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Perspectives and analysis for those who serve China

# China SOURCE

## Cross-Cultural Partnerships in China Ministries

### The Role of Due Diligence Research

*Andrew T. Kaiser*

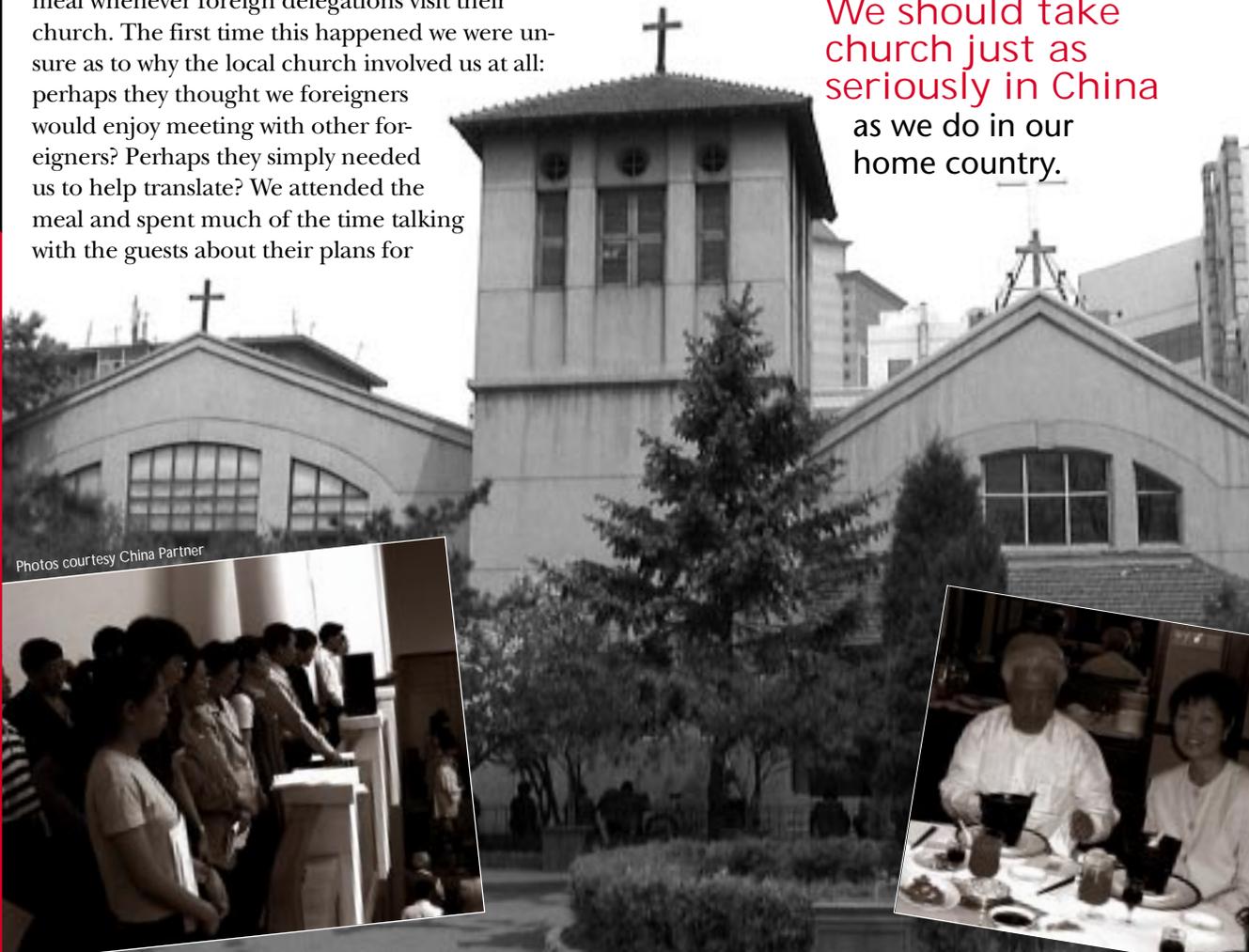
Few words are used more frequently in Christian outreach circles today than “partnership.” While what exactly is meant by partnership can vary greatly, when uttered, this word often has the power to make both national and foreign participants smile. Everyone likes partnerships, right?

