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[On the way to Tiger Leaping Gorge by Ralph Kränzlein via Flickr.](#)

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A recent survey of Christian leaders in China and representatives of churches and organizations outside China that work with these leaders provides insight into the health of China's churches and their ministry priorities. It also looks at their involvement in society and mission outreach. In addition, participants were surveyed regarding restrictions they had experienced due to religious policy.

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China's churches desire partnerships with overseas entities. However, as the church has become increasingly urban, the nature of those partnerships must change in response to the changes occurring in society and thus, in the church. Overseas organizations must understand these changes and consider carefully how they can best partner with the church in China.

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A conversation between two friends, one an overseas Chinese woman and the other from mainland China who has studied overseas, centers around the cultural gap between believers in China and those who come from overseas to help them. Mistaken perceptions, communication issues, and the importance of relationships are discussed.

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Two senior house church leaders

Is persecution in China increasing? Two house church leaders, one who was imprisoned in a labor camp for a few years, and the other who is a Chinese scholar with strengths in theological education and the history of the Chinese church, give their viewpoints on this topic.

Peoples of China

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Brent Fulton

China's elderly population is burgeoning and the question becomes, "Who will care for them?"

Families are finding this difficult, and neither the government nor society are currently prepared to provide the resources needed to address this. However, China's Christian community has several advantages that would allow them to meet this need. Urban Christians could care for the elderly in their midst and also offer a service to the larger community which would enhance the church's standing in society.

Book Review

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A Review of Christ in China: An Anthology by Ronald Boyd-MacMillan

In appreciation of Tony and Frances Lambert's 34 years of faithful service, OMF-Hong Kong has published an anthology of forty-six of Tony's monthly analyses of the story of Christianity in China. Written between the years 1987 to 2016, these articles cover aspects of the greatest revival story of the world church of the past 50 years, as well as selections that give unique slants on the contemporary story.

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A Journey of Opportunity: Following God's Direction in China
An Infographic

Editorial

Journeying Together

By Brent Fulton, Editor

For nearly 40 years Christians from overseas have been serving in various capacities in China. With the changing needs in China, and with the development of the indigenous church, the role of the foreign worker is now in transition.



[Keyboard by Ash Kyd via Flickr.](#)

How do China's Christians today view their relationship with Christians from overseas, particularly in light of their own church situation? How do foreign workers and the organizations that send and support them see their role? Do we share a common vision? Or, to borrow a common Chinese idiom, is it a case of "same bed, different dreams," working together yet having different expectations?

These questions led to the formation in 2015 of the China Gospel Research Alliance (CGRA), a consortium of four organizations in Hong Kong, all with a long history of China involvement. The CGRA members put together a team of researchers from Hong Kong, the PRC, and elsewhere and launched a study of Christian leaders in China and the organizations that serve with them.

In this issue of ChinaSource Quarterly we feature key findings of the CGRA study. My lead article examines the characteristics of those surveyed, highlighting their perceptions of how well the church today is doing in several important areas. Peony Tang and Zoe Zhou look at important dynamics in the cross-cultural relationship between the church in China and believers outside with which they seek to partner.

In response to the perennial question, "What about persecution?" we offer the perspectives of two church leaders, whose backgrounds and experience are as different as the opinions they express about China's current policy environment.

One of the largest looming challenges facing Chinese society and the church in China is the country's rapidly growing elderly population. I revisit some of the central issues in this looming demographic crisis and offer ideas on how the church can respond. Finally, to round out this issue with some historical perspective on where the church has come from in the past four decades, we feature a review of a new book honoring Tony Lambert, *Christ in China: An Anthology*, that contains a selection of articles he has written over the years.

So what do believers in China expect of their foreign or overseas Chinese partners?

In his article on how the expectations of Christian leaders in China have changed over the decades, Steve Z. remarks simply, "They are eager to have 'company.'"

Decades of service to the church in China have brought great blessing both to China's church and to believers outside China. Today with the maturing of the church has come a desire to truly serve with the global church. The future success of churches and organizations that serve China will depend in large part on their ability to make this shift in their relationships with China's church.

Brent Fulton is president of ChinaSource and editor of ChinaSource Quarterly. An avid China watcher, Dr. Fulton has written and taught extensively on the church in China and on Chinese social and political phenomena. He is the author of China's Urban Christians: A Light That Cannot Be Hidden and co-authored China's Next Generation: New China, New Church, New World with Luis Bush. Dr. Fulton and his wife, Jasmine, divide their time between southern California and Asia. .

Perceptions and Priorities of Christian Leaders in China

By Brent Fulton

During the last three decades opportunities have greatly increased for cooperation between Christians inside and outside China, both in strengthening the church in China and in advancing the gospel beyond China's borders. As China and its church have undergone rapid change, varying perceptions have emerged inside and outside China regarding the situation of the Chinese church, its priorities, needs, and expectations for working with the church outside China.



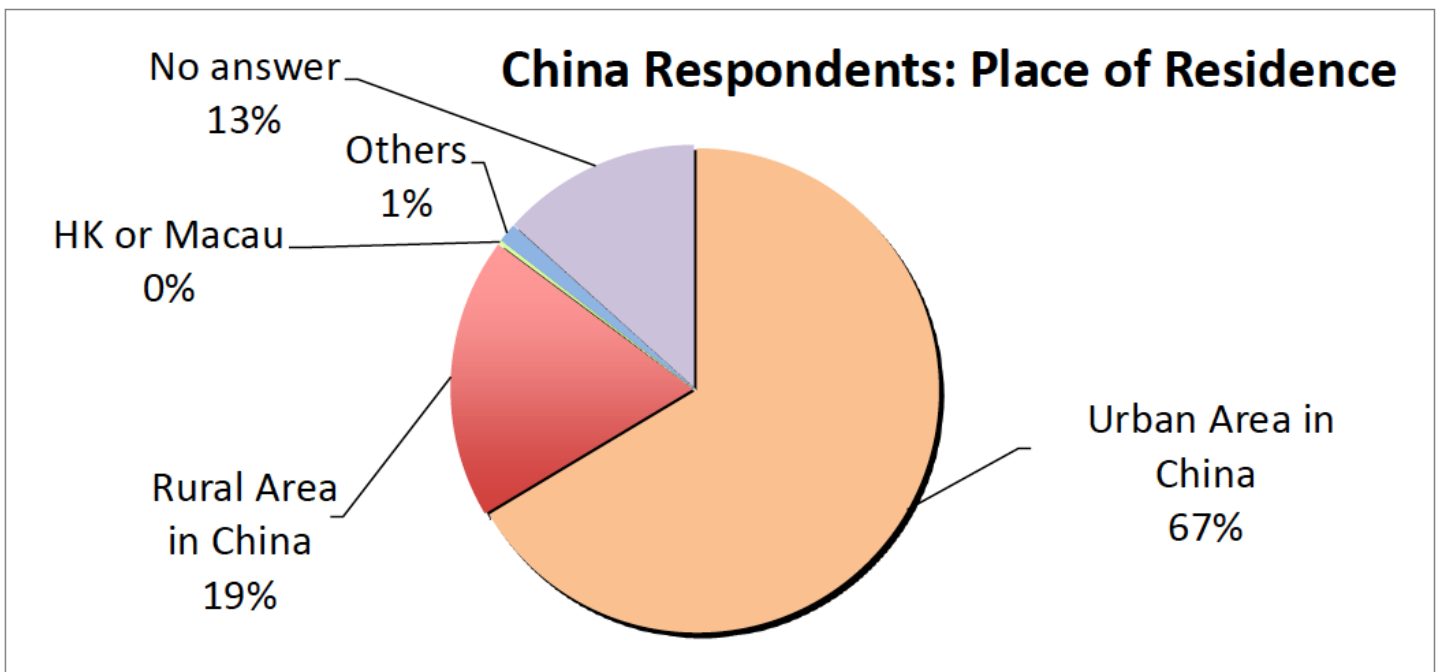
In order to better understand these perceptions and their implications for collaborative ministry, the China Gospel Research Alliance (CGRA)* conducted a survey from September 2015 to May 2016 of Christian leaders in China and representatives of churches and organizations outside China that work with these leaders. A total of 1,200 written surveys were completed, and 432 face-to-face interviews were conducted with Chinese Christian leaders from every province in China except Tibet. More than 200 overseas church and organization leaders were polled via an online survey, and forty took part in face-to-face interviews. These included agency leaders, board members, field workers, other agency staff, pastors, and financial supporters or volunteers. Most lived in Asia, with 37 percent being in mainland China and 16 percent in Hong Kong or Macau. Of the overseas respondents, 32 percent identified themselves as Chinese.

