

Prayer for the Persecuted Church – February 2020

China

Several areas for prayer, and some for rejoicing - we have put a few together.

For several years the authorities have been clamping down on all religions – and Christianity is no exception.

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Chinese authorities have been targeting places of worship, including the Three-Self Churches. Photo: ChinaAid

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Believers kneel in the rubble of their former place of worship. Photo: ChinaAid

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New rules to force churches to demonstrate ‘total devotion’ to Communist Party, warns Release International partner

Those rules limit communications between churches and overseas organisations, including donations.

But even before the new rules took effect on February 1, 2020, there were reports that Chinese officials were confiscating aid intended to help churches fight the coronavirus.

Confiscated

According to International Christian Concern (ICC) a Chinese Christian tweeted on January 27, ‘Some overseas Christians shipped supplies designated to serve local hospitals through local churches. Yet the supplies were confiscated.’

New rules – cont. 1

The tweet continued: ‘And the Christian who received the shipment was invited to “have tea” with the police (a common practice to intimidate and threaten citizens).’

A Christian human rights lawyer has also been ordered to delete his posts on the coronavirus. ICC say police warned lawyer Sui Muqing that his posts on the situation in Wuhan were damaging to the Party and ordered him to take them down.

Even so, Christians in Wuhan have been giving out facemasks on the streets and sharing their faith with passers-by.

Tough restrictions

The limit on church aid to help with the coronavirus comes as China introduces even tougher restrictions on religious freedom.

New rules – cont. 2

'The new rules codify the Chinese Communist Party's ideological and leadership supremacy over all religious affairs in China,' says Release Partner ChinaAid President Bob Fu.

'From now on, the Chinese Communist Party will become the head of the churches, temples, mosques, and other religious institutions. They will dominate every sphere of religion, from religious doctrines and leadership selection, to financial management.'

In practice, observers say this will require churches to seek state approval for a wide range of activities, including:

- staff changes**
- training**
- major meetings and activities**
- overseas communications**
- overseas donations over £11,000**
- major building works**

New rules – cont. 3

'Complete devotion'

The new measures came into effect on February 1, 2020.

Says Bob Fu: 'These regulations will require religious leaders and organisations to display complete devotion to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).'

'There will be little autonomy and independence left for any religious organisations in China.'

He adds: 'No independent religious institutions, such as house churches, will be legally tolerated or allowed to exist unless they join the state-run church organisations.'

Article 5 of the new regulations reads, 'Religious organisations must spread the principles and policies of the Chinese Communist Party... educating religious personnel and religious citizens to

New rules – cont. 4

support the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party... and following the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics...'
It was Chinese President Xi Jinping who introduced this process of Sinicization -- inserting so-called 'Chinese characteristics' into religion.

Control

For decades, China has controlled religious groups by monitoring official religious organisations. But under Xi, the authorities launched a five-year plan to tighten Communist Party control over religion.

Local officials throughout China have been insisting that churches fly the national flag and destroy religious imagery, such as crosses. They have also demolished many church buildings.

New rules – cont. 5

In state-run churches, Christians are commanded to sing patriotic songs and listen to pro-Communist Party sermons.

Churches who refuse to comply can be closed and their Christian members arrested.

Adds Release partner, Bob Fu: 'Since the Chinese Constitution guarantees religious freedom for all in Article 36, they are violating the very law by which they encourage Christians to abide.'

ENDS

Sources: ChinaAid, International Christian Concern, CSW

Christians in Wuhan

-we have heard that many have become much more earnest as a result of the coronavirus;

-people are coming to know Jesus as Lord and Saviour;

