 2025 with an online cohort for their Know Thyself course, tailored for African mission trainees in South Africa — making the training culturally relevant in varied settings. They have further developed this course and relaunched it as Growing in Cultural Intelligence, making it suitable for a wider base of mission focused churches. An audio dubbed version will soon be released in Chinese. A new iteration of Ross's Antioch Factor book is currently being edited and will be released in September. The team's

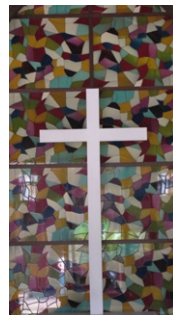
research of required courses led to a new course launching in 2026 on the subject of cross-cultural marriage. Each of these courses will have subtitled versions in other major languages - for example, Chinese, French and Spanish. The team runs cohorts for each of the courses to facilitate a group learning approach. The newsletter subscriber base is growing and engagement on social media is climbing, helping us connect with and train a wider audience.

Both teams partner with mission agencies and also with individuals. In the words of one student "it's a very valuable course and I have recommended it as part of missions preparation at the missions organisation where I'm currently based."

Delving deeper into scripture to enrich our prayer for China

Colossians 4:2-3 "Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains."

Paul starts, "devote yourself to prayer". Devote is "**Proskartereite**" – to be earnest towards, to persevere, be constantly diligent, attend assiduously, wait on (continually). An essential attribute of our prayer for China!



1 Thessalonians 5:17
'Pray without ceasing';

Ephesians 6:8
'Praying always';

Colossians 4:2
'Continue earnestly in prayer'.

These scriptures, amongst many others, highlights the idea that prayer as a practice, should be persistent and not limited by quantity or specific outcomes. It's not just about words, but about cultivating a lifestyle of prayer and relying on God's grace. The movie "The Greatest Showman", a musical, which includes in its repertoire a song entitled "Never Enough", is a song about the greedy desire for more, both in terms of success and personal recognition, and is a very powerful moment in the film's story. The song explores along the lines of ambition, desire, and the feeling that no amount of success, or achievement, is ever truly enough to satisfy a person. I would like us to apply this to our prayer life, that no matter how much or how often we pray, it will 'Never be enough'. The statement 'I am all prayed up' should

never exist in our vocabulary! In other words, we can never pray enough! Throughout the Word of God we are encouraged, reminded, commanded, exhorted and challenged to pray. Jesus Himself said that His House will be a House of Prayer. What about our houses? Each morning during our time of prayer, we ask the Lord to remind us throughout the course of the day, those prayers that would be on His heart and not only on ours! Prayers we should have prayed but did not! As we pray through this Prayer for China Letter, be challenged that no amount of prayer could ever be enough.

Once again thank you for praying. May the Lord bless you and your family.

Dear Lord, we hunger and thirst to talk to You through our prayers. Let our prayers be a two-way dialogue with You where we speak, as well as listen for Your prompting.

Lord, let it be that we will never be satisfied and complacent with our prayer life.

Keep us in that safe place of always wanting to pray more.



DAUGHTERS OF THE BAMBOO GROVE

A book by American journalist Barbara Demick, published by The Text Publishing Company, Melbourne Australia, 2025.

FROM CHINA
TO AMERICA,
THE STORY OF
ADoption,



The author subtitles this enthralling book, “From China to America, a true story of abduction, adoption and separated twins.”

It tells the story of identical twins, Shuangjie and Esther, one growing up in an isolated and poor Chinese village, the other kidnapped then legally adopted through a PRC government programme by American parents in Texas. The new, devoutly Christian parents believed that their beautiful new daughter had been intentionally abandoned by her birth parents and had no clue that there was an identical twin left behind! And they did not know that far from being abandoned, the Chinese parents loved and cherished both twins and were desolated when two-year-old Esther was kidnapped by the Government Family Planning Office. They were to spend 15 years desperately trying to find

her, never for a moment thinking she might be in the USA!

The US State Department estimates that at least 20,000 children in China are kidnapped each year. The Chinese Government acknowledges a figure of 10,000.

The background to these extraordinary figures traces back to the late 1970s. China’s population was about to reach 1 billion and a new law was passed that became famously known as “The One Child Policy”. The introduction to the law stated: “China is a populous country. Family planning is a fundamental state policy. The State shall adopt a comprehensive approach to controlling population size.” In 1981, the State Family Commission was set up which grew into a monstrous organization, bigger than both the police and the military

combined!

By the 1990’s an estimated 83 million Chinese worked, at least part-time, for Family Planning. Fines for having too many children were extreme – up to 6 times an average household’s annual income. An extra baby could ruin a middle class or working-class family. Enforcement was brutal. A sign near the twin’s village read “If you violate the policy, your family will be destroyed.”