Discussion of respondents' expectations for working together, along with their perceived difficulties in cross-cultural partnerships, is provided elsewhere in this issue. Here we will examine the characteristics of the respondents, both Chinese and overseas, in an effort to learn more about the current state of the church in China.

Characteristics of Respondents

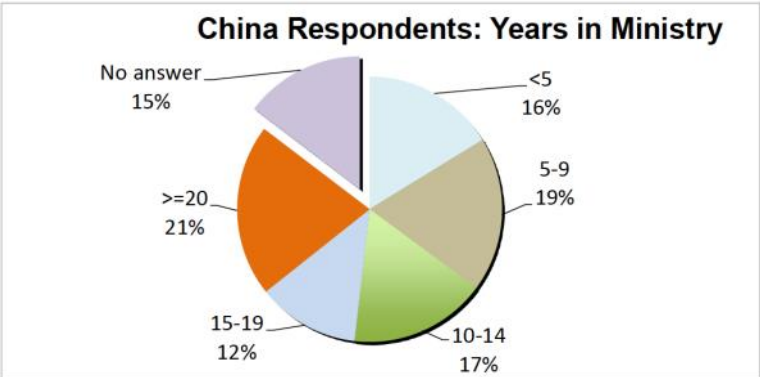
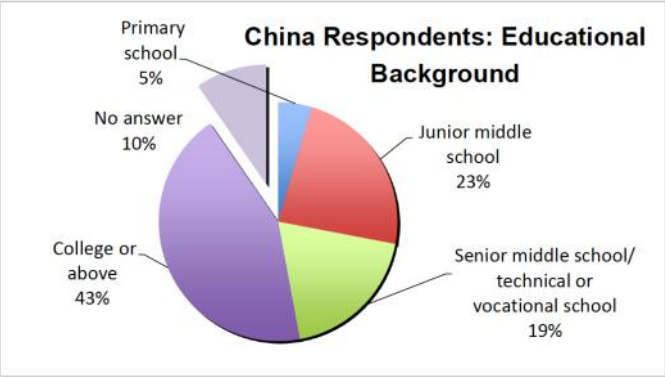
The Christian leaders surveyed admittedly represent a "convenience sample," as these leaders were primarily accessed via conferences being held specifically for believers from China. Three of the conferences had cross-cultural missions as their theme; thus, it may be surmised that these participants came with bias toward, and likely some prior involvement in, mission activity. In this sense the sample cannot be viewed as representative of the entire church in China. Nevertheless, as the church in China prepares to engage in cross-cultural ministry, and as more overseas churches and organizations prepare to help them in this endeavor, our sample represents a significant group of leaders who will likely be the ones to engage with overseas entities in the decades to come.

As the China sample is mainly composed of Christians in China's unregistered church, which makes up the largest segment of Christians in China, the data speak mainly to the dynamics of the unregistered church as it makes its transition from a primarily rural to an urban phenomenon.

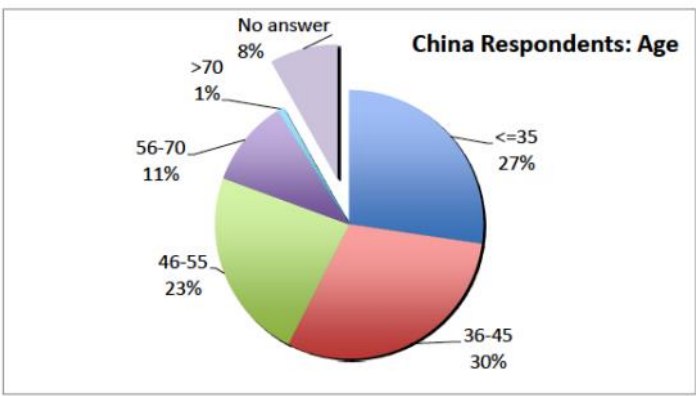
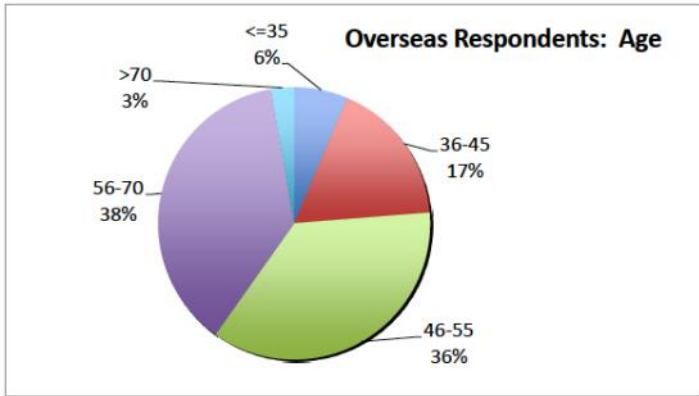


Although the majority of the China respondents were of urban background, a significant segment representing the rural church was included as well. Two-thirds of urban respondents were under the age of 45, while two-thirds of rural respondents were between the ages of 36 and 55. Just over half of respondents were male and 39 percent female (ten percent no response). Most respondents were married. Forty-three percent of all respondents had a college education or above, and more than 60 percent had received some theological training.

There were roughly an equal number of full- and part-time workers. Most had been involved in ministry for less than 15 years, but roughly one-fifth had 20 or more years' experience.



Comparing the demographics of the China respondents and those from outside China who serve with them suggests a significant generational difference. Overseas respondents were predominately male and tended to be older than the Chinese respondents, with more than two-thirds being over age 45. In contrast, 57% of the China respondents were aged 45 or under.



Health of the Church

Participants were given a list of ministry types and asked to indicate how well they felt their churches were doing in each area as well as which ones they felt were priorities. Urban respondents gave the church higher marks than rural respondents in all ministry areas except for training coworkers and pastoring the next generation, where the respondents were roughly similar. Female China respondents felt the church was doing better than male respondents in the area of encouraging financial giving.

In the areas of seminary training, protecting against cults, pastoring the next generation, and encouraging financial giving, China respondents were more likely than overseas respondents to indicate the church was doing well; overseas respondents saw the church doing better than did China respondents in the areas of discipleship, training for coworkers, and church planting.

Assessment of Ministry Areas by China Respondents							
Ministry Areas	Not at all ideal	Not ideal	Acceptable	Fairly ideal	Very much ideal	No answer	Total
Discipleship	8.0%	30.3%	34.0%	15.9%	3.7%	8.1%	100.0%
Training for co-workers	4.4%	30.4%	36.4%	16.1%	3.3%	9.4%	100.0%
Leadership development	10.3%	37.5%	23.0%	11.8%	3.6%	13.8%	100.0%
Church planting	9.4%	28.3%	30.5%	13.6%	3.8%	14.4%	100.0%
Church admin.	6.2%	27.0%	33.7%	15.5%	3.4%	14.3%	100.0%
Seminary training	2.3%	17.0%	37.6%	25.0%	4.8%	13.3%	100.0%
Guarding against cults	0.9%	4.5%	35.3%	34.9%	11.8%	12.6%	100.0%
Missions	10.6%	32.3%	26.3%	15.8%	4.2%	10.9%	100.0%
Pastoring next generation	3.8%	22.3%	38.3%	21.7%	4.8%	9.3%	100.0%
Encouraging financial giving	3.2%	19.8%	38.3%	21.1%	6.1%	11.6%	100.0%

Ministry Priorities

The top priorities for Chinese respondents were missions, pastoring the next generation, discipleship, and seminary training. Urban respondents viewed discipleship as a higher priority than rural respondents. Full-time workers ranked leadership development higher than did part-time respondents. More female than male respondents included pastoring the next generation among the church's top three priorities.

