

April

Family、 Nation、 World

Prayer Letter

Church Prayer Monthly- 2018 April



Each of us should please our neighbours for their good, to build them up.

〈 Romans 15:2 〉



基督教柏斯宣道會
Perth Alliance Church

Become a True Disciple, For the Glory of God

Become a True Church, Establish True Mission

English

M o n t h l y P r a y e r l e t t e r

1 /4	S U N	Give thanks for the success of PACE's first attempt joining the Belmont Harmonised Festival. It was a good turnout making our presence known in the community. Pray that God would strengthen the relationships built with some of our neighbours. (S. Eng Community Outreach)
2 /4	M O N	Give thanks for Sount Mandarin congregation's leaders retreat on 30th March. Pray that God will help leaders to serve faithfully in unity, live out the gospel in their daily lives, and be good examples for others to imitate as they imitate Christ. (S. Mand Leader's Retreat)
3 /4	T U E	Due to renovations and repairs happening at North Mandarin congregation, some ministries/activities initially planned for March had to be delayed. But praise God, Sunday worship inside the recreation centre is going smoothly and not negatively impacted much by this. Despite the diruption and delay in our plans, pray that no matter what, we would be obedient and surrender to follow God's leading. (N. Mand. Church Renovation & Repairs)
4 /4	W E D	In April, South Cantonese will start family group plan. Every brother and sister will be placed in a group, which will consist of brothers and sisters from different cell groups and of different ages. These groups will meet 3 times a year, in hope to build relationships and interactions of the body of Christ as a whole. (S. Cant. Small Groups (additional group))
5 /4	T H U	Pastor Thomas has started first cycle of chemotherapy on 28th March. Please pray for the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The chemotherapy medications selected will be suitable and effective at eradicating all the cancer cells in the rectum, liver, lungs, and adrenal glands; shrink all tumours especially the one in the liver, so that they can be surgically removed while retaining 50% of the liver organ itself so that it is able to still function normally.
6 /4	F R I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal side effects from chemotherapy and debilitating impact on everyday life • Enoch will return home for Easter period, pray for good family time, and building up of one another's faith. (Pastor Thomas Chemotherapy Treatment for Cancer)
7 /4	S A T	Pray for our PAC 365 Missions Conference 8-15 April. Pray for the organisation of speakers and the preparation of the STM testimonies sharing. Pray that this conference might be powerfully used by God to move us to greater involvement in local and world mission, either long term, medium or short term. (PAC Missions Conference)
8 /4	S U N	Give thanks for the 6 brothers and sisters from South Mandarin congregation getting baptised on 1st April. Pray that God will strengthen their faith and that they would follow Him all of the days of their lives. (S. Mand Baptism)
9 /4	M O N	North Mandarin congregation's Discipleship Training has resumed on 23rd February. In recent sessions, the students had the opportunity to teach and though there are room for improvement they did a great job. Pray for God to lead and that the students' experiences will enrich their studies and be better equipped. (N. Mand. Discipleship Training)