A consequence of the policy was that many “extra” children were abandoned and orphanages were overcrowded.

Responding to this reality, China in 1991 enacted a law that allowed foreigners to adopt Chinese children.

This became a lucrative activity both for the State Family Planning Institute and even more so for the

orphanages.

As the One Child Policy took effect, the number of abandoned babies reduced and the demand for foreign adoption could not be met. For a time baby snatching, become routine with documents falsified to show wrongly where children had been dropped off. Foreign foster parents who came to China to meet their new child were shown where they had been “dropped”.

When the twins were

born in 2000, they became briefly part of a loving family of an already illegal two. Their mother gave birth in secret in a small hut hidden in a bamboo grove. Hence the title of Babara Demick's book.

The author's determined work was to bring about miraculous results with the identical twins heartwarminglly reunited as teenagers.

A rural Chinese teenager meets her identical twin brought up in Texas.

This in itself makes for enthralling reading.

Esther is one of 16,000 Chinese adopted overseas – many to America, and many if not most to Christian families. With the abandonment of the One Child Policy effective from 2016, the adoption market essentially dried up. To formalize this, China officially stopped foreign adoptions on September 6th 2024.



The Human Cost

In our January 2025 edition of the China Prayer Letter, we wrote of some of the negative consequences of China's termination of international adoptions.

Our Mercy Director wrote:

“CCSM was, until recently, working officially with Chinese orphanages preparing young children for international adoption. This abrupt shift in policy is heartbreaking for so many families. There were parents in the middle of their journeys filled with hope who now have their dreams of being a Forever Mum and Dad shattered. Children who were so close to joining their forever families, with the love and care they deserved. With these loving families often came desperately needed life-changing medical treatments that were simply unavailable in their country.

Now we face a tragic reality: children who were already matched, who were so close to having the family they dreamed of, may never know what it is to call someone Mum or Dad. This is a deeply sad and unjust outcome.”

Note that the Chinese Government has subsequently announced an exception to the international adoption ban. Foreigners can still adopt children or stepchildren of their blood relatives within China up to the third degree of kinship.



IS THE CHURCH IN CHINA GROWING OR SHRINKING?

What is the current state of Christianity in China? Has its growth truly come to an end? According to the Pew Research Centre, the answer is yes, the growth has ceased. "In 19 nationally representative surveys conducted since the early 2000s, the authors find no clear evidence that Christianity continues to grow as a share of China's population."

In response, the Christian Times, an online Chinese Christian newspaper, gathered insights from 12 pastors of house churches in China. These pastors were located across eight provincial-level regions and span four generations, from those born in the 1960s to the 1990s. Of these 12 pastors, four openly opposed the Pew conclusions, "using words such as 'doubtful,' 'the data might be fake,' and 'nonsense.'" Five pastors refrained from commenting. Three

pastors remained indifferent to the findings of the survey.

Asked for their own analysis of the situation, four pastors believed the number of Christians in China is still growing. One pastor "believed that the Christian population in China is slowly declining." The other seven gave basically unclear answers.

The pastor who believes that the church is slowly declining gave as a reason the fact that in recent years churches have not been as active in evangelism as they used to be. Thus fewer young people are coming to faith. Also, that in recent years - especially during the pandemic - many older Christians have passed away. "The difference between past periods of church revival and the present is truly significant. In the 1980s and 1990s, during the revival era, it was common in many

rural areas for dozens of people in a single village to hear the gospel and become Christians. Such scenes were widespread back then and considered normal. However, similar occurrences have largely disappeared today, both in cities and rural areas." But this pastor knew of "a few churches in certain cities that are still growing - and growing quite rapidly."

A pastor from East China offered a more in-depth perspective. He believes that the number of Christians in China is slowly increasing, even if the growth is not immediately visible. He compared the current situation to the Cultural Revolution, when it seemed there were very few believers. Yet after the era ended, the Christian population quickly surged. Today, he observes a rising group of people in their 30s becoming active in local churches, and seminary training programmes continue to enroll students. He sees this as God preparing a new generation of leaders. In his view, the Chinese church is currently experiencing gradual growth, and the priority should be equipping leaders - especially those with a broad vision, international perspective, and strategic thinking."

Based on that response, the Christian Times proposed a revised

perspective: Christianity in China is entering - or has already entered - a phase of 'latent development.' "We should pay greater attention to the quiet transformation in the development model of the Chinese church - shifting from a past emphasis on rapid and simplistic numerical growth to a future-oriented pursuit of quality development. In recent years, many churches have recognised

this shift and have taken action, such as focusing on discipleship training, building healthy churches, and promoting missional church models." In this view "the conclusion drawn by the Pew Research Center - that 'the growth of Christianity in China may have ended' - lacks sufficient evidence and shows low consistency with on-the-ground observations."