China Respondents: Priority Ministry Areas by Location of Residence (Top Three Areas Selected by Each Respondent)		
Ministry Area	Location of Residence	
	Urban Area in China	Rural Area in China
Discipleship	55.5%	38.8%
Training for coworkers	24.7%	22.3%
Leadership development	35.7%	43.7%
Church planting	12.7%	7.8%
Church administration	19.3%	13.6%
Seminary training	41.3%	40.8%
Guarding against cults	3.2%	3.9%
Missions	49.9%	59.2%
Pastoring the next generation	49.9%	59.2%
Encouraging financial giving	5.4%	4.9%

For overseas respondents the top three priorities were discipleship, leadership development, and missions, while seminary training and pastoring the next generation were ranked considerably lower in comparison to the China responses. Overseas respondents also ranked financial giving as a higher priority than did China respondents.

Priority Ministry Areas by China and Overseas Respondents (Top Three Areas Selected by Each Respondent)		
Ministry Area	China Respondents (1)	Overseas Respondents (2)
Discipleship	50.9%	62.0%
Training for co-workers	25.0%	22.8%
Leadership development	38.0%	62.0%
Church planting	11.5%	14.1%
Church administration	17.5%	15.2%
Seminary training	39.8%	17.4%
Guarding against cults	3.5%	8.2%
Missions	53.5%	55.4%
Pastoring the next generation	51.9%	35.9%
Encouraging financial giving	5.2%	15.2%

Note: (1) Response rate of about 50% (2) Response rate of about 85%

Discipleship is recognized across the church and among those overseas who serve the church in China as a critical need. The fact that urban Christian leaders identify discipleship as more of a priority perhaps suggests that they are more aware of areas where the church has fallen short in developing believers, for example, in character or in their ability to work with one another. On the other hand, lacking strong Christian traditions in their background, urban leaders, many of whom are first generation believers, may be responding to their own felt need to build a foundation for spiritual formation that has hitherto been lacking. Seeing how the rampant secularism and material temptations of urban life affect the quality of believers' lives, these urban leaders may also have a greater awareness of the need for personal spiritual development in order to counter these prevailing cultural trends.

China respondents' identification of pastoring the next generation as a priority speaks to both the growing phenomenon of Christian education in China as well as concern about the church's future. Young urban Christian families are increasingly looking for alternatives to the state-run education system which is largely built around preparation for test taking, culminating in the nationwide university entrance exam, and which is overtly atheistic. The fact that providing educational services was listed as one of the top three ways in which the church is engaging with society also suggests the importance of this area.

Looking at the larger issue of leadership succession within the church, there is a sense among some traditional rural networks that they may have lost much of the next generation due to urbanization and to the fact that many within that generation have not shared their parents' Christian commitment and zeal for gospel ministry. Many of the independent urban churches are led by first-generation Christians who have not experienced intergenerational ministry. Hence the popular saying, "The rural church has no children; the urban church, no fathers."

Leadership development appears to be a higher priority for overseas respondents (62 percent) than for China respondents (38 percent). Yet nearly 40 percent of China respondents saw seminary training as a priority, compared with only 17.4 percent of overseas respondents. As the term "leader development" has been used loosely in China ministry circles to refer to everything from formal theological training to peer mentoring and coaching, perhaps some of the apparent discrepancy here is simply a matter of terminology; some activities identified by overseas respondents as leadership development may not be recognized as such by Christians in China.

Social Engagement

Participants were asked to indicate the motivation for the church to engage with society and to list the particular areas of engagement. Approximately 62 percent of China respondents indicated their churches are engaging with society, but only 28 percent mentioned the specific ways in which they are doing so. Of the overseas respondents, about 60 percent indicated that churches they work with in China are engaging with society. Urban churches were most likely to be involved in various types of social engagement with the most common areas being: providing family services, caring for those on the margins of society, or providing educational ser-

vices. Urban respondents’ churches were more likely to provide medical services, conduct cultural activities in the community, and use media to promote the gospel.

Mission Involvement

Given that the majority of China respondents in this study were surveyed while attending mission-related gatherings outside China, it does not come as a surprise that they demonstrated a relatively high degree of involvement in missions-related activity. The most common involvement was mobilizing their congregations to support missionaries through financially giving and prayer (46 percent of China respondents), followed by providing hospitality for missionaries (34 percent), inviting missionaries to the church (33 percent), setting up a mission department in the church (28 percent), sending short-term teams to ethnic minority areas, (28 percent), and sending their own missionaries from the church (28 percent).

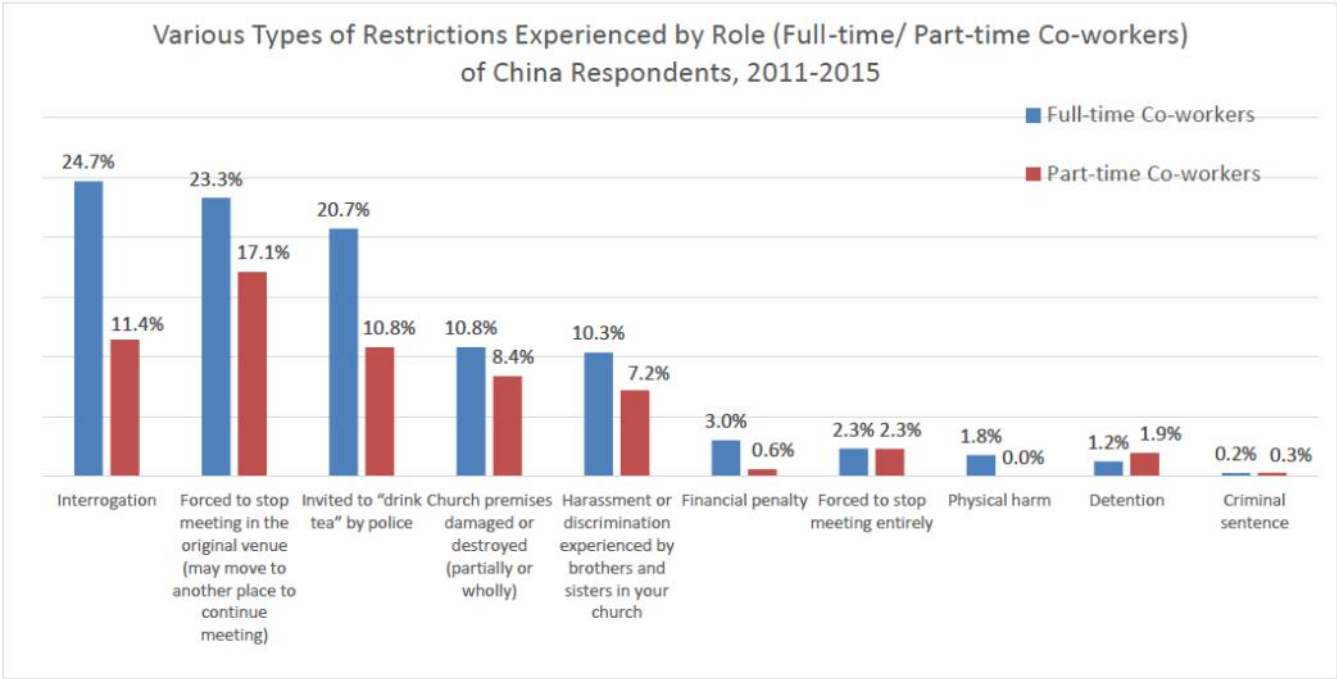
Both urban and rural churches are involved in cross-cultural mission, albeit in some different ways. While both are building mission sending structures, urban churches are more likely to have regular mission Sundays, to invite missionaries to share in their churches, to set up mission departments within the church, and to mobilize the congregation to support missionaries. Rural networks may have set up sending structures within their networks, but this activity may not be “owned” by the local churches. Stand-alone urban churches, on the other hand, are more likely to have church-based mission programs.

