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E-Bulletin #51 - Special China Issue - Please Pray for Christians in China

Dear Friends,

For decades we have strived to openly share news and prayer requests from Asia, as we seek to help God's people extend the kingdom of Jesus Christ. In this newsletter we have a deep burden to share with you, and we ask for your fervent prayers and intercession for our brothers and sisters in the Chinese house churches. They are now undergoing a fiery trial that is more fierce than anything experienced in China since the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s.

In the past 18 months, the situation for Christians in China has dramatically worsened. At the start, we hesitated to publicly share new information from China for a few reasons. Some of the news we have received from church leaders is so dire that most believers around the world simply wouldn't believe it if we told them. We also wanted to make sure these things were not part of a short-term crackdown, as over the years we have seen numerous seasons of persecution come and go in China. However, we believe it is now time to present the known facts, to help people understand what our fellow believers are experiencing right now.

We have also shared several links to web pages in this message, to help people learn more about the situation from other sources. Please take the time to read these articles.

* President Xi Jinping—who is about to have the constitution amended so he can remain in power for as long as he wishes—first raised concerns among Christians about three years ago when he spoke about the need to control "illegal religion". Persecution has markedly worsened since then, and hundreds of house church pastors have vanished over the past few years. Many are assumed to have been killed. Others may be held in "black jails" — secret facilities where they are tortured mercilessly. When someone enters a black jail they are usually never heard from again. Their families have no idea of their whereabouts, and all communication ceases.

* You are unlikely to hear much fresh information from the Church in China, because most mission organizations working in China have been targeted in recent years. Thousands of foreign Christians have been expelled from the country, while the large 'persecution' ministries have seen their Chinese contacts arrested. The result is that news about the Church in China is becoming difficult to access. The government appears to be trying to throw a blanket over the Church, so that the rest of the world can't see or hear what's going on inside the country.

* Christian activity in China has been strictly monitored, due to the presence of tens of millions of facial-recognition cameras that have sprung up in every city and town, and now even in villages. The data from these cameras is fed into a massive computer network around the clock. Using 'artificial intelligence', alerts are sent to the police if the computers detect any suspicious activity, such as a group of Christians gathering at a location for worship or Bible study. We encourage you to watch the following short video from the BBC. It is sobering, but will help you understand the challenges facing our brothers and sisters in China:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-asia-china-42248056/in-your-face-china-s-all-seeing-state>

* For decades, most members of Three-Self churches in China thought they were safe because they had registered with the government. Many looked down on the illegal house church networks and chided them for not "obeying the laws of the land." The distinctions between the two groups are now blurred. Hundreds of Three-Self pastors have also been arrested in the last few years, and church buildings have been demolished by special paramilitary forces. The largest single worship center in China, the Golden Lampstand Church in Shanxi Province, had a congregation of more than 50,000 members. The building, which was constructed with official permission, was recently blown up by the Chinese authorities and is now a pile of rubble:

<http://www.dw.com/en/in-xi-we-trust-is-china-cracking-down-on-christianity/a-42224752>

* Last year the government announced draconian new laws designed to punish "illegal religion" (i.e. all worship or activity outside the control of the atheistic Communist Party). These new laws, which came into force last month, include fines of up to US\$30,000 for holding prayer meetings or Bible studies, while Christians who travel out of the country (including

to Hong Kong) to attend conferences or other Christian events may be arrested and fined up to US\$50,000. These amounts are more than a lifetime's income for many Chinese believers. Pressure is also being applied to those who associate with Christians. For example, landlords face heavy fines if they rent a property to any believers who subsequently use it for meetings.

* As a result of this massive suppression, in the past year almost all house church networks we serve have stopped holding large gatherings, and most have broken down into tiny groups of no more than 4 or 5 believers. Even small meetings like this carry risk of detection and police action, so great is the control being exerted.

* In some parts of the country, thousands of Chinese Christians have been arrested. The worst of all is in northwest China, where the government has cast a wide net to demolish the threat of Islam, with at least 120,000 people currently believed to be held in concentration camps in the region:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jan/25/at-least-120000-muslim-uighurs-held-in-chinese-re-education-camps-report>

Many Christians in Xinjiang, both Han Chinese and ethnic minority believers, have been rounded up and sent to the same concentration camps. Church leaders we work with have told us things there are "worse than during the Cultural Revolution."

