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## **China Church Ministry Working Report 2018 -- Summary**

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### **The Narrow Path -- The Path of Grace**

© Otto Lui

Associate General Secretary (Training)

If we were to use a color to describe the state of the churches in China, black would not be too far from the truth. Since the newly revised Regulations on Religious Affairs came into effect in February 2018, there has been tremendous suppressing effect on religious activities of all kinds (for details, please refer to “Pray for China” issue 307, December 2018). In countless church seminars and articles, the future for the development of China’s churches has been described as increasingly difficult, or even as desperate.



The Narrow Path of Ministry, is Rather the Path of Grace.

The challenges faced in recent years have been rare since the opening of China -- crosses being dismantled, church buildings demolished, congregations forbidden, and there are even church workers being charged with “inciting subversion of state authority”. But ministers in the mainland have expressed that, in looking back at church history, we see that the Lord’s grace is all the more clearly seen in hard times -- this the hour of faith being tested, and the heart being refined by God. Many fellow church workers in the mainland are still holding out faithfully in the storm, fighting the good fight for the Lord. And we too are willing to walk this narrow path alongside with them.

In days like these, we rely on the providence of the Lord. Though our training courses have been reduced (to a total of 23 trainings, reaching 780 people), yet our book gifting has increased to around 100,000 (this also included two new projects totaling 10,000 copies)! Let us recall the abundant provision of the Lord:

- When the open publishing of Christian books had almost ceased, God made a way

through when He provided us with unlikely partners through our ministry network which we developed over many years.

- The eBook projects which we began years ago gradually became the primary source for reference books for fellow workers in the mainland. In future days when publishing will come under further restrictions, eBooks will become the mainstream.
- Gifting of books to seminary graduates in the mainland continues to increase, though every year we approach it with the thought that “this could be the last time”, meaning we always give the best.
- With years of cooperating with ministers in the mainland for “Living Word” training courses, though external teachers may no longer be able to join these training courses, there is still plenty of room for local development.
- The Business as Mission project which we began years ago is now showing greater promise in the current situation.

We have some important changes to make in the face of the current circumstances:

As there is a lack of development, and even active suppression of children’s Sunday school, the Professional Diploma in Christian Education course will now change its focus to “parental education”. This is the Bible’s teachings, as the raising of children is the responsibility of parents.

Leadership Development training will proceed through small group coaching and personal mentoring. The training camps held in Hong Kong will become even more crucial.

We must cherish current opportunities, and we must explore future opportunities. Opportunities come by the grace of the Lord, and are a sign of His faithful guidance. Your participation and accompaniment is also important, making this narrow path of ministry not lonely.

China Church Ministry of CCL has supported the development and leadership training of the churches in China through providing training and resources. Looking back, the leaders we have trained are counted in tens of thousands. In 2018, we conducted over 23 training courses and exchanges in the south, east, south-west and the north, as well as Hong Kong. We have gathered 12 life mentors and equipped 21 team coaches to train 445 shepherd leaders, and supported 302 disciple makers. Even though the atmosphere in the mainland is one of stormy weather, we continue to walk forward with faith. We continue to empower Christian leaders to change their lives from the inside out through Biblical teaching and holistic care. We strive to establish more church leaders to strengthen the church.

## Booking Gifting Under the New Norm of Pastoring

© Thomas Tang  
General Secretary

Mainland Seminary Graduates Book Gifting Project offers a golden opportunity for us to better understand the pastoral needs of seminary graduates since we visit personally to give away our pastoral resources. While we were confronted by various problems in publishing these resources, we also learned during our visits about the constraints faced by mainland church leaders under the “new norm” of pastoring in the country. Despite this, we were certain that God’s grace had been with us all this time.



Given the tightening of the Regulations on Religious Affairs, mainland authorities are particularly concerned about the source of religious publications. We thank the Lord for opening a way for us, enabling us to distribute 5,000 sets of pastoral literature to the graduates of 2018 in 50 seminaries and Bible schools in 24 provinces and municipalities across the country. The total number of book gifting topped 100,000 volumes.

It was no easy task to secure approval for our quality pastoral materials to be published and printed in the mainland, and made freely available to the seminary graduates. Let me share a side story here: while the cumbersome approval process had caused delay to the publication timetable, the Lord did miraculous work among the publication companies, printing houses and logistics firms. They worked concertedly to print and pack the hundreds of thousands of books and ensured that they were delivered to the 50 seminaries and Bible schools on time! A mission considered impossible was accomplished through God’s grace!