Religious Policy and Restrictions on the Church

China participants were asked whether they had experienced certain types of restrictions and, if so, when they had experienced these.

Educational background was a factor in how China respondents perceived restrictions on religious activity. Well-educated Chinese Christians perceived more severe religious restriction than others. Christians at middle age tended to perceive less restriction than the younger ones. Those who were over 55 have memories of the Cultural Revolution, when families were broken apart, teachers and officials publicly shamed, schools closed, and the Red Guard allowed to inflict terror across China. As religion was completely banned during that time, for this age group the current religious policy situation in China looks quite positive.

Of the specific kinds of restrictions, being forced to stop meeting in a particular location (with the option of moving to another location), interrogation, and being invited to “drink tea” (being asked to report on the activities of one’s church) by police were the most common types of restriction reported in the last five years, with more restrictive measures such as fines, detention, or criminal sentences becoming more rare. Full-time workers were more likely than part-time workers or others to have experienced any kind of restrictions. To put these figures into perspective, it is important to note that, except for having to move the church location and, in the case of full-time workers, of being interrogated, the majority of China respondents indicated that they had not directly experienced any of the specific restrictions mentioned in the survey.



As China’s church makes its transition from a primarily rural, peasant movement on the edges of society to having a dynamic and increasingly influential urban presence, its needs and its role within the society are in flux. While it is impossible to gain a complete picture of the church’s current situation, increased opportunities to engage with China’s church have allowed a new degree of visibility into the life and ministry of Chinese Christians, enabling those who serve to better understand their own role in this rapidly changing environment.

* The CGRA comprises representatives of OMF, Frontier Ventures, Open Doors, and ChinaSource.

The Expectations of the Chinese Church

By Steve Z.

Since the 1980s, Christians overseas have been in contact with the Chinese church for more than 30 years. We have witnessed both the rapid growth of the church in China and the dramatic changes in Chinese society. Today, China has become the world's second largest economy with the potential to become a nation with the world's largest Christian population. What can overseas Christians do for China? What does today's Chinese church need from us?

Through questionnaires and interviews conducted by the China Gospel Research Alliance (see “Perceptions and Priorities of Christian Leaders in China”), we found two particularly significant points.

First, China's churches are eager to have “company.” In the early '80s, churches overseas worked intensely to help rebuild the Chinese church in response to its recovery needs and to help the elderly preachers and Christian leaders who survived the trials and sufferings of the Cultural Revolution. Whenever an opportunity to enter mainland China was available, they would take with them Bibles and other spiritual books as well as curricula used in western and overseas seminaries, which greatly helped establish and grow the Chinese church.

With the restoration of church activities came the challenge of a lack of qualified and well-trained preachers. In the 1980s and 90s, as China slightly opened its door to the western world, “training Chinese preachers” became the most important ministry that the churches overseas provided. In those days, any curriculum used by churches overseas—especially in the Chinese seminaries and Chinese church Sunday Schools—could be sent to China as “training” materials.

However, “training” was only a short-term, stopgap measure to cope with an urgent need. In the past two or three decades, the biggest change in mainland Chinese society has been urbanization. Increased Internet usage has also brought cultural changes in the Chinese people's way of living. Chinese churches have also moved their sphere of activity from rural areas to the cities. A new generation of Chinese church leaders also has shifted from entirely rural folks with little education to well-educated urban young people. The latter are not only eager to pursue a formal seminary degree, either in the motherland or overseas, they also expect to receive formal training and accreditation-worthy learning.

Nevertheless, this seminary training cannot substitute for their own reflection on present-day church practices. Simply introducing courses from overseas will impact how the Chinese church develops. However, for Chinese preachers who have received training from the West and Chinese seminaries overseas, the challenges they encounter in their ministries cannot be resolved in ways based upon their predecessors' experiences. Quite naturally, they seek help and wisdom from the overseas resources that are familiar to them. This is the primary reason that Chinese Christian preachers long for the company of a mature and experienced pastor from overseas. The question is, however, are the pastoral colleagues from overseas prepared to deal with their issues? Are they willing to be humble, to devote themselves to understanding all the issues mainland Chinese churches encounter including: societal, and economical, as well as the unique cultural and theological implications?

Second, in addition to providing training, Christians overseas have also helped China's church with financial support. When China first opened its doors, its society was barren. Everyone was generally poor, but the country preachers were even more so. Therefore, Christians overseas discovered that it was not only beneficial for them to support the Chinese preachers' basic living expenses, but by doing so they could also effectively help those who devote themselves to full-time ministry. Looking back, the generous giving of Christians overseas has played a positive role in the revival of the Chinese church and the spread of the gospel.

However, with rapid economic growth and urbanization over the past years, the old—and once major—agricultural economy has disintegrated. Although social wealth is very unevenly distributed, the move into cities is the trend of modern Chinese churches. As a result, the expectations of Chinese churches and Christians for overseas financial support have also changed dramatically. In addition, Christians overseas have also begun to question if the Chinese church still needs financial support.

Due to the uneven development of urbanization, the disparity between rich and poor is great. Full-time pastors and grassroots city churches are still struggling. Today's Chinese churches are beginning to learn how to plant city churches and engage in cross-cultural missions in the community as well as how to establish Christian schools for children. These new and wonderful ministries require capital funding. Therefore, we should not think that the urbanization of the Chinese church means that it no longer needs financial help. However, Christians overseas should also note that there has been a fundamental change in how to support China's churches. Before becoming involved, know your options.



[Thomas H. Hahn Docu-Images.](#)

Continued on page 15

When Tea Meets Coffee

By Peony Tang and Zoe Zhou

The following is a conversation about cross-cultural differences that takes place in an elegant tea house in China. Peony, an overseas Chinese woman, is enjoying afternoon tea with her local Chinese friend, Zoe. Peony has ordered Chinese Jasmine tea while Zoe, being a coffee-lover, ordered a cup of cappuccino. Zoe studied abroad for a post-graduate degree in the 2000s. When she returned home, she found China had changed a lot.

Peony: You love coffee, right?

Zoe: I got used to having a cup of coffee in the morning when I was studying overseas. Now, coffee is quite common here in the cities of China as well. Tea and coffee shops are good places for young people to gather with friends.

Peony: I like this place—very relaxed. It has my favorite tea—Jasmine. I fell in love with it when I got involved in China ministry years ago.

Zoe: I enjoy tea as well—it's still the most common drink here at home. It's part of our cultural heritage. However, since the Open Policy in the 1980s, we've been exposed to overseas cultures and lifestyles, but the same is not necessarily true in other countries. When I traveled overseas, I found many foreigners who still think China is an ancient dynasty! It made me laugh! I encouraged my overseas friends to visit so they will see the real China.

Peony: Zoe, let's get started on what we wanted to talk about today. After China opened its doors in 1978, in response to the Great Commission many brothers and sisters from churches and organizations around the world came here to help churches and believers mature. There have been great achievements but also challenges, and cross-cultural issues have been one of the main reasons for those challenges. I would like to ask you, a local Chinese believer, how you think we can bridge the cultural gap.

Zoe: I'm happy to talk with you about cross-cultural issues, but first we should discuss what is happening in China.

Peony: People who live outside China do not fully understand what is happening here. They often have mistaken perceptions about life in China. What are your thoughts about this?

Zoe: Yes, even in this high-tech era, I have noticed that many foreigners still have very little understanding about life in today's China. To me this is quite strange. For example, an American once asked me, "Does Beijing have electricity"? The question totally shocked me. Even many rural areas in China have had electricity for decades!

I'll give you another example; this one is related to ministry. Out of love and compassion, some overseas brothers and sisters sent a "music box" to China last year. It looked like an antique—very old. We appreciated their love and kindness, but their gift was completely inappropriate. Today we can access a variety of worship resources online, by app, or by other audio players. We understand they love us, but it would be better if they knew more about China and understood our current situation before deciding on ministry projects.