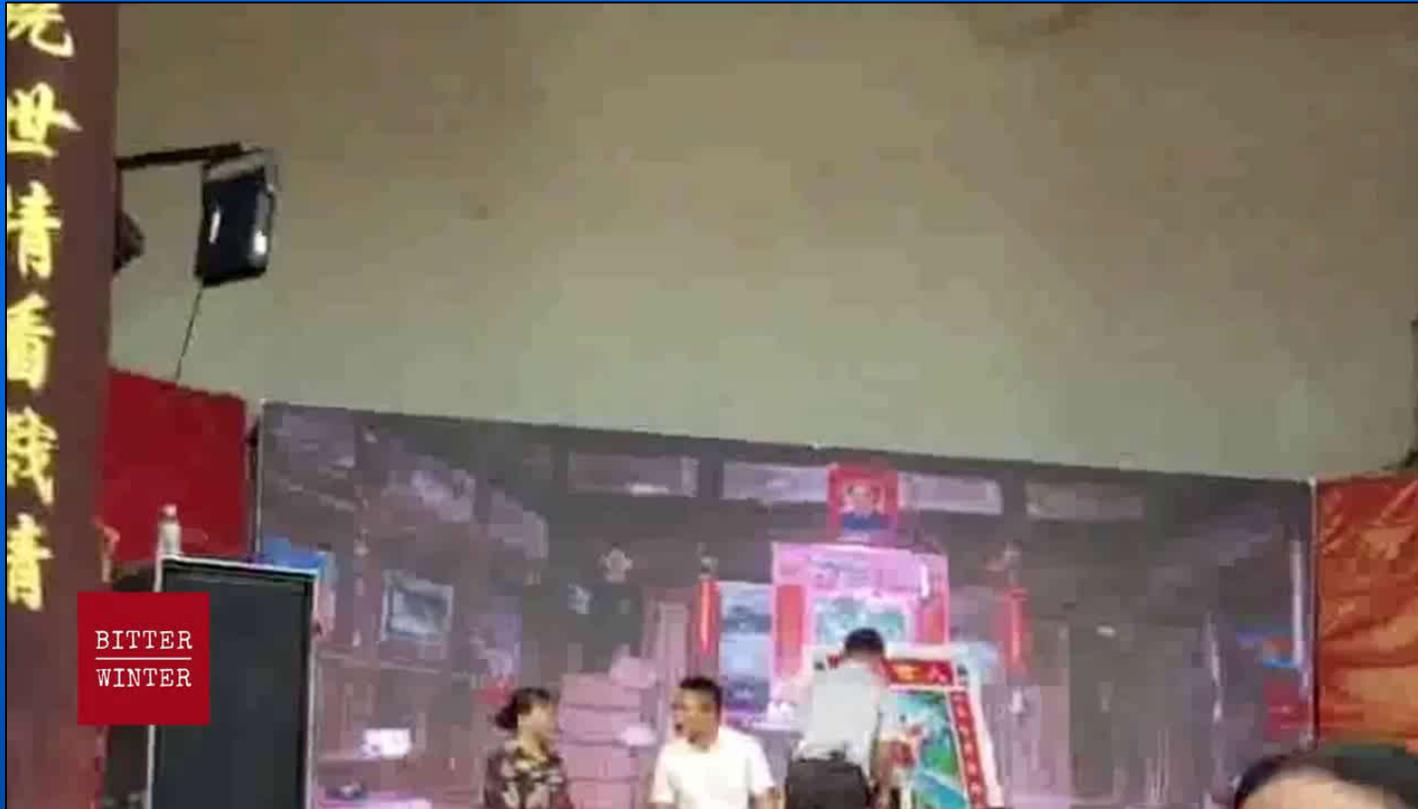
Let's thank The Lord

Comics and Vocational Courses Used to Fight Religion

17/02/2020 by Yu Shi, Bitter Winter.

People in China are bombarded with atheist propaganda in a variety of forms, as the government seeks to eliminate religion from their lives. China's totalitarian regime has been fighting for ideological territory with religions by vilifying them through indoctrination (Sinicisation) and other means to make its citizens pray to the only god – the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). And it uses an assortment of tools to achieve this. In the Suiyang district of Shangqiu city in the central province of Henan, every few meters on the so-called Street of Legal Propaganda About Religious Policies, comics on the bans in new Regulations on Religious Affairs are displayed. .

In A Skit Vilifying Christianity, A Party Secretary Says: “Can Christianity Really Cure People?”
YouTube video available at: <https://youtu.be/WikMGiJbdqs>



In one of the skits, a Party secretary visits an ill Christian and asks him: “Can Christianity really cure people, alleviate poverty, and help them become rich?” He then goes on to say that only the support and care by the CCP helps people to be cured. Other propaganda performances claim that Christianity does not allow believers to seek medical care or earn a living.

© Bitter Winter, Torino, Italy. Jan. 2020

China Appoints New Hong Kong Chief Known for Christian Persecution 14/02/2020 Hong Kong/Macau
(International Christian Concern) Also reported by The Guardian.

– In the midst of fighting the Coronavirus epidemic, China announced yesterday that it will put Xia Baolong, previously known for removing thousands of crosses from churches in Zhejiang province, in charge of the cabinet-level office that oversees Hong Kong and Macau affairs.

Xia, 67, the vice chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, will replace Zhang Xiaoming as director of the Hong Kong & Macau Affairs Office, while reducing

China Appoints New Hong Kong Chief – cont. 1

incumbent chief Zhang Xiaoming's authority in an unexpected demotion. Xia is a former close aide to President Xi Jinping who served as Communist Party chief of Zhejiang province and initiated a crackdown on Christian churches several years ago. Sonny Lo, a Hong Kong-based academic and political commentator told Bloomberg, "The reshuffling at this interesting moment may point to a deep distrust from Xi Jinping toward the former faction dealing with Hong Kong affairs."

"It's clear that Xi Jinping wants to have a clear grasp of the situation in Hong Kong — that's the major point," Lo added.

China Appoints New Hong Kong Chief – cont. 2

“We’ll probably see some adjustment in Chinese policy toward Hong Kong.” Hong Kong has been restive since last June, after the city attempted to pass an extradition law that would remove the legal barriers between China and Hong Kong. Millions have taken to the streets to express their anger, which transformed the movement into seeking more rights and democracy.

A pastor in Zhejiang told ICC, “This shift [from Zhang to Xia] is not a good situation.”