10 /4	T U E	A primary school in Hamersley has invited our church to participate in some volunteering activities. Pray that God will prepare suitable brothers and sisters to the school to show Christ's love. (N. Congregation School Volunteering)
11 /4	W E D	Pray for the Combined English Youth Group on the first and third Friday nights (alternating North & South). Recently, there had been a significant reduction of numbers of youth attending when it's held at South. Pray that the issue can be identified and resolved, so that all youth can consistently and regularly gather together, being disciplined and growing in love and knowledge of Jesus. (South & North Eng. Youth Group)
12 /4	T H U	Praise the Lord, brother Jie Yang's condition has been improving (suffered severe injuries from a car accident in 2017, undergoing rehabilitation). He can now write basic words in English and Chinese, and also progressing in his physical movements. Pray that God will continue to heal him and have mercy on him, that he may reach full recovery soon. (Healthy of Body of Christ)
13 /4	F R I	It's not easy for Discipleship Training students to attend class, they are in midst of many obstacles, and this has been disrupting student morale. Pray for God's protection on their hearts and strengthening of their faith, that they would receive support and encouragement from their families, as well as brothers and sisters, to complete the course. (N. Mand. Discipleship Students)
14 /4	S A T	Life impacting life: Ask the Lord to help us in persevering in our one to one relationships. (N. Cant. One to One)
15 /4	S U N	Please pray for leaders and teachers serving the youth in unity. That God will strengthen them, in walking alongside these youth and following and serving God together. (S. Cant. Small Group Leader)
16 /4	M O N	Please pray for the North Cantonese congregation's big excursion on 25th April, that we will be able to make new friends, get in touch with old friends and congregate the young and the old, and love one another. (N. Cant. Excursion)
17 /4	T U E	The PACE Cell Groups (South Cell, North Cell, East Cell and Unicell) have started a new series of studies in the Gospel of John. Pray that through these studies, which will be supported by a corresponding series of sermons, God's Spirit will not only deepen the members love for Jesus, but also empower them to live love-shaped lives and equip them to proclaim the good news of Jesus to their friends, family, work colleagues or fellow students. (S. Eng. Gospel of John)
18 /4	W E D	Our Pastor Thomas has been diagnosed with cancer, please pray for his wife, Pastor Joy's health, energy and emotions, that she will have the peace and comfort of God. (Pastor Joy)
19 /4	T H U	Praise and give thanks to God for putting the church plant idea in our hearts, pray for the Holy Spirit's leading in brothers and sisters to broaden our horizons and carry out the great commission and commandment, to love God, love our neighbours and make disciples of all nations. May God give us the love of Christ, faith that move mountains and Holy Spirit's guidance, and His wisdom. May the Lord of the harvest raise up more workers with a burden for the church plant and willing to use their gifts to serve God. (N. Eng. Church Plant Committee)
20 /4	F R I	Pray that God will strengthen each ministry committee member: Philip, Catherine, Phyllis To, Mavis, Peter, Cathy, Alison, Jessie, Joyce, Sing, and that God will be gracious to them in their work, family, health and everyday life. That

		they will walk closely with God to lead brothers and sisters in serving God together. (S. Cant. Ministry Committee Members)
21 /4	S A T	Give thanks for South Mandarin congregation's Joy fellowship group, and the way the elderly members love one another. They often encourage and pray for one another. Pray that God will continue to uphold them and give them health and joy in the physical and in the spirit (S. Mand. Joy Group)
22 /4	S U N	Pray for our PACE kids ministry. Give thanks for the enthusiasm of the teachers and parents, and pray that they will be faithful in this crucial ministry of discipling pre-school and primary school age children. (S. Eng. Children's Ministry)
23 /4	M O N	Pray that God will empower Pastor Leung, Catherine (Deacon committee chair) and Philip (Ministry committee chair), that God will be gracious to them in their work, family, health and everyday life. That they will walk closely with Him to lead brothers and sisters in serving God together. (S. Cant. Pastor & Leaders)
24 /4	T U E	Pray for the spiritual life of brothers and sisters, that we will be living testimonies in our everyday lives, leading unbelieving family members and friends to Christ. (Spiritual life of the Body of Christ)
25 /4	W E D	Please pray for brothers and sisters who need to travel frequently for work. Pray that God will protect their journeys, and guard their hearts and minds; help them to work effectively and also spend regular time with God, and experience the victory of Christ in all temptations and trials. (Travelling Members of the Body of Christ)
26 /4	T H U	In recent times, there have been many newborn babies amongst all congregations of our church. Pray for these new parents, that they would work together in unity, be appreciative and forgiving of one another, and experience God's work and sufficient grace in parenthood. (Families with Newborns)
27 /4	F R I	Pray for the new friends in our congregations, that they will become a part of our church community, enjoy church life and continue to get to know Jesus and accept Him as their personal Lord and Saviour. (New Friends)
28 /4	S A T	Give thanks for the new university students attending Unicell this year. Pray that they can settle in well, find a sense of belonging there, build strong relationships with others, and grow in their desire to seek, know and love Jesus more. Pray that God will preserve them and protect them from dropping out. (S. Eng. Unicell)
29 /4	S U N	Pray that the hearts of brothers and sisters of North Mandarin congregation will be united in loving one another, supporting one another, and there will be more appreciation and encouragement of one another and less criticism and judgement. That the young and old will be humble in receiving training and growing together to spread the gospel so that the name of Jesus can be lifted high, and live lives that give glory to God. (N. Mand. Unity of the Body)
30 /4	M O N	South Mandarin congregation has booked a venue for Christmas camp for 24th - 26th December. Please pray for the preparation work leading up to the camp. (S. Mand. Christmas Camp)



