

November

Family、 Nation、 World

Prayer Letter

Prayer Letter November ~ 2017

Become a True Disciple, For the Glory of God

Become a True Church, Establish True Mission



〈 Psalm 34:8 〉

Taste and see that the Lord is good,
Blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him.



基督教柏斯宣道會
Perth Alliance Church

English

Monthly Prayer Letter

Verse to meditate on : 2 Corinthians 4:18

1/11	W E D	Give thanks to God for the 'Water to Wine' movie screenings on the 28 th and 29 th of October, there were hundreds of non-believers from different backgrounds who attended this event and had the opportunity to hear of God's amazing work. Glory to God! Please pray for opportunities to follow-up with these non-believers. <i>(Follow ups after water to wine)</i>
2/11	T H U	South Mandarin will start training classes on "one on one discipleship" from the 08/11, please pray for Ps. Victor and his wife. Pray that they will have the wisdom and ability to teach and that they will be able to encourage participants to act on what they've learnt. <i>(S.Mand training)</i>
3/11	F R I	Pray for the High School students who are in the midst of sitting their WACE exams this month. Pray for good exam preparation and recall of material they have learnt, as well as a firm trust in God to sustain them and their parents during this stressful time. <i>(High school and uni students exams)</i>
4/11	S A T	Please pray for the Discipleship training class in the North Mandarin congregation. Ask God for guidance and protection. Due to the digital meetings, there have been interferences which can affect the classes. Give thanks for dedicated learners and please continue to pray for the students and the teachers. <i>(N.Mand DT)</i>
5/11	S U N	The Sunday school classes on the life of Jesus finished in October, ask God to keep calling members to persevere with their daily devotion, and to long after serving God. <i>(S.Cant Sunday school student daily devotion)</i>
6/11	M O N	Thank God for His provision, the funds raised for the Hamersley Carols is better than last year. Please pray for those who are organizing this event, that they will serve with joyful hearts to continue fundraising and send out invitations for the event. Please also pray for good weather for the event which is scheduled for 10/12. <i>(North Carols fund raising)</i>
7/11	T U E	Thank the Lord for His amazing planning, that there were opportunities for Pastors and participants to interact during the discipleship training course, despite resistance from other people. <i>(China - Revival)</i> Thank God for the "Basic Discipleship training" which builds churches with a healthy and sturdy foundation, but also provided healing and the rebuilding of marriages through the contemplative discipleship training course. <i>(China - Renewal)</i>
8/11	W E D	Pray for PACE ministry planning for 2018. May God give wisdom and a clear vision to Rolf and Sylvia as they explore strategies to further develop the English ministry for 2018. <i>(S.Eng Ministry planning)</i>
9/11	T H U	Thank God for the baptism service on the 15/10, ask God to bless sister Eleanor, strengthen her heart, and use her as a good testimony in church and her own life. <i>(S.Cant newly baptised member)</i>
10/11	F R I	Ask God for mercy on Yang-Jie, that God through His presence, Yang-Jie may feel comforted during this time in rehab. Please pray for both spiritual and physical strength. <i>(S.Mand Member)</i>
11/11	S A T	Please pray for the north Mandarin congregation as they have decided to have a sister as Chairperson for Sunday service. The training for this will commence soon, with the sister being rostered from February 2018. Please pray for the congregation as they start this trial. <i>(N. Mand Female Chairperson)</i>

