

Running Books for the Lord

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General Secretary

In September this year, I entered into my sixtieth year of life. Since this is a major milestone in a person's life, I had planned on celebrating it with my family. Unfortunately, due to work-related travels, I was unable to do so. Though I feel a sense of regret, my heart was full of willingness to run the race for the Lord, and to be used by Him.



Taking one step further, from Hebei province to Inner Mongolia



Graduates of the Inner Mongolia Bible School

“No one steps outside of Beijing to come to us.” “In remote regions like where we are, there is a lack of resources. We are in extreme need of help.” “We don't want financial support, not because we have any money, but because we want books!” These are the cries for pastoral resources from Inner Mongolia. We were deeply moved when we heard this. With the guidance of

the Holy Spirit, two years ago, CCL first began gifting spiritual books to graduates of the Inner Mongolia Bible School, officially beginning our Christian literature ministry in the region. In September, at the request of the Inner Mongolia Bible School, we joined their 30th anniversary celebrations. Thinking back now, I can still clearly see how touched the students were when they received the books as gifts. They described this gift as receiving coal in the

winter snow.

In these past few years, CCL has been donating books to more than 40 theological seminaries, bible Schools and training centres in provinces and cities of China. CCL has also gotten more deeply involved with some schools that lack resources, in order to understand their needs in terms of books and training so as to provide suitable assistance and service. One of these schools is the Inner Mongolia Bible School. With



the help of donations from supporters, we were able to donate over 1000 books to the library there last year, and set up a “Mainland Theological School Library Pastoral Care Shelf” to give students more resources to consult. We trust that it is the will of the Lord that we take this extra step for them.

I met principal Rev. Xie Baohua and vice principal Rev. Zhu Junwei at the Inner Mongolia Bible School, and Rev Xie was even from the first graduating class from the Inner Mongolia Bible School. I could feel their deep sense of belonging and responsibility for the local church and pastoral care. After graduation, Rev. Hao from the 3rd graduating class left his hometown to go to the city of Bayannur Hot in the Urad Qianqi region to serve in the theological seminary there. He told of the magnificent and tragic history of evangelism history in the area. In his hometown of Dashetaizhen, the Boxer rebels killed 12 Swedish missionaries and their children in September of 1900. Proving the saying of the ancient church fathers that the martyrs’ blood is the seed of the Church, Rev. Hao had grown up moved by this story of faith. We cannot replace the service of those native to Inner Mongolia, but books can cross regions and time to assist pastors in discipling believers, and growing the church.

Nanjing: discipleship training handing down leadership

Leaving Inner Mongolia, I met with the associate secretary of publishing, Mr. Matthew Fung, in East China to discuss with local pastors regarding ministry training and publishing work for the coming year. Moreover, this was the first time I got to see a completed set of

the newly printed 4-volume Discipleship Essentials by Greg Ogden and Daniel Meyer -- “Discipleship Essentials: A Guide to Building Your Life in Christ”, “Leadership Essentials: Shaping Vision, Multiplying Influence, Defining Character”, “The Essential Commandment”, “Witness Essentials”. This series was printed in traditional Chinese by the CCLUSA, and has always been loved by Chinese Christians. This year, CCL authorized Nanjing Union Theological Seminary to publish the series in simplified Chinese.



It is a shame that there is a lack in disciple-making, and an unwillingness on the part of believers to become leaders. Rev. Ogden points out that “leaders are the influence; Christian leaders are those who wield Christ-like influence..... Hence those who would wield Christ-like influence must be followers of Jesus -- disciples. This is the task Jesus left to the Church.” This series of books is suitable for small groups in church to teach disciples on the pathway to become leaders, and to fill in the gaps in church leadership. The series will allow disciples to become leaders, and wield Christ-like influence in their homes, churches, workplace and society.