Prayer Letter
OMF International

April 2018

Perspectives on Islam in China



Those who are familiar with the history of missions in northwest China would have heard of William Borden and the Borden Memorial Hospital. They would also have heard of the Northwest Ling Gong Fellowship (西北靈工團), started by Chinese Christians. The relationship between Christians and Muslims, including those in China, is of interest to many today. Western academics have produced many materials exploring this

topic, but Chinese scholars have only recently started examining this area. There are few materials written from a Chinese Christian worldview which look at the relevant historical, cultural, and theological issues as they relate to missions. And there are many differences between the Chinese and Western participation in this endeavor. In light of the scarcity of materials in Chinese on this topic, how do Chinese, especially the

Christians, see Islam?

The Chinese are not strangers to Islam, because Muslims have been living in China for centuries. Many Western Christians are unaware that large numbers of Muslims can be found throughout China, a total of over 23 million (about 1.6% of the total population). In 2013, the highest percentage was found in Xinjiang province (58%) and the lowest in Hainan Island (0.2%).

The Hui are the most numerous Muslim people group in China, numbering over 10 million. They are the third largest minority group in China, and are widely distributed throughout the country. In 1953, the Hui were officially recognized as a minority people group (Khui Khui in Arabic). However, they have been deeply sinicized, because they do not have their own language. They use Mandarin and have adopted some Han Chinese customs, but also follow the practices of Islam. Their ancestors may have been Muslims from outside China who married local Han women. They may have converted to Islam hundreds of years ago and have continued as Muslims from generation to generation. Beside the Hui, the government also recognizes nine other Muslim minority groups: the Uyghur, Kazak, Dongxiang, Kirgiz, Salar, Tajik, Bonan, Uzbek, and Tatar. These groups do have their own distinct languages and

distinctive cultures.

Most Han Chinese do not know how to distinguish between “Muslims” (Obedient Ones/followers of Islam) and “Islam” (the Islam religion). All Muslims are referred to as “the Hui of China”, and although the government describes the Hui as a Muslim minority, many Hui are actually Han who follow Islam. The word “minority” here, just distinguishes them from the Han Chinese who are not followers of Islam.

Islam entered China in several waves. Ancient literature shows that it first entered China during the Tang dynasty, and it has left many more historical artefacts than Christianity. For example, following the destruction of Yangzhou (which had been a very important city), Puhaddin, who was believed to be a descendant of Mohammad (16th generation), led the rebuilding during the Southern Song Dynasty (1265-1274). He built the *Xianhe* Temple and his grave can still be found near the Yangzhou Grand Canal. This is the most important evidence of Islam’s historical impact on China. It has been said that without Puhaddin, there would be no Yangzhou city today. Another famous Muslim in Chinese history is Zheng He. During the Ming Dynasty he captained some very famous maritime voyages

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PRAYER POINTS

April 2018

1 Today is Easter Sunday. Please pray that churches in China will be able to hold Easter events as planned despite current challenges and additional pressures.

2 Since the new religious regulations took effect in February, we have heard of pastors who have been restricted from travel, and some Sunday school programs for children have been stopped. Please pray earnestly for church leaders as they continue to minister in these changing circumstances.

3 Pray for pastors who have been invited to “drink tea” recently (euphemism for being questioned by the police). They face pressure to register their meeting places. May the Lord grant them divine wisdom and strength to make the best choice for their churches.

4 Brother Bian, the author of the well-known poem, “To the Unknown Evangelists”, has passed away at the age of 93. Pastor Fan Ai Shi, who was renounced as a Christian rightist in 1957, passed away at the age

of 103 in Ningbo. China has entered a new era without the influence of the elderly pastors, and the current generation of church leaders serve in a much more complex society. May they continue to seek the Lord’s heart and serve Him well in this new era.