"CHINESE TRADITIONAL CULTURE" AND THE CHURCH



In May this year the United Front (the Government department directly responsible for all officially approved religious groups) ordered a week long training in Hubei. The Deputy Minister of the Central United Front Work Department and Director of the State Administration of Religious Affairs, Chen Ruifeng, presided over the training in Hebei. The focus of the event was "learning and experiencing Chinese

traditional culture". Speakers included Yan Jue, President of the China Buddhist Association; Li Guangfu, President of the China Taoist Association Yang Faming, President of the China Islamic Association; Beijing Archbishop Joseph Li Shan, Chairman of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association; and Xu Xiaohong, Chairman of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee of the Chinese Christian Church.

The "Chinese traditional culture" theme included teaching on official CCP Marxist theory, positive lessons from the Mao era and the teachings of Xi Jinping.

A look at the topics discussed shows that the participants were

encouraged to "earnestly study and implement the CCP's theories, guidelines, and policies." Additionally, participants studied "Sinicization" and "strict governance" of religion. "Sinicization" means adapting religious beliefs and practices to reflect the CCP's ideology. "Strict governance" is a code word meaning that the United Front no longer trusts the bureaucrats of the five authorized religions and instead directly intervenes in the management of local religious communities. Attendees were required to write essays based on the topics and participate and engage in supervised group discussions.

One hundred religious figures from across the nation took part in the event.

VISITORS WELCOME!

China's short-term Visa free visitor policy is proving to be a winner. The list of countries offered this perk continues to grow – at time of writing, July 2025, up to 47.

There is a clear intent to lure foreign businessmen and tourists back after the severe and extended Covid lockdown.

2.6 million visitors came in through Shanghai in the first 6 months of 2025, half of them under the Visa free policy. Notably most of these came from Russia, Japan, South Korea and the UAE, reflecting the reaction to Trumpian tariffs and the PRC focus on finding alternative markets.

Beijing had over 850,000 visa-free arrivals in the year to June. This was 150% up on the same period in 2024.

Chengdu and Hainan were other centres to show large increases in visitor numbers. Hainan has a special deal of 30 days Visa free offered to 59 countries.

James Liang, chairman of China's leading online travel service Ctrip, said the policy has been a boon for travel businesses.

“Our inbound tourism has already recovered to 70 to 80 per cent of pre-Covid levels. It could be fully recovered this year,”

he told a Shanghai newspaper.

Many countries, particularly those in Europe and elsewhere in Asia, have received blanket exemptions to visa requirements. Their citizens can visit anywhere in the country during stays of up to 30 days. The scheme, in all its forms, now covers a majority of developed markets as well as much of Southeast Asia, which has strengthened its business ties with China in recent years.

In addition to the visa-free policy, the world's second-largest economy has taken other steps to encourage spending among overseas tourists, including opening more duty-free shops across the country.

Shenzhen is another city that has benefitted from the new policy. Visitors to Shenzhen have come



47 countries visa free to China from June 2025

from around the world but especially from Malaysia, South Korea, Japan, Vietnam and Singapore. To keep pace with demand, a direct flight to Dubai from the city commenced in July, and multiple international routes were added this year to cities like Vientiane, Osaka, Singapore, Tokyo, Bangkok and Hanoi.

Shenzhen, home to tech giants Tencent and Huawei, is attractive to travellers because of its status as a trade and manufacturing nerve centre, close to Hong Kong and a relatively low cost of living.

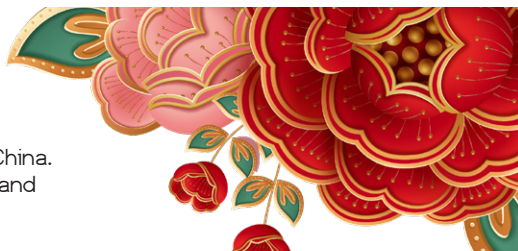
It has also become known as a youthful fun city – having one of the youngest tech savvy populations in China.



Prayer Points

SEPTEMBER 2025

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

PREPARING FOR BATTLE

Pray for both the English and the Chinese language teams that they might succeed in helping missionaries to both go and also to stay on the mission field.

Pray for those who need help to discover the FieldPartner sites.

Pray for the leadership team of FieldPartner including CCSM founders Ross and Christine Paterson who exemplify the reality that Christians never retire.

PRAYER POINTS #2

DAUGHTERS OF THE BAMBOO GROVE

Pray for all the Chinese children adopted into "foreign homes. Pray they will be able to fully reconcile their past with their typically blessed present and have joy in their special circumstances.