Our organization has been located in the same city in China for nearly ten years now. Many of our expatriate and local staff have been there from the beginning and, accordingly, we have gotten to know the local church leaders very well. In the last few years, the local church has taken to calling on us and inviting us to join them for a meal whenever foreign delegations visit their church. The first time this happened we were unsure as to why the local church involved us at all: perhaps they thought we foreigners would enjoy meeting with other foreigners? Perhaps they simply needed us to help translate? We attended the meal and spent much of the time talking with the guests about their plans for

partnering in ministry in China. But after the foreign delegates were safely on their way back to their hotel the Chinese pastors began to question us: What did these foreigners want? What were they offering? Were they trustworthy? Were they evangelical, or were they theologically liberal? The pastors felt comfortable with us, and so they used us to perform a simple evaluation of their potential partner. In business terms, they were doing their due diligence before entering into any kind of cooperative relationship. Since then, we have come to expect these phone calls—and to see the wisdom in this practice. This essay is an attempt to outline the nature and importance of this kind of due diligence in the forming of healthy cross-cultural partnerships for China ministries.

**We should take church just as seriously in China as we do in our home country.**

Photos courtesy China Partner



## The Need for Due Diligence in Forming Church Partnerships

Why are foreign churches so quick to leap when so little looking has been done? The televangelist debacles of the 1980s combined with the dizzying proliferation of denominations and sects in America today have taught evangelicals here to look very carefully before they give their offerings. While church hopping has developed into an extreme art form in America, most Americans still attempt to evaluate churches before committing to regular worship or membership. Yet, it is surprisingly difficult to find a foreign Christian group working in China today that can say much about the teaching, politics, fellowship, life of the body, or even theology of the people they are “partnering” with. What knowledge we do possess is often based on hearsay and the questionable reportage we have encountered in the West.

Imagine a Christian family moving to a new city in America: would we expect them to automatically apply for membership at the local Community Fellowship Church because they have “heard” that Community Fellowship Churches are the real churches? No! We would expect them to listen to a few sermons (probably from more than one preacher!), attend a Sunday school class or two, and talk to the people in the pews. What are they reading? How active are they? Are they growing? What do they think of the church leadership? We would expect any new arrivals to spend some time looking into the various church-going options available in their particular city. In business terms, this is similar to the process of performing due diligence research on a potential partner before entering into a

contractual relationship with him.

We should take church just as seriously in China as we do in our home country. The criteria for evaluation may be somewhat different—and, of course, the results of any such research must be locally determined and enculturated—but proper stewardship of all the resources with which God has entrusted His church requires that we look before we leap into any cooperative relationship. By doing some basic research, we can overcome our preconceived perceptions and develop partnerships that match the real needs and strengths of the local national churches.

## The Chinese Context

One reason due diligence is rarely done (or done in a very limited fashion) by China ministries is that it is difficult. Language, cultural differences and the necessity that it be done for a specific local body of believers places this kind of work out of the reach of many of our current agencies. Yet, this is precisely what Christian workers do on other fields around the world. In general, the kinds of information necessary to consider when evaluating new and old projects, local churches and how best to cooperate with them, fall into three broad categories. After looking more specifically at the questions involved in each of these categories, this essay will conclude with a suggestion as to how best to gather this information.

**The historical background.** Many events over the centuries have contributed to shape the unique aspects of Christian life and expression in China. These experiences are necessarily different in China—and in fact in each locality within China—from our experi-

ences in our home countries. Christian professionals working in China must come to grips with the historical relationship between opium, missionaries and the role of foreign Christians in the Opium Wars. In addition, the 19th century issues surrounding treaty rights, religious cases and the use of gunboat diplomacy are symbolic of modern power issues that still resonate today. Given China’s current national ethos, all foreign Christians working in China need to examine their work in light of the historical role of lies, deceit and the use of covers in spreading the Gospel in China. A rich understanding of local missions’ history (particularly with respect to past denominational affiliations, pre-1949 relations between local congregations, and relations among local church leaders during the Cultural Revolution) is essential to handling any relationship with local believers in a responsible and sensitive way.

**The current local regulatory environment.** China’s unique regulatory environment greatly influences everything foreign Christian workers in China do; it also shapes a given Chinese congregation’s ability and inclination to act in society. To be ill informed about the issues involved is foolish. Awareness begins with an understanding of the Three-Self Principles (self-governing, self-supporting, self-propagating) and their development from the Apostle Paul’s writings by foreign workers such as John Nevius and Roland Allen. Their acceptance by evangelical Christian workers around the globe and stated purpose to avoid foreign dependence should also be acknowledged. It is also important to understand the difference between registered and unreg-

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**ChinaSource**  
Partnering Resources with Vision

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istered fellowships in China, as well as the attitudes towards registration prevalent in the specific locality where the proposed partnership is to be located. Knowledge of the true nature of the interaction between groups of local believers and their particular Public Security Bureau (PSB) and State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA) representatives is essential to any successful partnership: we must know what is and is not possible in the current context. Remember, all regulations in China are first and foremost locally enforced and interpreted—and this includes the appointment of pastors and other church workers. Of course, one's place as a foreign Christian within this regulatory environment is often greatly influenced by the responsible and irresponsible activities of the foreign Christians who have come before.