### Constraints on Pastoring under the New Norm

Between 2012 and 2018, we witnessed the graduation of some 20,000 seminary students, and visited and conducted exchanges with many teachers, praying for the graduates who faced various challenges ahead of them.

Last year, we got in touch with workers and teachers in some 30 seminaries. They talked about the implementation of the newly revised Regulations on Religious Affairs in

churches in different parts of the country. There were restrictions posed on the pastoring work of frontline church workers, gatherings of young people and the use of certain materials by pastors. Pressure on shepherding had mounted. Such restrictions had become the “new norm” in pastoring all over the country.

In such a difficult time, material assisting in shepherding have proved to be even more important. I recall what happened in a visit to a district of the ethnic minorities last year. When we were briefing the graduates on how to use the pastoral package, the seminary principal did not wait for us to finish but eagerly grabbed a set of the package and demonstrated excitedly on the stage on how to make use of the different books to prepare a sermon, lead a Bible study class, disciples training, carry out family ministry and train leaders in order to overcome the challenges ahead.

### **An Extra Step under the New Norm**

A teacher in the southwestern region said, “I hope to continue supporting the graduates through WeChat groups in my mobile phone, fostering mutual support among them and helping them beat challenges in the first two years of their ministry.”

“The teachers are now preparing for a retreat camp to provide a chance for graduates of last year to take a break and do some reflection. We would like them to meet each other face-to-face and pray for each other instead of just interacting through the Internet in a virtual environment.” Such is the wish of some teachers in the central and southern regions.

Under the restricted new norm of pastoring, teachers fully understand the difficulties faced by the green pastors and are prepared to take an extra step to help the graduates.

### **Grateful for the Past and Hopeful for the Future**

Looking back at the past seven years, we have distributed a total of 400,000 volumes of pastoring materials (which have gone through the process of publication, production, delivery and visits) to 20,000 seminary graduates in provinces all over China. This is not easy to come by. May all glory be to the Lord for His love for the church!

You are cordially invited to remember in your prayer our book gifting project and the needs of each and every graduate. Let us also pray for those who are graduating in 2019, and may they still be able to receive the pastoral package under the new norm of pastoring, and be filled with wisdom to shepherd their flock! Amen!



## Please support 2019 Mainland Seminary Graduates Book Gifting Project

Fund Required: US\$320,500

We want to serve 50 seminaries, Bible schools and training centres, each with an average of 100 graduates. Every graduate would be given a package of pastoring resources (each package contains 10 paper books and 7 electronic books; US\$64 is the subsidy for each package). Please pray and offer your support to the ministry, thank you!

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### “Living Word” Leadership Training

## Training Strategies that Break the Limit

© Eli  
China Church Ministry Frontline Worker

With the implementation of the newly revised Regulations on Religious Affairs, ministry in China has been obstructed. But thanks to God’s guidance, CCL has long adopted the approach to emphasize the development of ministry teams native to the mainland. As such, though teachers and trainers might not be able to join from outside, “Living Word” training still has a lot of room for development. In 2018, we held 5 “Living Word” training classes in the eastern, southern and northern regions, training a total of 348 people.



In response to the changing circumstances, we purposefully chose to include trained graduates from mainland seminaries two years ago, and experienced pastors, into our rank of Bible teachers.

For example, we arranged teacher Leung to lead online training courses studying the book of Deuteronomy. This course equipped 7 brothers and sisters in a church in the south.

With their calling, they were sent as kindergarten teachers to reach out to parents, and influenced over 40 teachers as well. The school has since had its contents containing Biblical values removed, the government even planned to insert planners into the school's management, and the fate of the teachers is still unknown. Despite all this we still deeply believe in the importance of personal development. Those teachers of the Bible teaching who have a solid Biblical foundation will influence those around them, no matter where they end up.

Though faced with all kinds of hardships, we are grateful that our students are as wise as serpents, and have learned to protect themselves and the church. Last year, we were conducting training in a certain church in the eastern regions, the church's pastor was leading each group leader in Bible study using the "Living Word Curriculum Series". Suddenly, there was an unexpected inspection conducted by the authorities. Relying on wisdom given from above, the teachers were safeguarded, and the rest of the training activities were not affected either.