Peony: It seems updated information isn't always communicated!

Zoe: No, it isn't. In my opinion, many foreigners learn about China mainly through the media or older information. Since China is such a huge country, when the media focuses on things happening in just one area, the recipients generalize it for all of China. This gives them an unbalanced—even biased—picture of China as a whole.

Peony: I see. Would it be helpful to set up a platform so that brothers and sisters, both overseas and in China, could exchange information directly?

Zoe: I welcome this idea! It would be particularly helpful to overseas Christian organizations. The resources in God's family could then be utilized in a more effective and strategic manner.

Peony: There is a saying that foreigners will never be able to understand the way Chinese think and do things. It's true that many friends from overseas become confused after working with Chinese partners. To them, it seems that Chinese don't give full attention to a task. Would you mind sharing your thoughts about this?

Zoe: We also have negative impressions and are not always fully comfortable cooperating with many overseas brothers and sisters. A recent survey on partnerships between Chinese and overseas churches or agencies revealed that the number one challenge for such partnerships is cross-cultural issues, including differing expectations of relationships.

Peony: I understand—relationships play a critical role in Eastern culture. Since I've been in China, I've learned the Chinese saying: "You guanxi, jiu mei guanxi," (With relationship, nothing is a problem).



[Coffee Tea + the Great Wall of China by Dawn Danby via Flickr](#)

Zoe: Chinese often feel overseas partners pay attention only to the task and just want to get the job done. Sometimes, they don't seem to care about us and our feelings. In the survey, some Chinese interviewees felt they were being controlled and not respected. Some said, "Overseas partners have their own agendas and schedules and just want us to follow their instructions to complete their goals."

Peony: How do Chinese get the job done with right relationships?

Zoe: In Chinese culture, a genuine relationship is very important. Before we start a partnership, we need to build trust. My impression is that foreigners don't need to build relationships with others to form a partnership—they just start working together. For Chinese, this is difficult; we spend time getting to know one another first, then move on to the next step.

Peony: Can you give an example?

Zoe: Drinking tea together is one of the main ways to build relationships in Chinese culture.

Peony: Just like we're doing now. It seems we are moving in the right direction!

Zoe: Around the tea table, we spend time with friends, get to know each other, and see the possibility of building a trust relationship. But foreigners tend to think this relationship building is a waste of time. Their mind-set is "get the job done," and that's all.

Peony: Yet, I sometimes wonder how Chinese strike a balance between relationship building and getting things done effectively.

Zoe: Are you talking about the Chinese church leaders who attended various conferences last month conducted by different overseas organizations with conflicting, overlapping schedules?

Peony: Yes, it was quite interesting that Chinese church leaders chose to attend just half a day or perhaps one day at each conference. I understand it's all about relationships, but did they lose the opportunity to benefit from the conferences by trying to attend all of them?

Zoe: It didn't matter if they benefited from the conferences; they just wanted to maintain relationships with each overseas organization. If they had chosen to attend only one conference for the whole week and declined the other invitations, they felt they would have caused the hosts of the other conferences to lose face.

Peony: Since they only attended part of each conference, do you think the conference hosts were happy with their involvement?

Zoe: Perhaps not. Overseas organizations might need to coordinate among themselves to avoid scheduling conferences at the same time. From a Chinese perspective, excusing one's self from a conference definitely causes the host to lose face. This kind of situation puts the Chinese church leaders in an embarrassing position. In order to save face for these overseas organizations, their only option was to attend all the conferences but not for the entire time. Chinese worry about creating unnecessary estrangement from others if they don't save face for them.

Peony: Still, in a recent survey, Chinese Christians said they like exchanges with overseas parties because it broadens their perspective, and I think these conferences can help do that. For me, the way the Chinese dealt with the conflicting schedules was a bit negative. Could this have been handled in a more positive way?

Zoe: I think Chinese church leaders handled this in a positive and respectful way. They didn't complain; rather, they accommodated all the overseas organizations. When the schedules conflicted, they were flexible in their use of time and accepted each conference invitation graciously. Saving face is a way that Chinese show respect to others.

Peony: Do men and women handle this situation differently?

Zoe: Both men and women strive to save face for others. I think Chinese men might be more conscious about saving their own faces. In Chinese tradition, men play leading roles, and they need to maintain a respectable image.

Peony: Since relationships are so important in Chinese culture, do you think Chinese are effective in communicating their thoughts and preferences?

Zoe: In a cross-cultural setting, communication is always a challenge—differing concepts, distinct perspectives, varying approaches, and so on.

Peony: Is language a big barrier?

Zoe: Even when speaking the same language, miscommunication can happen.

Peony: Can you give an example?

Zoe: Sure. I heard this from a local Chinese friend. He discussed a matter with his pastor's wife, an overseas Chinese, but both were

native Chinese speakers. He then told her: “*Ni bu yong guan.*” In a mainland Chinese context, his message was: “You don’t need to take care of it,” meaning he would handle the matter so as not to burden her. But to an overseas Chinese, that message meant: “It’s none of your business,” implying she was unable to handle the matter and was no longer needed. She felt hurt.

Peony: The Chinese language is fascinating—and sometimes confusing!

Zoe: One should always be aware of the context before attempting to interpret the message. For example, saying “No,” is not welcome in China.

Peony: Then how do Chinese say “No?” Or do they never say it?

Zoe: (smiling) Please don’t be surprised if a Chinese doesn’t say “No” to something he doesn’t like. Unless it is entirely intolerable, a Chinese just doesn’t want to use that word.

Peony: I understand that. One time, I joined an overseas missionary to meet with a Chinese church leader. The missionary, who spoke very fluent Mandarin, supplied tons of Christian literature and the church leader helped to distribute it all over the country. They met to discuss how their Christian literature distribution project was going. I was surprised at what the Chinese church leader told me later.

Zoe: Why? What did he say?

Peony: He said Chinese living in the cities already had enough books to read and didn’t have time to read them all. Given that the overseas missionary loved China and wanted to distribute Christian literature, he was willing to help her with the project—by getting rid of the books into the hands of Chinese!

Zoe: Oh, that is so sad! Yet, I am not surprised. The church leader hesitated to say “No” because he recognized that the missionary loved them very much!

Peony: I am still wondering why he didn’t explain the situation to the missionary previously.

Zoe: Maybe he did tell her before, but she didn’t listen—or she didn’t understand. Having enough Christian books to read was probably entirely out of her concept or imagination. Maybe the Chinese church leader was more willing to tell the truth to an overseas Chinese than to a foreigner.

Peony: You mean Chinese may tell one thing to an overseas Chinese, but another thing to a foreigner?

Zoe: Yes, that may happen.

Peony: You mean, Chinese are accustomed to telling . . . lies?

Zoe: Chinese don’t see it as telling lies. Some Chinese tend to tell good things to please outsiders; this is a way that they serve their guests. Sometimes, they don’t want to hurt the feelings of others. In other cases, they don’t want to expose their limitations in order to save their own face, unless they have gained enough trust with the other person.

Peony: That’s why you are willing to share more of your thoughts with me—an overseas Chinese?

Zoe: Of course! We are both Chinese. This draws us closer. I would still trust my foreign friends, once I had built up good relationships with them. But it’s generally much easier for Chinese to connect with other ethnic Chinese because we understand each other better.

Peony: Again, it’s all about relationships and saving face.

Zoe: That’s true!

Peony: Another interesting thing I’ve noticed is that overseas and Chinese Christians seem to react differently to some government policies. For instance, recently new policies regarding overseas NGOs as well as a draft of new religious policies have come out. When you read comments from overseas, it’s all darkness and hopelessness. But if you listen to the Chinese, you hear mixed reactions, including some who think nothing really serious is happening. Why is that?

Zoe: Oh, this is a bit complicated. From a Western perspective, a law is a law; people are expected to follow it. But for Chinese, we have our own understanding as to how to interpret policies, and we also have our own ways of dealing with them.