5 News of Billy Graham’s passing, and video clips of his memorial service, have reached China. Billy Graham’s father-in-law (Nelson Bell) served in China, and his biography was published with government approval; many Chinese Christians are aware of this. Pray that books about the history of mission in China may be widely read.

6 Billy Graham was not only a great evangelist, he was also one of the founders of the Lausanne Movement. Thank God for his powerful preaching and worldwide influence. May church leaders not only admire his gifts in preaching, but also have a heart to learn about, and get involved in the world missions movement.

7 Seventy years have passed since members of the “Northwest Ling Gong Fellowship” reached Urumqi – the first step in their mission to the Northwest. Their last member, Li Daosheng, passed

away in July 2017. We thank God for churches in China which have dedicated themselves to serve their Muslim neighbors. We pray that God will raise up more like them.

8 Please pray for Christians learning Arabic and studying Muslim cultures in China. May God protect and strengthen them.

9 Please pray for Christian students at Minorities Universities. May God open doors and grant wisdom as they seek to contact, and be a blessing to, minority students.

10 Please pray that an indigenous theology will develop in China. This will be beneficial to church growth and development, and also helpful for those seeking to bless members of ethnic minorities.

11 Although there are Muslim primary and high schools in China, it is forbidden to teach Arabic and Islamic studies. Some Arabic-speaking Christian teachers are planning to offer their services using extracurricular language learning courses. Please pray for these Christians as they build bridges of friendship with Muslim families.

12 The new religious regulations have very little effect on Muslims. However, they face increasing political pressures in the Northwest, which has a knock-on effect on Christians there. Please pray for good relationships between these various communities, and freedom to continue observing their faith practices.

13 International media has been influential in generating so-called “Islamophobia”, even in China. Halal food has been boycotted on some campuses – this is unprecedented. Please pray for churches as they navigate complex, multicultural situations. Ask God to help them set a good example.

14 Some Chinese mission agencies are sending out workers to serve among Muslims in Central Asia. These workers need to start by learning local languages and cultures. May the Lord protect these workers’ physical and spiritual health.

15 Please pray for Chinese workers serving in creative access areas. May the Lord be their help in times of need.

16 A number of years ago, many responded to the “Back to Jerusalem” call. They continue to live and serve cross-culturally. Some of them have reached or are approaching retirement age, but may not be able to return home because they have no pension provision. May God provide for them through His people’s generosity.

17 Some universities in China have started to accept students from countries along the “One Belt, One Road” region. Many of these are Muslim, and Christian students are beginning to befriend them. May God grant wisdom to these students and open doors for them to have deep friendships and meaningful conversations.

18 Some Christian workers and technicians have been sent to Muslim countries to participate in the “One Belt, One Road” project. Pray for these Christians living in Muslim communities. May they stand firm and continue to grow in their faith, and may their lives shine for Christ.

19 China’s Muslims tend to be less well-educated than other groups, and Muslim communities would like to upgrade their science education level. However, most trained science teachers are not Muslim,

which causes concern to elders in these communities. Pray that these elders will become more open-minded and allow exchange with non-Muslim groups through education.

20 Nearly 98% of the 2400 prefectures in China have Muslim restaurants selling Halal food. This means that eating out provides the most frequent contact point between Chinese and Muslims. Pray that Christians will take the initiative to contact Muslims in these restaurants.

21 Poverty alleviation programs are being promoted all over China. Some of these poor areas have a high percentage of Muslims, and they have limited access to good education. May God bless these programs and enable them to make a real difference in terms of improving people’s quality of life.

22 Recently, the relationship between the Vatican and Chinese government has changed. This has caused some confusion among both Protestants and Catholics. Please pray about these sensitive interactions, as they can directly impact the lives of Christians in China.

23 Many high-quality Christian websites have been blocked. We give thanks for the window of time during which the church could make good use of social media. Please pray for churches in these new circumstances, that they will find creative ways of keeping connected and spreading the good news.

24 Please pray for Christians involved in the media industry. Most of them are young, and they may be immature both spiritually and emotionally. May the Lord help them grow in their faith, knowing that He is in control of all things. Pray that they will be wise and discerning when they share the good news with their colleagues.

25 Due to new regulations, it is hard for Christian literature work to continue as before. Pray for Christian literature workers; may God grant them wisdom to find new ways of operating.