12/ 11	S U N	North church is having their yearly Rite of Passage (children come to age) on the 29/11, pray that God will help each family "pass down to the next generation, the wisdom, power and deeds of Yahweh." Pray that God will bless the north church as they work together to help the next generation grow, so that they will be God's disciples for life. (Rite of Passage)
13/ 11	M O N	Pray for University students who are preparing and sitting for exams this month and/or looking for summer vacation work. Pray that they will be diligent in their studies and seek the righteousness and kingdom of their heavenly Father, trusting him to provide for all their needs (Uni-students exams and looking for work)
14/ 11	T U E	Please pray for cell groups "Grace" and "Love", ask God to give wisdom to the leaders and help members to grow and build relationships. (S.Cant Cell groups)
15/ 11	W E D	Thank God for unity in our team, we collaborated well with the local teachers and had great interaction and leaning. Please pray for ongoing training of local co-workers who will be able to pick up the baton and train the next generation of leaders. (China – New Leaders)
16/ 11	T H U	Some brothers and sisters have started to share the gospel, teaching new believer materials and "One on One" discipleship courses, ask God to keep their faith up and strengthen them. (S.Mand Gospel sharing n training)
17/ 11	F R I	The fundraising has begun for the Hammersley Carols outreach event. Please pray for unity within the organizing committee from different churches. Pray for passion in working together for the purpose of reaching out to the community, showing the love of Christ, that the people who attend may be guided to a relationship with God. (North Christmas Carols)
18/ 11	S A T	The results of the plebiscite on Same Sex Marriage will be published this month. Pray that whatever the outcome, the government will ensure that the rights of all Australians to practice their religion freely will be protected. (SSM)
19/ 11	S U N	Please pray for the ministry direction for the next year for our whole church, that a theme and direction may be set while still allowing each congregation to have specific goals and targets which reflect the current situation for each congregation. (New theme for 2018)
20/ 11	M O N	Please pray for the three sisters from south Mandarin who are getting baptised on the 26/11. Ask God to strengthen their faith, and bless the day to reveal God's Glory to people! (S.Mand Baptising body)
21/ 11	T U E	November is a busy time for international students to finish assignments and prepare for exams, ask God to protect their hearts, that they will experience God in this busy time. Pray that they will also put God first and give glory to God! (international students)

22/11	WED	Rolf and Nonna are planning to lead a team of volunteers for the Scripture Union Family Festival (Beach Mission) at Augusta, from the 1 st -10 th January 2018. Pray for the planning and preparation for the mission, that sufficient people will join the team, with the appropriate gifts to serve and witness to the campers in Flinders Bay Caravan Park. (S.Eng Beach mission)
23/11	THU	Please pray for the baptism services in December! Pray for members who have decided to be baptized, ask God to prepare everything, so that these baptism services will be smooth! (North baptising members)
24/11	FRI	Please pray for the relationships between brothers and sisters, that they will be united in love and support one another; with no negative criticism. Pray that brothers and sisters will be humble to one another and share the gospel together (North Mand Member)
25/11	SAT	Please pray for the new ministry committee in the south Mandarin congregation, pray that the new team will collaborate with love to serve God together. (S.MandNew MC)
26/11	SUN	Pray for our mission team who are going to Thailand. Pray for co-operation with the church in HK, the preparation work and meetings. Pray also for the training before their departure in January. May God prepare the heart of all participants and provide opportunities for the team members to bond and get to know each other a bit better before the mission trip. (Thailand STM)
27/11	MON	Amazing Guidance! We have being invited to a minority ethnic group to start "Basic Discipleship training". Please pray for this as we need someone to translate the materials to their language. Pray for the translator and ask the Holy Spirit to guide us in discerning when is a good time to start a class with them! (China — Minority ethnic group)
28/11	TUE	Please pray and find time to read Haggai. Learn to put God's kingdom and church affairs first in life and work. (Seek first the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness)
29/11	WED	Please pray for new comers in our church, ask God to strengthen their longing for God. Pray also for the follow-up work, that this will be done with love and care. (New comers)
30/11	THU	The C&MA of Australia will hold its annual Council Meeting in Perth in February 2018. Annual Council is the legislative body of the Australian Alliance, a gathering of licensed workers and church representatives, who meet for business, spiritual renewal, fellowship and encouragement. The theme for the 49th Annual Council is 'Be Prepared'. Pray for all the Council preparations and that it will be a significant time of encouragement for all who attend. (C&MA Annual council meeting)

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Prayer Letter
OMF International

November 2017

Chinese Christians and Social Involvement

In April 2012, a church in Wuhan initiated a movement for Christians to donate blood. Since then, they have set November 25th as the annual “Christians Voluntary Blood Donation Day”, and the day has been tacitly approved by the government as it has been on-going for the last few years (picture bottom left).

On June 1st, 2013, members of a church in Chengdu went on the streets to pass out leaflets that said “No abortions on Children’s day”. However, they were stopped by the authorities (picture bottom right).