<https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2018/02/china-100-christians-sent-re-education-camps-xinjiang/>

* The supply of Bibles to Chinese Christians has been severely reduced. The house churches have never been officially allowed to access Bibles, but now the registered churches are also reporting a great shortage. Last year, the few remaining Bible courier ministries that were operating from Hong Kong also closed down. A decade ago, Asia Harvest was one of about a dozen known ministries providing Bibles to the house churches of China. Most of those groups have since been forced out of the country through threats, intimidation, seduction, and other means.

We have received reports of some who carried Bibles into China recently being stopped at the border. In the past, officials would confiscate the Bibles and allow the person to continue on their journey. Now, those caught with Chinese Bibles have been interrogated for up to 12 hours, expelled from China, and banned from coming back for 10 years. We believe the overall purpose is to isolate the children of God in China by strangling the supply of God's Word. Many Chinese Christian websites, Bible apps and other resources have also been blocked by the government.

* China is also extending its anti-Christian influence into neighboring countries. We have received reports of believers in Nepal, Myanmar, Laos and Vietnam being warned not to spread the Gospel across their borders into China, or they will face severe consequences.

Summary: Few Christians around the world imagined that China would ever return to its intense anti-Christian persecutions like during Mao's rule, but things are lining up for a brutal and prolonged period of struggle for Christians in China. In many ways, because of new technology, believers face an even greater challenge than during the dark days of the Cultural Revolution. Many in the West thought that Communism collapsed with the breakup of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s. Politicians were certain that free market reforms would cause China to open up and embrace democracy. They were wrong. The dark forces of aggressive, God-hating atheism are alive and well in China, North Korea, and other parts of the world.

Please Pray for China

* Praise God that He has done a wonderful work of grace in China during nearly 70 years of Communist rule! Today there are at least 100 million Christians in the country, many of whom love the Lord Jesus with all their hearts and are willing to lay down their lives for the Gospel. Pray this persecution will cause the Church to rise up and claim even more of their country for the kingdom of God.

* Please pray the kingdom of Jesus Christ would be strengthened and would grow even larger as a result of the current anti-Christian campaign. Pray that Satan would not have his way, but that God's children would be covered by the Blood of Jesus and would come through the tribulations refined like pure gold.

* Ask God to glorify His Name once again among the people of China, and that by breaking down into tiny groups of believers, the churches will get back to the basics of the faith and introduce more people to the Lord than ever before.

* Most of the younger generation of Christian leaders in China have never experienced severe, physical persecution. Understandably, many are nervous. Please pray our Heavenly Father would reveal Christ's all-sufficiency to them, and they would come through to the other side closer to God and better equipped to lead His people.

* Pray the Holy Spirit would give His children heavenly wisdom and strategies to know what to do in this crisis, and that the transformative power of the Gospel will continue to be shared to the one billion people in China who have not yet bowed their knee to the Lord.

* By God's hand, Asia Harvest has provided almost 11 million Bibles to the house churches in China over the years. We wish it was many millions more! The pressure is intense, but please pray the Lord will continue to hold open the door for us to continue. Please intercede for our Chinese co-workers who oversee the projects. As long as there is a slight opening, we want to faithfully continue to obey what God first called us to do 30 years ago.

* Satan and wicked men have continually tried to destroy God's people in China over the centuries, but God's plans have progressed regardless. Pray the King of Kings would confound the present generation of rulers, and they would learn the lesson that many before have discovered, dating back to the time of Pharaoh's persecution of God's children, when the Bible says, "The more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread; so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites" (Exodus 1:12).

Please feel free to share this message with any concerned believers, or to post it on social media etc.

Until All have Heard of Jesus,
The team at Asia Harvest
www.asiaharvest.org

Re: Special China Issue – Please Pray for Christians in China (Asia Harvest) - posted by ThyKingCome (), on: 2018/3/7 15:04

Thank you for sharing brother - this is almost impossible to comprehend what life would be like under these conditions. I watched the video about the facial recognition cameras. Chilling. I can't help but think, "God has facial recognition cameras too" and He keeps watch on the evil and the good. This encourages and provokes me to prayer for my brothers and sisters in China.

-Kevin

Re: , on: 2018/3/7 15:04

Lord willing, we will pray for China tonight on our Persecution Watch call. I think what is happening in China is part of a global wave of persecution. As the times grow darker Jesus did say that we would be hated by all nations on account of his name.

The Chinese Church has had a history of suffering and they have grown under persecution. May this be the same now.

Blaine