Peony: I learned the Chinese saying: “*Shang you zheng ce, xia you dui ce,*” (The authorities have their measures; we have our countermeasures).

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View from the Wall

Is Persecution Worsening?

Perspectives on the Changing Religious Policy Environment in China

By two senior house church leaders

Last year two senior house church leaders were asked to give their opinions on the current trends inside China. Their perspectives highlight the differing views of China's Christian leaders.



[The Chinese flag by zachary jean paradis via Flickr.](#)

Views of Pastor A

Are Chinese Christians entering a harsh winter season?

In recent years, much overseas media has covered stories of persecution incidents in China. The demolition of crosses has been reported extensively over the past two years. Some have even said the church in China is entering a harsh winter season. This gives an imbalanced impression that persecution is a common phenomenon in China. When we analyze the environment facing the Chinese church, we must not lose sight of the particular context of individual persecution incidents. Otherwise, we will misread the signs and miss the opportunities that the Father has been giving to the church in China of this generation.

Overall, the fact is that some persecution incidents have occurred in recent years and still do today. At the same time, the majority of churches continue their meetings and ministries with unprecedented freedom. Let me give an analogy. The government at times arrests people who are suspected of committing financial crimes, but that does not mean the government intends to forbid all activities of the financial market. Similarly, persecution incidents happening in China do not imply a harsh winter for the church—a nationwide crackdown on Christianity.

New measures on managing unregistered churches.

I am also aware of the spread of an internet message about four ways of managing unregistered churches:

1. Churches that are willing to join the TSPM system and be managed by the authorities can be granted registration.
2. Churches that decline to join the TSPM system but are willing to be managed by the authorities can have an informal registration with the authorities for reference.
3. Churches that neither join the TSPM system nor are managed by the authorities should continue to be educated by the authorities.
4. Churches that neither join the TSPM system nor are managed by the authorities and continue to be infiltrated by foreign forces should experience crackdowns.

These four measures are consistent with the pattern of current religious restrictions, and I personally believe they are not merely rumors. It is common knowledge that the government conveys messages about new policies through informal channels to test the waters, in particular when those new policies are controversial and might arouse public opposition. In this way, the government may ascertain how the local churches and local authorities will respond to the new religious policies. They can then determine to what extent the new policies will be implemented.

I personally find this new policy is not necessarily a sign of harsh winter. On the contrary, it creates even more space for church ministries. One might find the crackdown mentioned in measure #4 as very negative for the church. This is indeed the measure taken by the authorities over decades, so the church is no worse off now. However, in this generation, the overwhelming majority of churches in China are indigenous ones and are not funded by overseas entities. Overseas funding is usually taken as a sign of control and unacceptable by the government.

Measure #3 is the current situation of most unregistered churches. The authorities attempt to educate and manage unregistered churches by having “tea meetings” with pastors. Again, this situation is no worse off than previously. As the authorities continue to dialogue with the churches, the churches can, on the contrary, grasp the opportunities to educate them about how the churches can benefit society.

Measure #2 is a new measure that provides the opportunity for church registration which has been called for by unregistered churches for years. Measure #1 is not a preferred choice for unregistered churches.

Personal experience of restrictions.

I, personally, feel I have less control over my church and myself because of the relationship with the authorities in recent years. My church continues services in a commercial building without any interruptions. The authorities occasionally have “tea meetings” with me to receive an update on what is happening in my church. However, these meetings are becoming less frequent now—just two or

three times a year. As part of the top leadership of my network, I, of course, do not naively believe I am free to do any kind of ministry. I expect tighter surveillance by the authorities than an ordinary Chinese pastor would receive. While hundreds of thousands of church leaders can freely communicate with local and overseas parties online, I often expect irregularities with my online service or electronic devices. While most pastors are free to travel to overseas countries for church events, I pray that the organizers of overseas events will not take too high a profile and cause the authorities to hinder my travel.

Pastor A is in the top leadership of a prominent church network in a rural area in China. He was imprisoned in a labor camp for a few years during the 1980s because he continued to evangelize under the tight religious control of the government. With the increase in urbanization, he migrated from his home village to a city and started an urban church in the 2000s. Now, for years, he has been shepherding a local church of hundreds of believers with a large proportion of well-educated young people. Like a good number of other urban churches, every week they conduct several church meetings in a rented apartment in a commercial building as well as tens of small group gatherings.

Views of Pastor B

Harsh winter is the right time to prepare ourselves

Historically, Christianity has been associated with Western imperialism. It is hard for the Chinese government to forget the painful invasion of western countries since World War I, in which western missionaries were seen as collaborating with foreign powers. The pouring of funds from overseas into the churches in China in past decades caught the attention of the Chinese government. Deeply rooted in Chinese culture, the provision of funds creates a master-and-servant relationship. Thus, the image of Christianity is closely related to infiltration by foreign forces.

Religious issues are seen as sensitive under the sovereignty of the atheistic Chinese Communist Party. The advance of Christianity in China has drawn the attention of the Chinese government, and some government officials perceive Christianity as a destabilizing factor. In addition, the Occupy Central Hong Kong incident in the second half of 2014, with Christians playing a pivotal role in its organization and actively supporting it, was seen as threatening from the perspective of the Chinese Communist Party. This has been taken as an apparent clue that Christianity could initiate and participate in social movements. That gets on the nerves of the state leadership.

Pine trees harden during a harsh winter

In Chinese culture, pine trees are often depicted as symbols of steadfastness and endurance while plum blossoms portray a strong personality that does not fear difficulties. When winter becomes harsher, pine trees harden even more and plum blossoms take time to flourish. We firmly believe that regardless of changing circumstances, the One who reigns over all, including our history, shall never change. Everything is in his good hand.

Therefore, we should examine the situation and prepare for the worst. On the other hand, we should hold on to our hope that victory is a sure thing and walk faithfully with the Lord. As we revisit church history, God's kingdom can be further expanded when his children grasp the opportunities to share the gospel during difficult times. Throughout the generations of the early church, the scattering or migration of believers helped to spread the gospel.

Today, some worry the churches in China are not aware of potential severe persecution as they seem to take an optimistic perspective towards the signs of a tightening environment. It can hardly be imagined how they would endure, or even survive, in a tightened environment. Yet from the history of the Chinese church, we can see that harsh winters realign the churches, test their foundation of faith, and enable believers to show their faithfulness to the Lord. Because the price for keeping the faith has been raised by the authorities, the churches in China will naturally purify themselves. True gold fears no fire. Difficult times can nurture disciples that are willing to carry their own crosses. Pastors will also have to serve with pure motives, be ready to be motivated by God's love, and to shepherd the Lord's sheep faithfully.

If the situation gets worse, local churches will be compelled to break up into smaller sizes. The scattering of believers will help to spread the gospel, as in the early church. As the government prepares to put a strong hand on donations, churches may face financial hardship. However, local churches will then be unable to "lay up treasures" in their bank accounts. After all, there will be no need for them to save money for establishing glamorous church buildings. As soon as donations are received, they will have to be given away—to the poor, to seminaries, and to charitable groups. This could speed up the development of church ministries in a wonderful way. The delegation of religious control to the authorities at the community level would, on the one hand, narrow the space for unregistered churches. On the other hand, for survival, local churches would be motivated to gain favour from the local authorities by doing good deeds in the community. It is time for more local churches to move out of their comfort zones to reach and serve the community, help the needy, and care for the neighbourhood—to truly become salt and light.

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Peoples of China As China Grows Older

By Brent Fulton

As China “grows old before it grows rich,” the question of who will care for its burgeoning elderly population looms large for young families and for the church.

China’s birth rates have been brought under control during the past three decades. As a result, the number of working-age people as a percentage of the total population has begun to plateau and will decrease steadily over the next decade. Meanwhile, the proportion of China’s elderly has begun to mushroom. The pyramid-shaped demographic profile that characterized China up through the 1970s, with a large pool of children and youth at the bottom and a comparatively, smaller, elderly population at the top, is rapidly being replaced by a barrel-shaped contour featuring a large, middle-aged population that is steadily moving into the ranks of the elderly.