Fuzhou: Joyfully seeing the rise of a new generation of servant leaders

September is the month of seminary commencement. On the 14th of September, I was in Fuzhou at the Fujian Theological Seminary sharing my experience of working at CCL with the freshmen. Through my sharing I exhorted the students to serve the Lord faithfully. I've known Rev. Yue Qinghua, principal of the Fujian Theological Seminary and chairperson of the Fujian Province Lianghui, for 23 years, since



1994. There is a “Mainland Theological School Library Pastoral Care Shelf” in the library of the seminary, and it is a prime example of using books for ministry. On the one hand, it's a witness to the long years of collaborating and serving with Rev. Yue; on the other hand, it's a solid addition to providing spiritual and biblical-related technical books, which bolster

student's learning. Students can also renew their spiritual life and learn about church management through “devotional and church work” books.

In those years, I came to know many younger pastors aged 25-35. Today, many have become servant leaders in many cities and provinces. Not only are they partners in CCL ministry, they are also fellow travelers on the path of service. How many times we had prayed together for the country and for the Chinese people with tears in our eyes! How we cried out for our brethren to hear the Gospel! How much more we had prayed that the Spirit of wisdom would be upon the pastors of the organized churches and free churches, to help them to pastor under the circumstances of the Chinese state! This day, I see a group of committed youth entering seminary with passion burning in their hearts, to receive instruction and to be equipped; all this for carrying the baton as the next generation of servant leaders in the church. I am deeply moved in my heart to see this.

“Landfall”: running fast with book ministries while the Spirit is blowing

Originally, the meteorological department had estimated that Typhoon Talim would land in Fuzhou along the Chinese East coast on 14th September. Later the winds changed, blowing towards Japan instead. It coincided with my birthday, and it was me that made landfall instead (The writing of “landfall” is the same as “entering age sixty” in Chinese)! I thought back to decades ago, when I was still young and strong. I never felt tired no matter how far or long I traveled through the mainland. As I advance in years, it has become easy to feel tired of this life of traveling, and it takes longer to recover my strength. Age sixty implies that I must start counting down the days until I am relieved of my post. I cherish the time I have left to run for the Lord.

I have no idea how Rev. Yue knew that it was my 60th birthday. He arranged my birthday party in secret and gave me a very pleasant and moving surprise. I thought to myself, I had desired to celebrate my birthday with my family, but truly, aren't these mainland pastors my brethren, my flesh and blood, my family in the Lord Jesus Christ?

Though I do not have that sense of self-sacrifice that Paul expressed in Romans, “For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race (Romans 9:3)” yet, 5 years ago the retina of my right eye detached

and my eyesight received permanently damage, such as macula holes; I only have 10% of my vision left, so I cherish my time in ministry, and chased after every second in serving my brethren when I recuperated. I know also that I will not have as a long life as Moses, but if the Lord is willing, I still hope that while I still breathe, with my remaining eyesight, I can continue to run the race through literature ministry in China. This is so that those readers with 100% eyesight can read spiritual books, open the eyes of their heart and cultivate their spiritual life!

Pastor Hu, Keep Up Your Efforts! **-- Visit to Changsha in Hunan**

© Interview and compilation: Ai Lin **A volunteer for China Church Ministry**

Editor's note: Thanks to the Lord's guidance, we visited a mainland pastor in Hunan who is receiving a living subsidy from us. We were accompanied by a volunteer, Ai Lin, in our trip and she was as concerned as we were about Pastor Hu's ministry and needs.

I have long looked forward to visiting the mountain areas in Changsha of Hunan where I would get the chance to see and hear for myself the stories and experiences of frontline pastors. My feelings welled up inside me as I recalled the scenic rural areas of the mountains and the faces and unique stories of the pastors there.



We arrived at the church served by Pastor Hu after a few hours' journey on the road. Pastor Hu was in his 40s and a fresh graduate from the Bible school. He came to serve in this church in the mountain from a distant place. The first question he asked us was how to best serve his church. He cared not for his adaptation to the life here, nor his language barrier, but how to learn as soon as possible the needs of the brothers and sisters and how to launch various ministries to best shepherd the believers.