These two events might seem to be unrelated, but they demonstrate that Chinese Christians are trying to be more involved in social projects – sometimes successful, sometimes not. It is a reality that the Chinese church is beginning to play a part in addressing more social and community needs.

Chinese society at large is familiar with Christians doing charitable work. Ever since the arrival of Christianity in China, foreign missionaries and local believers have been involved in charitable work. They have played an



important role in education and health care, they ran orphanages and drug rehabilitation centers, advocated for the abolition of foot-binding of women and helped refugees during various wars. All of this is still remembered by many. This writer has seen many examples of charitable works that continue to this day. For example, in a hospital in Lanzhou, a sign from a leprosarium in the early 20th century still declares that “God so loved the world” (picture bottom left). In a hospital in Zhejiang, an old publication declares that this hospital was started by Christians in 1912. (picture bottom right).



However, in the West during the early 20th century, there was a controversy concerning the so-called “social gospel”. Many Chinese Christians chose a different path - they began to mainly emphasize evangelism and personal spiritual growth. “Fundamentalism” was a key characteristic in the development of Chinese Christianity at that time.

During the period 1950 – 1979, Chinese society went through a tremendous upheaval. Since then, due to the influence of fundamentalism and unprecedented social changes, many

Christians have been reluctant to get involved in social or charitable work. Since the 1990s, as Christianity has spread more widely, especially in the urban centers, Chinese Christians are once again considering what it means to be a Christian in society. This was especially true after the Sichuan earthquake in 2008. According to reports by the government, there were 1,060,000 volunteers who helped in the disaster zone, of which 60% were Christians. This shows that the main volunteer force in China is composed



of Christians. Although the Christian volunteers from house churches were not organized by anyone, they were willing to step out in faith and reach out to those in need. This was a great example of what can happen, even in today’s materialistic society. Since

(Continued on page 6)

Prayer Points

November 2017

1 According to church tradition, November is the month for a special time of thanksgiving to God. Let us give thanks to God for watching over the Chinese church, and especially for the fact that Chinese believers are now seriously considering how to be involved in social projects as an expression of God's love.

2 Please pray for Chinese Christians working with AIDS patients, especially those looking after the children of those affected by the disease.

3 Remember the spouses and children of those serving prison sentences. Pray especially that teenage children can be helped and nurtured by mature Christian adults.

4 There is a local ministry whose focus is the children of prisoners. Through seminars and other methods, they are making local churches aware of the needs of these children. May more churches gladly and wholeheartedly step up to join in this ministry.

5 Pray for workers in large factories like Foxconn Technology Group. There are usually over 10,000 workers in each factory, mostly in their twenties. Pray for those sharing the gospel with them.

6 Pray for those leading Bible studies in the dorms for factory workers; they

are workers themselves, and faces many pressures. May the Lord strengthen them and enable them to have a good and effective witness.

7 Pray for those working with left-behind children in rural areas. Some urban churches are starting to do regular visits. We give thanks that these ministries are developing; may the Lord raise up more to participate in this ministry.

8 Pray for a farmer in central China who has adopted ten disabled children. His family support these children in addition to running a farm. May the Lord strengthen and encourage them in the midst of all the demands of daily life.

9 Please pray for those who have continued to serve in Sichuan, following up after the 2008 earthquake. Their ministries have changed from disaster relief to agricultural development and children's education. May the Lord grant them wisdom, courage and resources going forward.

10 Please pray for those who adopt abandoned babies. Due to government policies, they have to pay more and deal with a lot of "red tape". If they are unwilling to pay a bribe for the necessary documents, they can hit roadblocks in the process.

11 Government policy only allows parents without children to adopt, so most Christian families are unable to adopt children. May the Lord open doors for needy children to be adopted by Christian families.

12 An abandoned baby boy named “Hosea” has finally been officially adopted by a Christian couple, after a difficult two year process. Pray for this child and his adoptive parents, that he will grow up knowing that the Lord has a wonderful plan for his life.

13 Pray for local ministries that are trying to minister to abandoned babies. Even when Christians manage to register an organization to take care of them, everything is very difficult because of the excessive red tape, lack of a basic framework and limited professional help.