With many walking with Jesus, pray they will have special influence back into China.

Pray for those parents and children who were traumatically affected by the change of policy.

Pray that the current generation of Chinese orphans will find satisfactory placements and know peace in their lives.

PRAYER POINTS #3

IS THE CHURCH IN CHINA GROWING OR SHRINKING?

Pray for the church in China to continue to grow, both in quality and in quantity.

Pray for the church in China to be ready for each and every situation that it must face in these difficult days.

Pray particularly for pastors like the 12 mentioned by Christian Times to be given wisdom and anointing to lead and to grow their flocks.

Serving, Supporting & Strengthening
the Church and People of China





Prayer Points

SEPTEMBER 2025

"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

"CHINESE TRADITIONAL CULTURE" AND THE CHURCH.

Pray for the leaders of the Official church in China that they will not compromise their faith and core beliefs under the pressure of Sinicization and "strict governance".

Pray that God will speak into their hearts and make it clear that there is a time to take a stand.

Knowing that the flame of true faith is still burning in some of the official Three Self churches, pray that they will be protected from the concerted attacks on what they know to be true.

PRAYER POINTS #5

VISITORS WELCOME!

Rejoice that PRC policy is to make it easier for visitors to come to China as opposed to the isolationist policies of earlier eras.

Pray that more Christians will be able to safely avail themselves of the visa free opportunity to visit China and to reconnect with friends from previous more open times.

Pray that the welcome will one day extend to people of faith allowing a return of international fellowship and Christian cooperation.

PRAYER POINTS #6

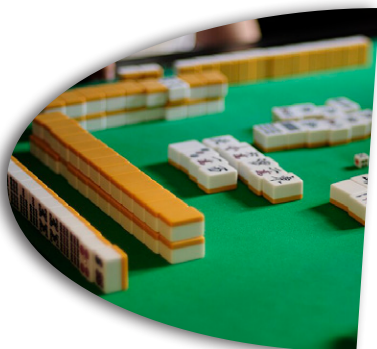
SHOULD CHRISTIANS PLAY MAHJONG?

Pray that this classic and complex game can be enjoyed in China by everyone including Christians without the damaging influence of gambling.

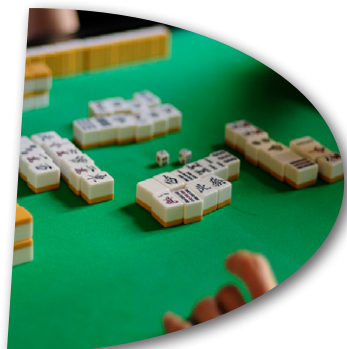
Pray that Western players will includes diaspora Chinese in their groups and use it as an opportunity to make friends and share the gospel.

Pray that all who love China will take every opportunity to find common ground to develop friendships leading to outreach.





SHOULD CHRISTIANS PLAY MAHJONG?



Mahjong, a game of skill, strategy, and a bit of luck, has a rich history that traces back to ancient China. The name "mahjong" translates to "sparrow," perhaps related to the game's quick and lively nature. Traditional beliefs suggest that the game was originally played with tiles made from bamboo, ivory, or even stone, which were intricately decorated. The game typically consists of 144 tiles, featuring suits similar to playing cards, including characters, bamboos, and circles, alongside honour tiles like winds and dragons.

Mahjong quickly spread beyond China, gaining popularity in neighboring countries like Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. Each region developed its own variations and rules, enriching the game's diversity. By the early 20th century, mahjong had made its way to the West, particularly the United States, where it gained immense popularity in the 1920s, largely among the

upper class.

In China, mahjong transcended mere entertainment, evolving into a cultural phenomenon. It became a social activity, often associated with family gatherings and celebrations.

Today, mahjong is widely played across China and the Chinese diaspora, often seen in parks, community centers, and homes. It is said that 900 million Chinese play Mahjong and a common joke is that the remaining population watch!

In recent years, online mahjong platforms have gained traction, bringing the game to a global audience and allowing players to connect regardless of geographic barriers. This digital transformation has kept the essence of mahjong alive while adapting it to modern tastes.

Research carried out by our Editor suggests that Christians in China are ambivalent towards Mahjong. Whilst some are opposed due to it often being played for money, other feel it is harmless in a family setting. Some that we spoke to said it is in the same category as drinking wine or any alcohol - not to be encouraged. Another said it is well known that many Christians play and even bet small amounts. They just don't tell their Christian friends about it!

Very few noted the possible pagan roots that may cast a spiritual shadow over Mahjong.





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.

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.

CCSM has a YouTube channel which has recently added short video clips highlighting prayer needs for China.

Check it out at: [Chinese Church Support Ministries - YouTube](#)

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