When he was in his younger days, Pastor Hu had worked in many provinces and cities. He came to Changsha of Hunan also for work reasons. After he was converted, he loved reading God's words and listened carefully to sermons. He strongly believed that the Christian faith should be rooted in God's words. All these seemed to be equipping him to serve as a full-time pastor. In a gathering, the pastor suddenly asked, "It is time. Why are you still standing here, waiting?" His heart was touched immensely. He decided to respond to God's calling and to study for a three-year seminary course to equip himself.

While in Bible school, Pastor Hu stayed focused on his studies and led a simple life. He

even thought about postponing establishing his own family. Yet, God's grace showered upon him beyond his expectations. He met a sister during his service and got married early this year! His wife is now receiving training in a Bible school to prepare herself to serve the Lord with her husband in the future. The couple made no complaint about their shabby house, nor did they mind their very meagre income. They showed every determination to



respond to God's calling. So, a thought came to my mind, "How can I help these committed frontline pastors? Should we deprive of these pastors the right to earn what they serve as workers simply because there is a lack of resources in the church in the mountains?"

Pastor Hu's ministry needs our prayers desperately. In his visits to the homes of believers of his church, brothers and sisters of all ages hoped that Pastor Hu could pray for them for blessings from the Lord and healings. There was nothing wrong with this, but Pastor Hu told them that faith was not just about asking for blessings and peace. The brothers and sisters themselves did not read the Bible and pray. They believed that going to the church on Sundays alone should suffice. There was a lack of systematic Bible teaching. The adults all went away to work and the ministry could not be passed on to a new generation. Inadequate resources and constraints of all kinds hindered the shepherding work. Yet, I saw how committed Pastor Hu was to the Christian faith and how he insisted on shepherding the believers. He wished that this church in the mountain could grow healthily. I pray that those who have heard his story could give them support and assistance.

Are you willing to partner with Ai Lin and help meet the needs of mainland pastors?
Please act now:

In 2017, CCL would offer financial support to 23 pastors in urban and rural areas based on their actual needs and the quality of living in their areas. The fundraising target is US\$103,000. As of mid-November, we are still short of US\$32,000. If you are moved, please donate a living subsidy. Thank you!

Prayers

1. Ministry for the soul

It takes courage and resilience to engage in literature ministry, to produce publications that nurture the soul, albeit without profits. Spiritual books are important for the nurturing of Christian leaders.

May the Lord raise up missionaries to serve in places lacking literary resources, and move more Christians to donate to the vital ministry.



2. Scripture reading



Christians in many remote areas generally have limited education. They make a living mainly by relying on farming and running small businesses; in their daily lives, they often use simple language, hence scripture reading is a heavy burden for them. They are often heard saying that they quit reading Proverbs after a while because they find it difficult to understand.

May the Lord lead the Living Word team to publish the right materials and offer classes to help church leaders impart Biblical truths to their congregation effectively, according to believers' ability and to help them practice the truths. May the Lord give the believers wisdom and perseverance in learning the Bible.

3. Left-behind children

According to national statistics, there is an estimated number of 61 million children left behind by their parents in villages across the country. A decade later, among their peers, one in five would have been a left behind child. A report in Henan found that children with the "left behind syndrome" had the following characteristics: declining academic performance, dislike for attending school, a withdrawn, fragile



character, moral vacuum etc.

May the Lord open the eyes of the society to help it see the long-term consequences of the problem, and become willing to invest in counselling services for the children. May He also use churches as a channel of love and care for them, to help fill their spiritual void.

4. Bullying in school



Concern for the problem of bullying is growing. Recently, an anti-bullying campaign was held in Shanxi province in some high schools and vocational schools, with a plan to extend it to all 3,000 junior secondary and above schools in the province in 2018. The campaign seeks to deepen schools' understanding of bullying, let teachers and students share their views and experiences on the issue. Students are also taught about emotional management and inspired to pursue virtues such as courage and kindness.

May the Lord shine His light upon campuses to protect students from being bullied. May the training and experience sharing in Shanxi prompt other provinces to take similar action.

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