

Grateful for Still Being Able to Serve

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During the three-year pandemic, church services were suspended. It is a very precious opportunity if ever the evangelist can preach to believers.

Under normal circumstance, pastors and evangelists devote much of their time to preaching, visitation, teaching and spirituality nurturing of their sheep. For pastors who have just started serving in three provinces in northeastern China, however, their experience of attempting such ordinary tasks is extraordinary and there is much to learn during the process. Heilongjiang, Jilin and Liaoning in northeastern China have a population of more than 120 million which accounts for nearly one-tenth of the country's total population. The churches in these three provinces are mostly scattered in rural areas, some of which have already been closed for more than 10 months this year.

Paradigm Shift: From Centre to Perimeter, an Ambulatory Spiritual Courier on the Go

Evangelist Chen graduated from seminary two years ago right when the pandemic was at its peak and the society was most chaotic. He started serving in a rural church with a small congregation of about 60 people. During the past two years, whenever the church was closed, Chen traveled for hours every day carrying his Bible in his backpack and paid visits to believers in the villages. He knocked on house after house, enquiring about the spiritual well-being of believers in each household and sharing bible teachings with them. The situation of each family is different, and the young evangelist has to tackle every issue and problem alone and on the spot. One can imagine how much more stressful this would be compared to preaching and teaching in the church. While on the road, bad weather is

another real and unpredictable risk. During the pandemic and days of church service suspension, whenever Chen is en route to a believer's home, he thinks of himself as a courier who grasps every opportunity to deliver spiritual nourishment. He said, "*Looking back on these two years, I am most grateful for still being able to serve.*"

Paradigm Shift: From General to Specific, a Spiritual Care Specialist on the Spot

After graduating from seminary last year, Evangelist Zhang returned to his hometown to serve. It is a long-established city church in the province. Zhang grew up in this church, he was taught the Bible and learned to serve there since he was a child. The church has a large congregation. During the time when Zhang was studying in the seminary, he came back to serve in this church during weekends. Upon graduation and commencement of ministry in this church, the transition for Zhang was smooth. Zhang always aspires to serve the young people, and he is currently the pastor of the youth fellowship. In recent years, due to the pandemic, some of the young people in the church have been experiencing emotional problems such as depression and anxiety. Other church co-workers do not have much experience and resources in counseling young people, so Pastor Zhang devoted much of his time shepherding them. He said, "*They (the emotionally distressed young people) are reluctant to reveal their psychological condition to others, but sometimes they are willing to talk to me. I am most grateful to be their companion.*" While social distancing and isolation are the order of the day during the pandemic, Zhang is drawing close to and soothing the young and troubled souls in his church.

Paradigm Shift: From Black Suit to Track Suit, a Spiritual Fitness Trainer on his Mark

Evangelist Xiao Zhong is pastoring a church in a rural area with about 80 believers in its congregation. Weekly preaching has always been his major responsibility. Before the pandemic, he preached at the church regularly. During the pandemic, the church was closed, so he started preaching on the virtual platform. Recently, even the virtual platform was interrupted, yet Xiao Zhong continues writing his sermons every week. The author was curious to find out why he would continue the laborious work, Xiao Zhong shared, "*Preaching is always an integral part of my ministry, I don't want myself to become sluggish. I have been preaching for believers and others in the past, but these days I am preaching for myself and my family, and I am rediscovering the astonishing power of God's word. It is God's grace that I'm still able to preach.*" Xiao Zhong is like a fitness trainer, in days when he is unable to preach, he works hard to stay vigilant and fit. He keeps his spiritual muscles in tone and potential mental despondence at bay. Xiao Zhong is on his mark and ready to take off whenever the opportunity to serve comes.

These young evangelists in the three northeastern provinces keep serving relentlessly despite encountering many obstacles. This is not because of the need to fulfill their respective job duties, but because they consider their calling to ministry as a way to share God's love. They remain loyal to the Lord, sensitive to others' needs and diligent to stay spiritually competent in their individual circumstance despite enduring great hardship. Do you feel their genuine desire to serve? Are you willing to walk with them?

The three main characters in this article were given Book Gifting pastoral packages upon graduation from seminary. It is hoped that the materials can support them through the ups and downs in their ministry life.

For this year's Book Gifting Project, the Book Gifting Team plans to distribute over 70,000 copies of pastoral resources to 4,000 graduates and produce three book presentation videos. As of November, the team has delivered pastoral packages to nearly 2,100 graduates. For the remaining 3 months of book gifting arrangements (the graduation ceremony of some seminaries is held before the Chinese New Year), we need your prayers and support, and please remember our need to raise an outstanding USD 192,308. Thank you!



The severity of the pandemic has been like a roller coaster this year. We thank the Lord that after much waiting, we were able to distribute Book Gifting pastoral packages to 227 seminary graduates in the northeast at the end of September. May the Lord enable the materials to become a blessing to the graduates and to their ministry.

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~The above is part of the content of PFC issue355, if you would like to read the full newsletter, please contact us at [pfc@ccl.org.hk](mailto:pfc@ccl.org.hk), thank you!~

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