14 China has now moved on from the “one-child policy” to a “two-child policy” But there is still a national reproductive policy in place. Some Christian families have more than two children. Please pray for two college professors who face the possibility of being fired because they each have three children. May the Lord guide and provide for them.

15 Thank God for a church in Guangxi that has been taking care of minority students for over ten years. Some of these students have now graduated from high school and are starting at university. Some others are getting theological training in order to serve God in minority areas. Pray for them, that as they enter this new phase of their lives, they will depend on the Lord and continue to live for His glory.

16 Please pray for drug rehabilitation ministries run by Christians. In Guangdong and Yunnan provinces, Christian doctors have set up these types of ministries. However, due to the

sensitive nature of this work, the lack of funds and limited professional help, they face great challenges. May the Lord encourage them by bringing willing, skillful people to join them in this ministry.

17 Some nursing homes have successfully registered in China, but they are all in rural areas, where there is a lack of professionals to do the work. May the Lord lead more urban churches to get involved in this important ministry.

18 Traditionally, Chinese have always honored the elderly among them. There is therefore great difficulty in setting up nursing homes in urban centers. Please pray for local churches, that they will show honor to the elderly by caring for them in practical ways.

19 Chinese rural churches lack pastors and their congregations are aging. Some of the elderly cannot be taken care of by their children (because they have gone to work in the city). May the Lord send urban Christians to visit the elderly in the rural areas on a regular basis, to provide them with emotional support, health care and other services.

20 Chinese Christians who want to help with social needs have few legal opportunities to do so. This can be very discouraging and demotivating. May the Lord help them to overcome the obstacles to service and be witnesses for Christ as they demonstrate His love in their communities.

21 In Wuhan, one house church was able to register a food bank and they run it in partnership with a

government agency. May the Lord continue to bless this church, that they can meet the physical and spiritual needs of many through their food bank.

22 November 25th is China's "Christian's voluntary blood donation" day. Please pray for the preparation of this event in cities across China, so that more Christians can participate and demonstrate God's love in their communities.

23 Today is Thanksgiving Day in the USA. Many Chinese churches hold similar thanksgiving gatherings at this time. May the Lord bless both organizers and participants, so that they will more deeply appreciate the love and goodness of God.

24 In some cities, churches are spending a lot of time and money negotiating with various government departments to prepare a suitable venue for November 25th's "Christian's voluntary blood donation" day. Pray for favor in the eyes of government departments.

25 Today is China's "Christian's voluntary blood donation" day. May the Lord protect and use Christians who are participating in this event, so that more in the community can understand that Christians serve a God who is full of goodness and mercy.

26 Please pray for the Chinese church as they look for ways to be involved in society, to be witnesses for the Lord, and to share His love in their communities. May the Lord be at work to expand these ministries, so that

many lives will be touched by the love of Christ.

27 We thank God that some Chinese Christians have been able to get involved in charitable work. However, there are many barriers to involvement in health care, education and work among minority groups. Christians are also forbidden from getting involved in ministries that involve social justice or care of AIDS sufferers. May the Lord continue to open new doors for Christian social engagement.

28 The Chinese church needs to better understand the value of doing charitable work in society. May God open their eyes to opportunities for demonstrating the gospel in deed as well as sharing the gospel in word. Pray that Chinese Christians will persevere in this direction over the long term.

29 Please pray for NGOs being registered by Chinese Christians. Due to the fact that NGOs can only be registered by individuals and not by churches, there is a lot of pressure associated with the registration process, causing many difficulties. May the Lord continue to sustain those NGOs that are operating well now.

30 We know of Christians who have started a "Christian NGO incubation" ministry. They can give assistance to those who want to register as NGOs and mobilize people for service in China. But they face a lot of political pressure. May the Lord strengthen, sustain and guide them – and grant them success!

(Continued from page 2)

then, there has also been a growth in the number of drug rehabilitation centers run by Christians, and ministries to prisoners have developed. Christians have also reached out to left-behind children, assisted orphans, and started nursing homes for the elderly.