**Thorough evaluation of the local partner.** Any responsible due diligence re-

partnership, it is probably worth investigating the nature, availability and provenance of local Christian literature. By imagining that one is looking for a new church home in one's own home country, many of the most important questions will naturally leap to mind.

This kind of information is basic to doing long-term, responsible, and effective work for the church in China. Of course, it is unrealistic to think that all this information could be gathered before entering into a partnership; but shouldn't we try? At the very least, admission of ignorance on these issues should bring humility and reserve to much of what is being attempted.

### Yes, But How?

In any society where hierarchy and bureaucracy are pervasive, knowledge functions as a highly valuable commodity not to be traded lightly. Accordingly, the kinds of information sought in any

send their own people, organizations and individuals already working in specific Chinese locations should be sought out to provide introductions and advice. With knowledgeable, locally invested cross-cultural workers acting as "marriage brokers" it should be possible to avoid many of the more common misunderstandings that have plagued partnership efforts in the past.

It is ironic that while foreign churches move away from emphasizing long-term service overseas, the role of the career foreign servant is still essential to the successful and responsible operation of most significant church-to-church partnerships. In addition to surveying the local context with respect to the due diligence questions raised above, long-term workers living in the community can build the trust necessary to maintain a healthy long-term partnership. They are in a place to provide accountability for both sides and, to the degree that they have entered into fellowship with the local Christian community, these long-term foreign residents can provide valuable corrections to the foreign church's misconceptions about the national church's true needs and wants. At the same time, they can communicate the struggles and needs of the foreign church to local national Christians in a way that is sensitive and sincere, thus granting respect and dignity to both partners.

Is this too much to ask? Many foreign churches balk at the thought of asking, much less sending, someone to serve long-term overseas. But for our church partnerships to be valuable and productive, we need long-term servants to function as mediators between the two partners. It is the churches that should be sending their own people into such service. If we really wish to serve alongside national churches in China as partners in ministry—if we truly wish to make local Chinese pastors smile—what better way to demonstrate our love and hope for them than by surrendering our lives and entering into theirs.

**Andrew T. Kaiser lives in China with his family. He has been working in China's nonprofit sector since 1997.**

## The kinds of information sought in any due diligence valuation of a Chinese national church partner will require significant and wide-ranging relationships of trust in the specific Chinese community being considered.

port would be incomplete if it did not include an objective evaluation of the partner—in this case any government agencies and private organizations with which your specific project must cooperate, as well as any local church bodies with which you seek to partner. Degrees of corruption and levels of commitment are all worth assessing. In regards to the local church, this work is often difficult since the opinions of one believer are unlikely to provide the broad objective evaluation necessary. Issues to investigate include church programs, historical and personal relations between various groups of believers, theological trends, degrees of unity, leadership potential, local Christian attitudes towards Chinese culture and social life in general, teachings on various issues, and church finances. Depending on your specific areas of

due diligence valuation of a Chinese national church partner will require significant and wide-ranging relationships of trust in the specific Chinese community being considered. One of the most practical means for developing these relationships and acquiring this information is the placement of long-term Christian workers living cross-culturally in their potential partner's locality. Whether it involves Western Christians being sent to live long-term in Chinese communities or Chinese believers coming to live for an extended period in our Western church communities, these exchanges must allow enough time for the visitors to develop linguistic and cultural fluency as well as the relationships necessary to maintain whatever partnering initiatives may evolve. For Western churches that are not in a position to

# The POWER of Partnership

James H. Taylor III

Photo courtesy China Partner



## in Christian Professional Service

**H**ong Kong's coordinated assault to halt the grim specter of the SARS outbreak is an illustration of the power of partnership. No one department in Hong Kong can handle it alone. Indeed, no one city, area or country can either. The Hong Kong Health Department has established strategic links with every relevant government agency as well as with China, Singapore and other countries in the region. Moreover, it has joined forces with the U.S. Center for Disease Control based in Atlanta and the World Health Organization based in Geneva to draw on their expertise.

In another article in this issue of *ChinaSource*, we consider the "Power of Prayer Partnership." Prayer is the indispensable foundation of any effective partnership in Christian service. Even in the SARS outbreak in Hong Kong, it is very moving to see how Christians have responded in prayer for patients, medical workers, and government leaders. Around the world MSI colleagues have also been standing with doctors, nurses and hospital staff who are on the front lines of this war against a new virus.

