

## Book Gifting Brings our Hearts Closer Together

© Sheung En  
Member of Book Gifting Team

Every year after the Lunar New Year, the Book Gifting team actively prepares for book gifting for the seminary graduates and also organizes the Book Gifting trip. However, due to the pandemic, the team was not able to meet with the graduates in the past two years. Yet, it is amazing that during this period of time, we have not been detached from one another, the team has been communicating frequently with graduates in various parts of China.



The Book Gifting team misses the pre-pandemic days when they could go to the schools and interact with the graduates personally.

### Caring words nourish the heart

After the Lunar New Year, the pandemic escalated in China and we contacted graduates from the South Central region. One of them was Si, who graduated from a provincial seminary in 2018 and then returned to her home city church to serve. When I messaged her, her first reply was, “Yesterday I suddenly thought of you ..... for so many years, I felt that I had not improved, and then I remembered how you cared about me. I never thought I would receive a message from you today.” I reviewed the messages between us. The last time I contacted her was already over a year ago when her mother was seriously ill.

### Difficulty multiplies after the pandemic

When I asked about her ministry, she said, “It has been four years already, I feel that I am very inadequate, I feel that I cannot keep up with shepherding needs, especially the pastoral care of the church after the pandemic, it is very difficult ..... I am responsible for many areas, and there are few full-time ministers in the grassroot churches, so it is difficult to pastor ..... It's really difficult to continue pastoring.” The message from Si mentioned “difficult” three

times, and it really struck my heart. I empathized the strong sense of helplessness in this evangelist who is in her twenties. Under the pandemic, churches in China have imposed a double moratorium, i.e., they have suspended the opening of their meeting places and all collective religious activities. Meetings allowed to be conducted by the churches were very limited, and in some areas, even individual visits were not possible. Novice evangelists are seeing the hearts of brothers and sisters becoming lukewarm, yet they are clueless as to what they can do next.

## Serving "Who else but Him"

Rural churches in the same area also faced pastoral care challenge after the pandemic. Evangelist Xiaoming graduated in 2020 and is now serving in a rural church. The pandemic hit just after he graduated and commenced ministry life. There was a severe loss of believers; even church leaders and deacons were gone. During the pandemic, believers had no jobs, no income, and were living under great pressure. When they resumed work and production, they had no choice but to work overtime and were always terribly busy every day. *"The pandemic affected worships, offerings, evangelism, visitation, and spiritual nurturing,"* said Xiaoming. This is a real gap from what he expected when he initially responded to the calling to ministry, yet he shared, *"It's not easy to persevere serving in a rural church, to learn to live by faith, to take up the cross ..... what else can sustain this other than the calling and the mission being so clear, and also the many lovely faces ....."*

At present, there are only about 50 elderly members in the local rural church.



The Book Gifting package is even more valuable to pastors in situations where there are scarcely any shepherding resources available.

## Venturing the uncharted path together

Although it has been two years since the pandemic broke out, and although living under the pandemic is now the new normal, for pastors in South Central region, whether in urban or rural areas, subtle changes have taken place regarding the ecology of the church, and pastors are still trying to figure out the proper way to administer pastoral care. How should they face the current shepherding situation? The answer to this question has become a priority for these novice evangelists. The Book Gifting team prays earnestly for the post-pandemic pastoral care and church development situation, and humbly hopes that through the pertinent resources included in the Book Gifting packages, the team can be the graduates' companion and venture the uncharted path together with them. May the partnership be a source of inspiration, reference, encouragement and comfort enabling the graduates to be recharged.

In 2022, the Book Gifting team will arrange over 70,000 copies of pastoral resources to 4,000 graduates and produce three videos to introduce the contents of three selected books. We need your prayers and financial support (USD 307,692). Thank you!

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**Your prayers and concern for the ministry are needed:**  
**Here is the situation in some parts of the South Central region**

| <b>Province</b> | <b>Christian Population</b> | <b>Number of Pastors</b> | <b>Pastor to Christian Ratio</b> | <b>Prayer Support</b>   |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| Hainan          | 60,000-70,000               | Approx. 140              | 1:430-500                        | The problem of aging pastors in the province is serious. Please pray for local theological education so that a new generation of young pastors can be nurtured.   |
| Guangdong       | 350,000-400,000             | Approx. 1000             | 1:350-400                        | Please pray for local challenges in administering pastoral care under the pandemic. Meetings can only be held online, and pastors are not able to visit believers and care for them individually, resulting in a regression of faith and loss of believers. |
| Guangxi         | Approx. 100,000             | Approx. 260              | 1:385                            | In March, the “Measures for the Administration of Internet Religious Information Services” came into effect, interfering live online worship. Church ministry and pastoral care become even more difficult amid the pandemic.                               |



~The above is part of the content of PFC issue349, 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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