There are five big issues that face Chinese Christians as they seek to become involved in charitable and social work:

1. The church has no legal standing as it tries to be involved in charitable enterprises.

For historical reasons, the majority of Chinese Christians attend unregistered house churches. These churches are not recognized by society or the government. So it is hard for Christians to do any sort of charitable work in Chinese society under the name of a church.

2. The government wants to start charitable enterprises but is unclear how exactly it wants to do it.

On September 26th 2013, the General Office of the State Council circulated a paper “Regarding government social services guidelines”. This sets out requirements for the safe and orderly implementation of social services, under the principle of gradual reform and innovation. By the year 2020, the whole nation is supposed to have developed a basic framework for government spending on charitable services to match its economic developments. They

want public funds to be used effectively and only spent on “proper” enterprises. But churches providing these charitable services are not recognized by the government as “proper” enterprises. As things are at present, Christians can only serve social needs as individuals; this makes it hard to deal with the government who wants to work with organizations.

3. Christians want to serve, but face many difficulties.

A few Christians have managed to register charities, such as community centers or nursing homes. In theory, government officials want to be able to work effectively with charitable enterprises. But there are very few churches or Christian organizations that can openly bid for social service contracts. Usually government departments set up a certain number of social services for a certain period of time. For example, with the ageing of Chinese society, the government has been pushing for nursing homes to be built. But traditionally Chinese people have an aversion to placing their parents in nursing homes. As a result, it is hard to find physical building spaces in urban areas in which new nursing homes might be built. The government has allowed Christians to open nursing homes in the outskirts of cities, thus solving one of the most pressing issues in China today. But they do not want those Christians to influence the community, and there are strict restrictions on evangelization.

4. The new laws are hard to understand and implement.

In September 2016, China began to implement “Charitable Laws”. Quoting, “in order to establish charitable organizations, application for registration should be made to the civil affairs department of the people’s government at or above the county level. The civil affairs department shall make a decision within 30 days of receiving the application. Those who meet the conditions prescribed in this Law shall be allowed to register and have a public profile. If they do not meet the conditions prescribed in this Law, they shall not be registered and the reasons shall be stated in writing.”

In practice, not only do charitable organizations need to register with the proper government department, they also need to have a “competent business unit” to issue a certificate that is used for registration – this is causing a lot of problems. According to the *Xinhua News Agency* (September 1st, 2016): “There are currently 600,000 social organizations that have registered, but there are millions of others that are not yet registered. Due to the difficulty of registration, many charities are currently operating illegally. So in effect, when the “Charitable Laws” are implemented, the government will be working with charities that are actually operating illegally. According to the new “Religious Affair Regulations”, house church charities have no right to operate, and no right to provide social services that the government might fund. Christians as individuals can volunteer and help, but technically churches cannot run any charitable organizations.

5. Although overseas NGOs continue to operate, there are many limitations on them.

After the implementation of the “Charitable Laws” last September, the “Foreign Non-Governmental Organizations” Law also went into effect. According to reports, there are over 7,000 overseas NGOs in China, mostly doing poverty alleviation, medical work and community development work in rural areas. The new law does not affect how these overseas NGOs operate on a day-to-day basis. Instead, it seeks to regulate how foreign funds can be used in China. Overseas NGOs are required to find the relevant business department to register with, so they can then take that registration and apply for legal status with the Public Security Bureau. In addition, without government permission, these overseas NGOs cannot partner with any local organization. So this effectively blocks the church from working with an overseas NGO.

Even as difficulties abound, the 21st century Chinese church is still trying to work out how to apply the principles taught in the story of the Good Samaritan. One pastor quotes Rev. Martin Luther King, “A great country must be a loving country; a person who does not care about the vulnerable cannot be a great man, and a country that does not care about the poor cannot be a great country.”

One very good thing is that Chinese Christians are no longer asking “Why do we need to be involved in society?”

but are now asking “How should we serve our society?” Some urban church leaders are saying: “Because we are chosen by God, we must follow the Great Commandment. We must serve those around us and preach the Good News to those who have not

heard, so that they too can experience the love of Christ.

May God continue to lead the Chinese church as it grows in maturity and seeks to serve society in the spirit of Christ!

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