There are five essential ingredients to all effective partnerships: unity of purpose; mutual trust; division of responsibility; collective decision-making; and good communications.

**UNITY OF PURPOSE.** Unity of purpose is the indispensable starting point of any effective partnership. For Christians,

unity of purpose is summed up in God's glory and the Kingdom factor. The risen Lord's last command is our first concern. It was unity of purpose that bound Nehemiah and his people together and enabled them to complete the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem in 52 days. Now, as then, it is "the vision thing."

**MUTUAL TRUST.** Building trust between individuals and organizations is critical if partnership is to move forward smoothly. It cannot be taken for granted. Just because we are Christians does not mean that mutual trust will be immediate or inevitable. Nehemiah also knew that the nurturing of mutual trust required patience and tact, and needed to be on-go-

ing. It took a Barnabas in Jerusalem to break down the deep mistrust for Paul, build mutual trust, and lay a foundation for partnership.

**DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITY.** A wise division of responsibility and delegation of authority avoids unnecessary duplication, costly competition, and ensures effective use of limited human and material resources in order to achieve synergy. Paul put it graphically: the body is one, but the members are many, and their differing functions indispensable. Therefore, the eye cannot say to the

hand, "I don't need you." Nor can the foot say, "Because I am not a hand, I don't belong to the body" (Matt. 18:19). In the face of formidable forces, Nehemiah's wise division of labor and delegation of responsibility assured him and his people of success in their undertaking.

**COLLECTIVE DECISION-MAKING.** Collective decision-making is a fourth important ingredient of effective partnerships. There is no better way to nurture unity and trust and build partnerships than through mutual consultation and collective decision-making and action. Consider an illustration in the life of the early church. In Acts 6, Luke

Building trust between individuals and organizations is critical if partnership is to move forward smoothly.

described how the church in Jerusalem was really growing—so much so that the leadership could not cope. People's needs were overlooked and division marred the unity of the church. Peter and the other leaders immediately called the new Christian community together. Options were outlined, a way forward proposed and a collective decision made. The problem was resolved, and the number of new believers continued to increase rapidly.

**GOOD COMMUNICATIONS.** Maintaining good communications is also very criti-

cal to partnership. It is important that all bodies that have committed themselves to partner in an undertaking and have been involved in mutual decision-making are kept in the picture as the partnership develops. Otherwise, misunderstandings are sure to arise. Remember the case of the offending altar in Joshua 22. The Israelites had taken possession of the Promised Land. The two tribes had fulfilled their commitment and were now on their way home back east of the Jordan River. Just before crossing the river, they built an altar as a symbol of their solidarity with the nine

tribes. It was a great idea, but done without communication. For their part, the nine tribes also failed to ask what was going on and assumed their partners had fallen into apostasy. War was narrowly averted only after communications had been restored.

A final word. In the anecdotal evidence for each of the five principles of partnership given above, wise and good leadership is present. The lesson is clear. Those of us in Christian professional service today need to forge strong partnerships if we are to see God's glory and the advance of His Kingdom. The

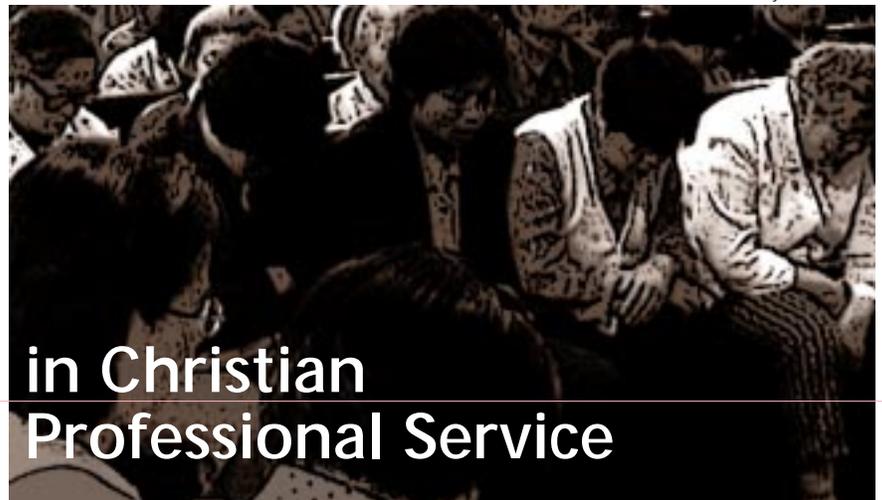
measure of their effectiveness and success will be seen in our commitment to these basic principles—unity of purpose, mutual trust, division of responsibility, collective decision-making and maintaining good communications.