"Living Word" training not only leads students to study the word of God, but through Bible study, it establishes them as a group that is faithful, teachable, and committed to becoming teachers of others as well. We are willing to spend time and effort on these students, to establish open, trusting, supportive and companionate relationships with them, as they grow in the walk in the "Living Word" training, as they nurture the churches, as they lead people back to the Bible, to love and live out the Bible.

**Please support the Mentoring based Leadership Training**

( providing Living Word Bible Teaching, Business as Mission and Six Leadership Essentials )

Fund Required: US\$167,000

Goal of Training: Equip 115 team coaches, train 340 shepherd leaders, and support 460 disciple makers.

## The Lord loves the next generation, He always leads the way!

© Sunshine  
China Church Ministry Frontline Worker

There were altogether 20 students who had completed all training courses by the end of 2017. These 20 students were from various areas of 3 different provinces. While they were planning to implement what they had learned with the aim to provide training to teachers within their areas, they were challenged with the newly revised Regulations on Religious Affairs. Despite an urgent need to equip leaders for service in every district, they are compelled to significantly limit enrollment.



The current course instructors were even unable to be physically present at all practical training sessions of the graduating students. Some of the sessions had to be conducted by video recording. Despite the grave and stern external circumstance, the students have their minds well prepared to be loyal soldiers for the Lord. They said, “If we are unable to teach at church, we will disperse and teach in our individual homes!” As Children Sunday School classes are suspended, we (CCL) have redefined the focus of its training course as “train the parents”.

By the gracious guidance of our Heavenly Father, graduates of the Professional Diploma in Christian Education course are reaching out by one or more of the following ways: adding Christian Education teaching materials into the curriculum of local bible schools, giving training to Sunday school teachers at churches in neighbouring areas, equipping Christian Education teachers through organizations that serve local churches, establishing social service organizations and using them as centres to provide Christian Education training to both church member and non-member parents.

There were 12 students in the second Professional Diploma in Christian Education course and they completed all class work by the end of 2018. The third course will commence in mid-2019 to provide training to more students who identify with the concept of “Home-Based Christian Education”. At the present stage, there have been some church-run kindergartens being forced to relocate away from the church vicinity. On the other hand, there are Christian Education graduates who have opened new childcare

centres and are bringing the children to God. We firmly believe that God will continue to open up new and different pathways to accomplish His work.

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## Cross-Cultural Ministry

### Finding glimpses of light through cracks

© Dr. Yeung  
Lecturer (CCLDI)

Individuals who commit themselves to marketplace ministry and Business as Mission are often neglected and misunderstood because the business sector often projects a secular connotation. Believers lack related training. In the mainland, however, there are genuinely vast needs and opportunities within this sector.

In the southwest region, there are many minority groups. Gospel-based drug addiction rehabilitation programs are recognized by the government. These areas are an ideal condition to develop Business as Mission. Yet local resources are relatively scarce. Thus our ministry in the region has definite importance.

Ah Shu from the Henan province has good networking in her hometown. She can be regarded as a local missionary, but she has no support from any churches or organizations. Her resources are limited. Sometimes she has to come back to Hong Kong to work as a “maternity matron” to subsidize the ministry expenditures.

The “Watchman” is a young minister of a town church. He has not turned 40 yet. He is of great potential to be trained up. His service team at church is also young and energetic. He is willing to devote himself to learn marketplace ministry. The financial strength of his church, however, is less favourable than the churches in the coastal areas.

Many believers in the church of Rev. Bao in Shanghai are of the young and working class. The church has done some preparatory missionary work in the greater northwestern region and Southeast Asia. Such work is believed to be accomplished using the Business as Mission model by these believers, yet they do not possess adequate workplace and financial stewardship training.





The central region of China is very historic, and it is the business and transportation centre of China. It only takes a few hours to travel to Hong Kong or to other major cities in China by the high-speed railroad network. There are many people belonging to the Hui minority and central and south Asia traveling to this region for business. It is an ideal place for implementing Business as Mission and training nationwide believers.

Finding ministry opportunities in China is like peeking through hair-width cracks for glimpses of light. Business as Mission has great potential for expansion. May God guide us and allow us to find breakthroughs amidst oppositions and risks, and be able to grasp every opportunity to serve Him.

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