[20471-RODSC_0017 by neville mars via Flickr.](#)

Today, there are more than 200 million senior citizens in China. Of these, some 30 million are considered disabled. As of 2012, there were only 3.9 million nursing home beds available in all of China. By 2050, the elderly population is estimated to reach 400 million, accounting for a third of the country’s total population.* Given the traditional expectation that the young are to take care of their older relatives, as well as the lack of a suitable social safety net to meet the needs of China’s burgeoning older population, the burden that this demographic reality places upon the urban infrastructure is formidable.

As China’s elderly population mushrooms and its working-age population shrinks, families find themselves caught in the middle of this demographic divide. Cultural expectations and legal requirements put the onus on them to care for older family members, but neither the government nor society at large are currently prepared to provide the resources needed to support this effort.

Furthermore, the Bible is clear that taking care of one’s own family is a primary responsibility of believers: “But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” (1 Timothy 5:8)

For many Christian congregations in China, the immediate concern, especially in the rural areas, is caring for elderly pastors in their later years of life. TSPM-affiliated churches have the advantage of owning property that, in some cases, can be used to develop a home for the elderly that adjoins or is adjacent to the church. Several have already taken this step, and others may be expected to follow suit.

Younger urban pastors are faced with caring for parents who, in many cases, still live in the countryside or in smaller cities. Many of their congregants find themselves in a similar situation. With living space limited in the city, it may not be practical or desirable to have older relatives move in with the family. While they might want to personally offer care out of a sense of filial piety, the reality is that many will need to look for third-party solutions.

Looking further across the society, two possible large-scale responses merge, both of which provide opportunities for China’s urban Christians not only to care for the elderly in their midst but also to offer a service to the larger community, thus enhancing the church’s standing in society. Given the right mix of expertise and investment, along with a favorable regulatory environment, urban Christians could potentially play a leading role in both areas.

One response involves training home health workers to visit seniors who are still living on their own or whose family is not able to care for their needs. So far, this appears to be the government’s favored approach to eldercare as it is seen as more cost-effective.

The other response is to construct residential care facilities. Investors in this space have thus far targeted the high-end market where income from wealthy clients and their families will more than cover the cost of providing first-class services. The biggest need is among middle- and low-income clients and their families. Preferential treatment and incentives, including tax exemption and waived, or lowered administrative fees, are available for companies wanting to invest in this area.

Both approaches require training skilled and non-skilled workers. Given the overall lack of expertise nationwide in gerontology and other related fields, however, the means of training these workers is not readily available in country. China’s church, like most entities in society, is struggling as it grapples with the challenge of China’s ageing population. On the other hand, the Christian community in China is the one entity that does have access to a sizeable pool of potential personnel, both professionals whose expertise could be applied specifically to senior care, as well as unskilled workers who could be trained for support roles. With a biblical ethic of caring for others, these Christians could bring to their service a motivation that would not be found among others who see senior care as simply a business opportunity. If they were able to create a viable model, it would likely catch the attention of government

officials who have been tasked with finding ways to care for the elderly and who have resources at their disposal to do so, but who are wary of committing funds without first seeing firsthand that the proposed solution is going to succeed.

Several small-scale projects are currently being undertaken by individual church congregations and by Christian entrepreneurs and healthcare professionals, some in collaboration with Christians outside China. Thus, an urgent concern facing urban Christian families in China—how to care for ageing relatives amidst widespread social change that has left traditional practices unworkable—has created an opportunity for China’s Christians to exercise their beliefs and values in practical ways. Doing so would gain the church legitimacy within society as Christians are seen caring not only for their own needs but also for the needs of their community.

* Rainy Yao, “Golden Years: The Coming Investment Boom in China’s Elderly Care Industry.” *China Briefing*, <http://www.china-briefing.com/news/2014/09/10/golden-years-coming-investment-boom-chinas-elderly-care-industry.html> (Posted on September 10, 2014).

Brent Fulton is the president of ChinaSource and editor of the ChinaSource Quarterly. This article is excerpted from China’s Urban Christians: A Light That Cannot Be Hidden, pages 14 and 65-66. Used with permission.

The Expectations of the Chinese Church Continued from page 8

First, whether for full or partial investment, overseas funds should not be used to help finance the purchase of church properties in the cities. This is not only because the Chinese property market is far more in demand than that overseas, but because of the practical ramifications. A Chinese church does not have a legitimate social identity to purchase property and can only do so through private individuals. In the event of national policy changes, the issue of property rights will come to the forefront.

Second, Christians overseas should try to avoid using economic means to help the children of Chinese pastors study abroad. This can lead to church divisions and mar the reputation of the pastors.

The financial support for urban pastors from Christians overseas should be based on practical considerations, and support from within the Chinese churches should always be encouraged. The high cost of living in the city is a social problem, but the Chinese church needs to learn to sustain itself and not rely on funds from overseas to supply the cost of living of its own pastor.

In supporting the Chinese church’s cross-cultural missions, the primary emphasis of Christian overseas should be coaching with financial support as secondary. Do not prematurely transplant young missionary recruits and then use monetary support to attract more Chinese to become missionaries outside their country in the hope of sending out more Chinese Christians as overseas missionaries.

Since the era of the apostles, the church has become universal. No matter how the Chinese church has developed, it still needs to interact with the church around the world. In these interactions, be they positive or negative, Christians overseas need to understand the essence of these exchanges as well as how the Chinese church views them.

Steve Z. (pseudonym) is a pastor, writer, researcher, and specialist on church development.

When Tea Meets Coffee Continued from page 11

Zoe: Whenever the government introduces a new policy, we may not agree with it, but most Chinese will show respect for authority and not openly protest it. We’ll simply ignore it and quietly follow the old way. The authorities also “open one eye and close the other”—unless the issue is really harmful to national security. They won’t look for trouble by arresting those who are against a policy. This is our Chinese “system.”

Peony: It’s a big job to learn Chinese culture—just like learning about all the different kinds of Chinese tea!

Zoe: It’s the same for learning about different kinds of coffee! When there is more interaction and partnership between China and overseas countries, people will understand that we speak, think, and do things in very different ways. It’s not just about language. More than language skills, we need listening ears and humble hearts.

Peony: In Hong Kong there is a beverage that is a mixture of tea and coffee. Perhaps we need to mix with each other more often to learn and understand each other better.

Zoe: I’ll second that!

Peony Tang is an overseas Chinese experienced in managing research projects. She has been participating in China ministry in the areas of research and project management for ten years. Dr. Zoe Zhou is an indigenous Chinese researcher with cross-cultural exposure, notably with overseas churches, for over ten years. She is passionate about sharing the current situation in China with overseas communities.

Book Review

Excitement, Realism, and Incisive Commentary

Christ in China: An Anthology. In appreciation of Tony and Frances Lambert's 34 years of faithful service; OMF-Hong Kong, 2016.

Available for US\$25 plus postage from OMF-HK by request; email jwm@psmail.net. Also available on the [OMF-Australia website](#) for AUS\$36.36.

Reviewed by Ronald Boyd-MacMillan

I remember a conversation in 2006 with a high ranking member of the Religious Affairs Bureau. He was refusing my version of events in a certain province, and the meeting was going from bad to worse. I pulled out a copy of *China Insight* and showed him a piece by Tony Lambert that proved the case. Instead of blowing up, he smiled and said, "Well, if Tony Lambert says it's a fact, then it must be a fact." The meeting then took a much better turn.

Not everyone in high places appreciated Tony's incisive and sober commentary on the church in China, but that is also testimony to his accuracy and even fearlessness. This anthology preserves forty-six of Tony's monthly analyses of the story of Christianity in China that were written during the years from 1987 to 2016. I cannot think of another China watcher that had a combination of such longevity with a rigorous attention to detail, a sober refusal to exaggerate, and a wide-ranging interest in all aspects of the greatest revival story of the world church of the past 50 years. For these reasons alone, this anthology is worth it.