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Photo courtesy China Partner

# The POWER of Prayer Partnership

*James H. Taylor III*



## in Christian Professional Service

A few days ago my dear friend, Ajith Fernando, director of Youth for Christ in Sri Lanka, sent me an e-mail note. In it he wrote, "You are regularly in my prayers." Attached were some thought provoking reflections he had as he celebrated his 54th birthday. At that point of passage, Ajith had been asking himself the question, "What am I going to do when I am too old to run around; when there is no 'job' for me to do?" Like so many of us, he naturally thought of intercessory prayer. However, as his thoughts carried him on, he began to see that praying for people is not a prescription for retirement but an important part of his job description now, like teaching or writing a report or visiting a sick person. Ajith concluded, "It is the most powerful thing I do. (James 5:16) When I finish

praying for the day, I have a sense I've achieved something."

This got me to thinking. Intercessory prayer is not just work, it's hard work. Paul describes Epaphras as "always wrestling in prayer" for the church he helped plant in Colosse. It was sustained spiritual struggle. This sort of perseverance bears fruit. It makes a difference in a marriage and family, at school and at work, in a church and in a nation, as well as in the fulfillment of God's global purpose. Praying for people is a powerful job every Christian has.

An insurance company in Hong Kong likes to focus on "the power of partnership" in its attention grabbing TV ads. Jesus taught His disciples about "the power of prayer partnership."

"Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father

in heaven" (Matt. 18: 19). This is an invitation to and promise of a powerful prayer partnership. The church fully recognizes its importance when sending people out in cross-cultural service overseas and urges members to sign up as prayer partners. Unfortunately, a limited understanding of the role of Christian professional service as it relates to the Great Commission drastically limits the scope of this powerful prayer partnership. Because most do not look upon Christian professionals, or those in the corporate world and business, in civil service or politics, teachers, workers and housewives as being an integral part of the Great Commission, churches don't ask people to sign up and provide prayer support for them. This is indeed a vast mistake!

Yet these Christians have an incalculable

**Continued on page 11**

# A Cord of Four Strands

## Churches Partner to Strengthen the Church in China

Partnership:

a close,  
collaborative  
relationship

between two  
or more

individuals and/or  
organizations

with the intent  
of accomplishing  
mutually  
compatible goals

that would be  
difficult for each to  
accomplish alone.

**C**hances are that when you've attended a Christian wedding, you've heard an allusion to Ecclesiastes 4:12: "Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken."

by Mike Pollard

This verse describes a wonderful vision for Christian marriage, but it is also equally applicable to the power and strength of churches working together in partnership. One such partnership is now evolving between several evangelical churches and an organization in one particular region of the United States. If this partnership succeeds, it will catalyze a church planting movement and will mobilize that Church for an expansive missionary sending movement.

The church partners come from common historical and theological

1994, it moved into its current facilities. In the early 1990s the church's leaders committed the church to a church planting vision, planning to start ten churches in 20 years in their area. Thus far, the church has planted three daughter churches.

In another city 90 miles away and home to the more than 50,000 students of a large university, First Church began as a fundamental independent church in 1961 with a handful of members. Over the years it evolved into a grace-oriented Bible church. From its beginning, the church grasped the im-

**"We realized that if we didn't bring purpose and focus to the ministry, the results would continue to be scattered."**

roots. Each was founded by a handful of eager believers who longed to see a biblically faithful church grow and influence their city. Central Church\* grew out of a home Bible study that started in the fall of 1968. Today more than 1500 people attend the church each weekend. The church has traditionally attracted many high-level professionals and entrepreneurs.

Community Bible Church began in 1985 when seventeen people met in a home to discuss the possibility of starting a new church in the northwest part of their city. In 1986, 75 gathered for the church's first worship service. In

\*Names of churches and individuals have been changed.

plications of reaching the local university students for Christ. Collegiate ministry has long been the major staple of the church's ministry. Now located just off campus, as many as half of its 3,000 attendees come from the university during the school year.

Many students from Central Church and Community Bible Church graduated from high school, migrated to the university 90 miles away, and found their way to First Church. For years much cross-pollination has existed between these three churches. Several overseas workers receive financial support from all three churches. Yet, in the past few years, and independent of

each other, each church began to realize that it could not continue to be involved in international ministry in traditional ways.

Bill Peterson, Community Bible's Global Outreach and Evangelism Pastor, says, "Six years ago we decided that we needed a more focused strategy for our cross-cultural ministry. Up until that time this ministry was very traditional and scattered. Individuals asked us for support and if their ministry sounded good, we supported them. But we realized that if we didn't bring purpose and focus to the ministry, the results would continue to be scattered."