26 Please remember a Christian professional photographer who is working on the production of a documentary series about contemporary Chinese Muslim religion and life. He has met great resistance. May the Lord grant him strength and enable him to overcome difficulties in order to accomplish this task.

27 Please pray for a Christian couple - both husband and wife are university professors. The school has notified them that if they insist on participating in church activities, they will not be re-appointed. May the Lord grant them wisdom and direction at this difficult time.

28 Please pray for rural church leaders who have been asked if speakers "from outside" have preached at their church - they may be fined because of this.

29 The May 1st Golden Week begins today. In the past churches would hold large meetings, training courses and retreats at this time of year. However, current conditions mean that churches have no choice but to cancel their meetings, scale them down, or even operate secretly. May God continue to bless and build His church in spite of these restrictions.

30 Please pray for special meetings that will go ahead during Golden Week. May the Lord empower the speakers, and use these times to edify and renew His people.

(Continued from page 2)

to the west. Zheng He was a third generation Muslim; his father and grandfather made the pilgrimage to Mecca. These famous Chinese Muslims do not have Christian counterparts in Chinese history.

The Hui provide us with an example of successful contextualization in China. Some may ask, why would any Han Chinese – who live in the land of Confucianism – become followers of Islam? And how do Han Chinese view this “foreign religion” called Islam?

This writer, when visiting a rural area, found this couplet posted outside a teacher’s house at a Madrassah:

The truth that spreads west glorifies our ancestors

The teaching that presses into the east stirs up the lost

In China, the vast area between today’s Xinjiang and the Mediterranean Sea is called “The Western Region”. It was known to Han Chinese even before Jesus was born, so they realized they were the people living in the “East”, and not geographically the center of the world (the so-called “Middle Kingdom”).

The significance of this couplet is that its author expresses the idea that one day Islam will be

universal. The first sentence describes how their ancestors advanced the Muslim faith to the West, and the second sentence expresses the mission of Islam to the East.

The couplet also expresses the idea that Islam is already found in the west and the east; it had entered China through Muslim traders. First of all, they settled in small Islamic enclaves. They were not exclusive or aggressive, but gradually integrated into society through intermarriage and permanent settlement. This explains why there are Muslims all over China. They followed Quranic teachings and faithfully continued to preach Islam. During the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties, they contextualized Islam by incorporating the Neo-Confucian instruction, and they established a unique cultural basis for the Hui people. In the Qing dynasty, a conflict occurred, often referred to as the “Muslim Rebellions”. It was a conflict among the Muslim communities, between various factions in Islam, and was localized to western China.

The most active Muslim group in China today originates from the al-Sufiyyah’s Jahriyya (“Jahariyah” in Arabic). These Muslims entered China during the Qing Dynasty in the 18th century. The Islamic philosopher Ma Mingxin (Vijayetula Muhammad Sufi,

1718-1781) introduced this form of Islam. This Sufi group in China is the largest, most widespread, and most centralized faction. This writer visited a new school deep in the mountains of China, in a very inaccessible place, and was surprised to find large a sinicized Islamic archway (see picture on page 1) and classrooms there (see picture on page 8). This shows how deeply rooted Islam has become. Also, Halal beef noodle shops displaying verses from the Quran can be found in every large and small city in China, testifying to their faithfulness in following and preaching Islam.

Compared to Islam, the presence of Protestant Christianity in China is brief. Christian missions started with Bible translation, and the Chinese Union Version has only been available for a hundred years. By contrast, Muslim teachers contextualized Islam using the Neo-Confucian Classics many

centuries ago. Christians have contextualized their faith in China to a certain extent, but not to the same extent as Muslims.

Chinese Christians are beginning to get to know their Muslim neighbors, and slowly moving forward in terms of breaking down cultural walls and better understanding Islam. This is a long process, but in future it will be possible for Christians to share the love of Christ with their Muslim neighbors. In Henan province Christians are 6% of the population, and Muslims are 1%. So the ratio of Christians to Muslims is 6:1, and they have been friends for many generations. The local church there can more easily interact cross-culturally. We know that God can use them to bless their communities. Let us pray that more and more Chinese Christians will interact lovingly, wisely and graciously with their Muslims neighbors.