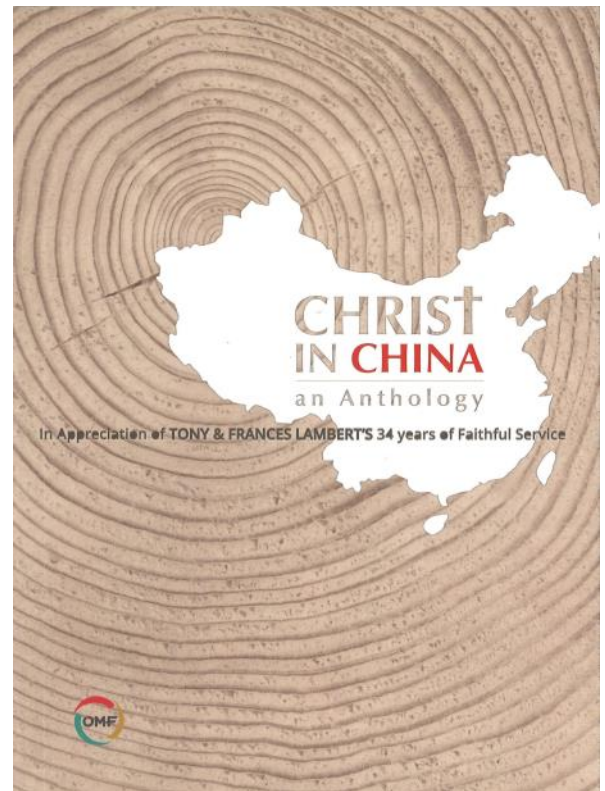
Of course, I did know Tony quite well, and he was gracious enough to let me tag along on many of his China trips. As a journalist, I prized two elements in particular of his approach. The first was his commitment to get to the bottom layer of the house church story. We all knew about documents from Beijing, statements of Three-Self leaders, and statistics from Amity Press, but few were really making it their business to get around the countryside and see for themselves just how extensive—and how vulnerable—the house church movements were. Tony brought this story up to the surface in all its complexity, including the production of vital profiles on the cults that were wreaking such havoc with new believers. The second was his trust of the simple truth. In an age of breathless excitement about the growth, with noughts being added to estimates almost daily, Tony brought a responsible realism about the figures of church growth, in the 1990s especially. This also involved warning about the perils of running ministries based on optimistic information.

This is what makes the book deserving of a wider readership. It is not just snippets of the world's largest ever revival; it is a template on how to do planning, reporting, and effective ministry in the midst of bewildering change. The section headings give you an idea of the range: History of the Church in China; Indigenous Movements; Cults and Sects; Minorities and the Gospel; Voices from China, and Contemporary Issues and Trends. I still photocopy and send to mission strategists an article Tony wrote in 2004 called, "The Gutzlaff Affair: A Warning from History."

I was delighted to see this piece included in the anthology. Charles Gutzlaff (1803-1851) was a pioneering missionary to China, but he set up a literature distribution network which statistically looked incredible in its initial results until it was sadly exposed as an elaborate fraud. Gutzlaff was the real deal, but he just did not listen to criticism when concerns were expressed that his Chinese workers were doctoring their reports and feathering their own nests when they left his orbit of supervision. Everyone paid a price, especially Gutzlaff, who died heartbroken not long after his workers were exposed. As Tony writes, "...good intentions and zeal for the gospel are not enough," and, "...what sounds like a great work of God at a distance may dissolve into the air close up." His final sentence should be chiselled in stone: "To question and probe the reliability of various China ministries and projects far from being unspiritual is actually essential if the gospel is to be preached effectively in China and the Chinese church built up and equipped so that it can itself reach out effectively."

Tony and I had to put this into practice. Once we arrived at a large TSPM seminary and saw a huge stock of Bibles destined for minority tribes—except they were not being distributed. A phone call to Hong Kong and the plot thickened. The mission agency that paid for them did so on the understanding they were to be given out free. But the leader of the seminary was saying they had to be sold. It became a scandal that tainted a great Christian leader, just like Gutzlaff. Few thanked us though for helping to expose the fraud. These days, throughout the worldwide church, as planning processes become more elaborate, there is always the danger of creating paper fictions of impact despite the best intentions to be more accountable.

There are other pieces too that give unique slants on the contemporary story. In addition to seeing how Tony built up reliable assessments on church growth, there are profiles of Bishop K. H. Ting when he tried to impose liberal theology on the TSPM rather coercively. It is even worth rereading pieces that one would be inclined to dismiss as dated but still carry powerful reminders of what has



been largely forgotten. In the Voices from China section, Tony quotes a Peking University student reflecting on the Tiananmen massacre of June 1989. Fresh from the very time, it details a level of repression that has been denied by government propaganda for so long we routinely now talk of the “Tiananmen incident” and put the death toll at no more than a few hundred. To read again that groups of twenty people were secretly executed near the Marco Polo Bridge on a regular basis after the massacre reminds one how traumatic were these protests and their aftermath.

For all that, for me, the most staggering sentence of the whole book was from his introduction: “When I first lived in China in 1973 not one Christian church was open to the public in the entire country. . . . I did not come across any independent evidence of existence of Christians until 1978 when I was able to give a Bible to a young man in Shanghai who had been injured in the Cultural Revolution.” To think that Tony puts his pen back in his drawer nearly fifty years later, after seeing a church of 100 million grow from this standing start, beggars belief and surely expands faith. To preserve a sense of sheer astonishment and excitement at the power of God, read this book!

Dr. Ronald Boyd-MacMillan is currently the Director of Strategic and Global Research at Open Doors International. Based in Hong Kong for many years in the 1980s and 1990s reporting on the Chinese church as a journalist, he has also travelled extensively among and taught in China's house church movements in the 2000s. He is the author of Faith That Endures: The Essential Guide to the Persecuted Church.

Is Persecution Worsening?

Continued from page 13

Chinese churches have gone through over 200 years of ups and downs. We may see the past as a nurturing stage when believers were pampered, trained and disciplined. Now that they are mature, it is time to put their strength to the test. Learning from the historical patterns of the church, we see that passionate evangelization comes from a burning spirit; a burning life comes after the test of fire. All in all, the harsh winter is a period of trials but also a season of hope. Farmers will have the time to relax, reflect and prepare for the busy harvest in the coming spring. When the winter trial is over, I believe God will enormously revive the churches in China and charge them with the Great Commission.

Churches in China have been abundantly equipped in the past decades; the restrictive environment is a mere, but crucial, push for them to reach their destiny in God's kingdom.

Pastor B is an indigenous Chinese scholar with strengths in theological education and the history of the Chinese Church. He shepherds an unregistered urban church of mainly well-educated, middle-class people.

Taken from published materials of [Open Doors](#). Used with permission.

Intercessory Notes

Please pray

1. For wisdom and insight for leaders, both inside and outside China, as they form new partnerships. Pray that all involved will understand their roles as they partner together in China's rapidly changing environment.
2. For the thoughtful, wise, and godly involvement of China's church and Chinese Christians in all their interactions and activities within their culture as they gain a new degree of visibility in society.
3. For understanding and acceptance of cultural differences between mainland Chinese and people from overseas; for good communication and valued, perceptive relationships.
4. For wise responses to changing religious policies and God's protection and presence when discrimination and persecution are present.
5. That China's church will see it is well positioned to help care for the growing, elderly population and know how to respond to this challenge



Resource Corner

A Journey of Opportunity: Following God's Direction in China An Infographic

China has experienced rapid change, and so has the church in China—now numbering over 100 million Christians. How can we better partner with the church in China as to sustain growth and increase effective sending? One way is listening to the needs and perspectives voiced by 1,200 Chinese church leaders in the 2016 survey of the China Gospel Research Alliance (CGRA).

The CGRA has teamed up with GMI to create an infographic highlighting the survey results. It is available [here for free download](#) and may be reproduced digitally and in print for the purpose of educating and engaging audiences with the content. Any use of this image in a paid product or service requires permission from CGRA. For permissions please write to info@chinasource.org.