George Fields, an Associate Pastor at First Church whose parents were instrumental in the church's early history, recalls the church's cross-cultural

more strategic, in part so that the church would better understand what we were doing and become more actively involved in it."

Each church began a journey of determining where in the world it might become strategically engaged. Through activities such as praying, analyzing current relationships and workers that they already supported, sending leaders on exploratory trips, and consulting with other organizations, each church emerged with a resolution to serve in the nation of China.

In the case of Central Church, the cross-cultural ministry committee was advised to bring church leaders into the discovery process as early as possible. The committee asked a group of the church's pastors and elders to jour-

**"God spoke to our leaders in a significant way while they were there. They became strongly convinced of God's call on the church to minister in China."**

ministry history: "At our first conference, we voted to support three individuals each at \$10 per month. That has mushroomed into a current-day annual cross-cultural ministry budget of \$300,000 supporting 56 workers. But it's difficult to rally increased giving and involvement around workers who most people don't know. Our orientation has historically been more of a 'shotgun approach.' When someone came out of our church and wanted to serve overseas, we simply supported him or her with few questions asked. A few years ago we decided to continue supporting these overseas workers, but also to target three to five areas around the world, to be determined by where God was clearly working."

Franklin Turner from Central Church echoes similar sentiments. "Five years ago we supported 30 workers on the field, but very little rhyme or reason guided what we were doing. When I came on as the new chairman, the cross-cultural ministry committee began to consider how we might become

ney to China on a vision trip in December 2000. "I thought that we would send our leaders on several vision trips before making any decisions about the future," says Turner. "But God spoke to our leaders in a significant way while they were there. They became strongly convinced of God's call on the church to minister in China."

In every city Central Church's leaders heard the same story about China. While the gospel had made tremendous inroads into rural parts of the country, few from the ranks of students, intellectuals and professionals in large cities had responded to the gospel. By the time that Central Church leaders were ready to return, they had determined that the church would somehow be involved in serving among China's urban upper classes.

All three churches already supported workers serving cross-culturally in China. Each discovered a common thread woven through many of those workers. A student group at the local university had been sending students

## advice on joining a partnership

**"Realize it's a lot of work and headaches. It's harder to work as a group than alone. You must be committed to seeing it through to the end. If you're not willing to work together and iron out differences, then don't start a partnership."** —Bill Peterson

**"If you're starting a brand new partnership, be realistic. You'll tend to set unreasonably high or fast goals at first. If you're entering an existing partnership, be wise. It's like entering a marriage; through this union you will allocate your resources in ways that you wouldn't alone."** —George Fields

**"Before committing to a partnership, make sure that all of your church's critical leaders are informed. Prayerfully consider if the goal of the partnership (region, people group) is where the Lord is calling you. If God is in it, it's the best way to maximize your resources. You will benefit from the strengths of other partners. It exponentially increases everybody's potential to have the impact that you desire to have."** —George Fields

**"Understand that in a partnership, what will occur is bigger than all of the partners. It's like a new creation. This is not traditional cross-cultural work. It will impact the whole church and give it a sense of significance."** —Franklin Turner

**"Find agency partners that will work with you rather than take control of the partnership."** —Franklin Turner

on short-term visits to China for years. Some had become long-term workers, with connections to the three churches.

One such worker took note of each church's evolving interest in China and encouraged them to meet and consider what they might accomplish through a partnership. And in January 2001, all three churches began meeting regularly and prayerfully considering what God might be orchestrating.

Also invited to these meetings were representatives from the student group active at the local university. Not only had this organization had much informal influence on these three churches, but it also brought to the table an al-

lenues for involvement." Turner and Central Church elder Kirk Brown went back to China in April and July 2001 for the purpose of discovering partners with which the partnership could work in a business context. They discovered an organization that serves professionals through business consultation and schools for English language and leadership development.

The vision that has evolved for the partnership is one of serving among students and young professionals in several Chinese provinces and working with the church as it receives believers from this class of people. Those collective churches, in turn, will become

serve," says Peterson. "I can't imagine doing what we're envisioning doing without them. They started the work there. They have brought us into an amazing network of people and organizations," says Fields.

While all three of the Heartland Partnership's churches are larger in size, none believes that involvement in partnership is restricted to larger, more "sophisticated" churches. "Cross-cultural ministry sophistication is more of a by-product of partnership than an initial requirement," says Turner. "When I first visited China, I wasn't very sophisticated. Since then I've read a lot of Chinese history, made Chinese friends and am learning to speak Chinese. Churches will develop sophistication as they wade out deeper into partnership."

Fields agrees. "Depending on the nature of the partnership, churches' size or sophistication is not the issue. I'd encourage churches considering a partnership to go for it. The process of exploring and getting involved will answer a lot of your questions. Don't prematurely exclude yourself on the basis of the notion of your size or your perceived resources if a partnership's goals and vision are the same as your own."