He added, “It is possible that Xia will oppress the churches in Hong Kong.”

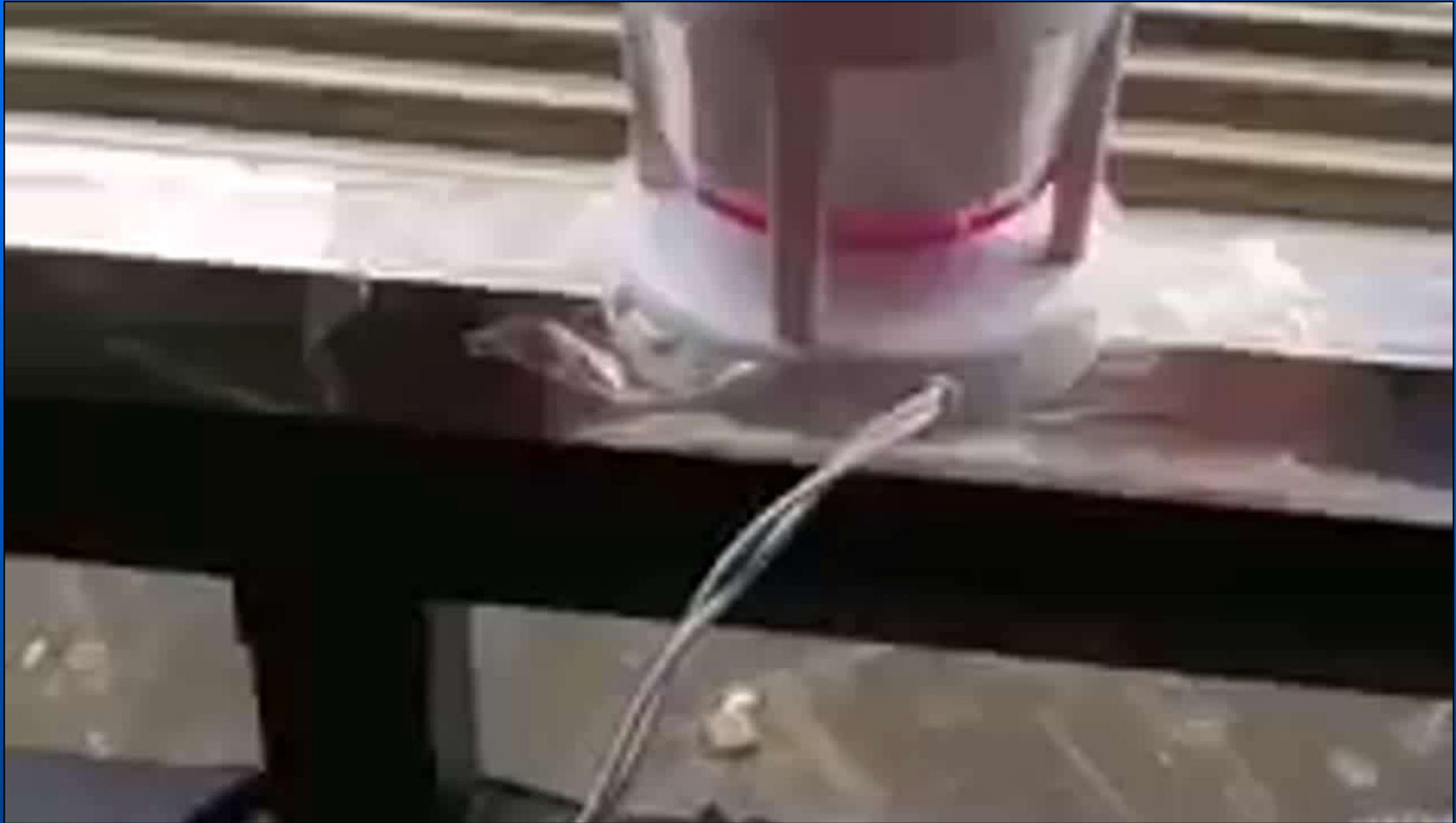
China Appoints New Hong Kong Chief – cont. 3

Ying Fuk-tsang, director of the divinity school at The Chinese University of Hong Kong, also told Christian Times (HK) that “the appointment of Xia can be seen as Beijing’s adjustment towards Hong Kong/Macau policy, ‘it will only be tighter’. [...] When the overall environment is tightening, as an indispensable part of civil liberties, religious freedom [in Hong Kong] would also be affected as a result.”



***Christians were distributing face masks and Gospel pamphlets to passers-by on the streets, while gospel message broadcast loudly from white van.
shared by Father Francis Liu from Chinese Christian Fellowship of Righteousness***

Video available on Twitter at: <https://twitter.com/Frfrancisliu/status/1221756220073111552>



***Christians in Wuhan seek to bring a message of peace and hope to their neighbours with creativity.
shared by Father Francis Liu from Chinese Christian Fellowship of Righteousness***

Video available on Twitter at: <https://twitter.com/Frfrancisliu/status/1221660148998885377>

Let's Pray..