To the church that cannot picture itself involved in a partnership, George Fields advises, "Pick one thing that you can do well. Focus on doing one simple thing well. You've got to focus. Keep it simple. Or ride the coat tails of a bigger church that already has a vision and has developed infrastructure for ministry."

Could each of the churches have accomplished this vision without working in a partnership? "Possibly," says Fields, "but not nearly as quickly and effectively. What will hopefully take the Partnership five to ten years would have taken our church alone at least 15-20 years." "As a single church we never could have dreamed up as big of a vision, as specific a focus, or as comprehensive a strategy," says Peterson. "If your church has the chance to join a partnership, don't miss the opportunity."

**Mike Pollard is the Nashville Area Representative for ACMC and the editor of Mobilizer magazine. Copyright ACMC 2002. Adapted and used with permission.** 尾

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**"As a single church we never could have dreamed up as big of a vision, as specific a focus, or as comprehensive a strategy. If your church has the chance to join a partnership, don't miss the opportunity."**

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ready-existing structure for future involvement. This organization would continue to send the churches' students to China. A related organization with ties to China would continue to influence students for Christ there. A third entity, headquartered in the same city as the first two churches, was already structured to send professionals in short-term capacities.

It seemed to all that God was clearly orchestrating a partnership, but the next question to be answered was what the precise mission of such a partnership would be. Each church brought different strengths and vision to the table. Community Bible Church, with its focus on church planting, wanted to see churches planted in China. First Church, strongly rooted in collegiate ministry, yearned to see a partnership connect with college students in China. Central Church, a church with many business experts and entrepreneurs, wanted to jumpstart an outreach to professionals in China. Says Turner, "If we were going to rally our church around this partnership, our leaders believed that we needed to find additional business and professional av-

senders of workers into the rest of the country and beyond. Thus, the Heartland Partnership was born.

Members of the Partnership have been meeting for a day of planning every month or two except during summers. In the nearly two years of the Partnership's existence, much of its time has been spent laying the foundations for future ministry. "We've gotten on the same page of a common and specific vision," says Fields. "We've developed a strategic plan and identified which partners will carry out which goals," says Turner. Additionally, the three Partnership churches are preparing to jointly hire a man who will serve as the partnership facilitator. Kirk Brown, the former Central Church elder with a substantial business background, has moved to China and works among Chinese professionals.

All Partnership churches have been pleased with the involvement of the student organization they came to know through the local university. "They've had connections with China for decades. They provide us with great training and have already established the structures through which we can

# The Formation of a NEW City-to-City Partnership

An Interview by  
ChinaSource

**T**here is a growing trend for groups of churches in a city or region to partner together to develop a strategy for effective ministry. Recently a group of churches did just that and choose to focus their ministry efforts on one city in China. Here is an interview with a church leader who has been part of the process.

**ChinaSource (CS):** *Have you had a growing personal interest in China?*

**Church Leader (CL):** Yes, I've been interested in China since the 1970s when one of my high school classmates started talking about China. I have lived vicariously through him over the years as he made it his lifelong interest to be a bridge between China and the West. Through him, I have learned about the needs of China and the amazing work that God is doing there. My wife and I have also hosted Chinese students in our home over the years, but I had never personally visited China until last year. I've now been to China three times since May 2002.

**CS:** *Are you in ministry full time?*

**CL:** No. I am a businessman. I worked for U.S. Agency for International Development in Washington D.C. for several years before moving to help with a family business. I've been involved with several start-up businesses since then.

**CS:** *How did the partnership for China first begin to develop?*

**CL:** The partnership grew out of the Perspectives on the World Christian Movement course. My wife and I took the course eight years ago and I have been helping coordinate the course ever since. Over those eight years, we have had over 600 students from probably 40 different churches in the area take the course. A natural by-product of the course has been mission pastors, mission committee people, church members and businessmen

from different churches asking questions like, "Hey, what are you doing in missions; what is your mission strategy? Are there areas where we could work together on a missions project? How about a joint, short-term mission trip?" We decided to form the Harvest Network as a way to foster greater collaboration and cross pollination of mission ideas. We can accomplish something in missions together that we could never do as individual churches. We probably have 12 core churches from different denominations participating right now with several others interested once we are further along with our plans.

**CS:** *Why did your network decide to focus on China?*

**CL:** To advance the concept of different churches working together, we needed a good first project—one that would creatively capture our churches' interests, while meeting needs overseas and in our community. We began to kick around ideas and discovered a shared interest in China. A number of our churches were seeking ways to get involved in China. We had a prominent Chinese house church leader visit the area. He really challenged and inspired us. For a Perspectives class, we had representatives from a ministry organization who gave a great overview of the suffering, yet victorious house church movement in China. They showed us practical ways to come alongside the church in China and help. We also have a number of families in the area who have adopted Chinese children through a local Christian adoption

Photo courtesy China Partner

Minnette Northcutt



Photo courtesy China Partner

We began researching the various regions in China to determine where the needs were the greatest and where we could realistically have some positive impact.

agency. Through these and other connections, God was pointing us toward China.

**CS: *How did you go about developing a strategic focus for China?***

CL: China is a big place! We realized that if we were going to be effective, we needed to focus. We decided that we wanted to focus on one city in one province. That way, our churches could have a sense of ownership. There would be a specific city and region to know and pray for. We could send people on repeat trips to the same place to grow deeper in our involvement and relationships. We are interested in developing relationships where there will actually be two-way interaction. A firm conviction of ours is that God is just as interested in what the Chinese church can do to help us as He is in how we might serve them. In order to create an environment where we rub elbows and really get to know one another, we had to focus.

We began researching the various regions in China to determine where the needs were the greatest and where we could realistically have some positive impact. We asked a lot of people who have much more experience in China about where would be a good place. We learned where the house church movements have a strong urban presence. We researched educational and business climates knowing that several of our churches are interested in those areas. We even asked our Chinese house church contacts where they wanted us to focus. We sent teams to China twice to visit several cities and learn as much as possible. On our most recent trip in March 2003, we took seven people from three different churches to visit four cities in western/central China. We had narrowed down our focus to inland cities in the poorer western/central regions of China. In each city, we made contact with local Chinese believers, local Western ministry representatives and Chinese government, university and business leaders.

**CS: *Why did you decide on the city that you chose?***

CL: We all felt a strong leading to our focus city for several reasons. One was that it was very needy spiritually, but there were some exciting things beginning to happen. Several house church movements had recently seen a great increase in meeting places in the city and on university campuses. While there are only a few Westerners in the city, they were beginning to see some real fruit to their ministry. We want to go to a place where the Spirit of God is at work. We want simply to join in His work, hopefully adding “fuel to the fire” and not getting in the way!

Another reason for selecting our focus city was the openness, and even ea-

leges and claims to be among China’s top five cities for technology, research and educational strength.

All of these reasons, along with the fact that there are nice tourist attractions nearby, led us to our decision. We believe the city offers ample opportunity for our matrix ministry approach.

**CS: *What do you mean by matrix ministry approach?***

CL: Because we have so many churches as a part of our partnership, we recognize that each church has different skills, abilities and interest in ministry. Not everyone will be doing the same thing. Some are interested in



Photo courtesy China Partner

**We sent teams to China twice to visit several cities and learn as much as possible.**

gerness, of the city officials in attracting business and investment. This city is one of the cities featured in China’s “Go West” campaign, so there are a number of great incentives in place for foreign businesses and investors. There are a number of national and provincial development zones created in and around the city, including a High-tech Industrial Development Zone, which is one of China’s highest priority zones today. We were impressed with the enthusiasm and detailed plans of the government and business officials with whom we met.

Another factor was the strong educational environment. The city has a large number of universities and col-

working with university students, whether through student/professor exchanges, English language training, American business lectures or other academic and professional lectures. Others are interested in charity work, perhaps among orphanages, migrant worker children, widows or the elderly. Job training and business entrepreneurship are needed to help with the large unemployment problem. Still others are interested in creating businesses in the city, either as foreign owned businesses or helping Chinese start their own businesses. There are opportunities to source manufacturing in the city that will establish a great

presence while possibly creating jobs for local Chinese believers. Finally, our overall goal is to help strengthen the Chinese House Church movements through discipleship, training and targeted resources. All of our churches want to help in this area, but we realize the sensitive security issues involved.

Imagine a matrix with different ministry interests across the top and different churches along the sides. One or two of our churches will probably want to be involved in all areas of ministry, but most will only want to focus in one or two areas. Some may only want to commit to prayer for the city and our work there. That's great. We have identified prayer as one of the matrix ministries. A group might go on a short-term trip to simply walk around the city and pray. In many ways, that may be the most important work we can do.

We are also including mechanisms in the matrix ministry for the Chinese believers to invest in our lives as well.

**CS: *How do you see the church in China helping you in the States?***

CL: This is the part of our partnership that most excites me. I am convinced that God is bringing us together with our brothers and sisters in China for mutual edification. The church in China has strengths and weaknesses just like the church in the West has strengths and weaknesses. What I have learned in my limited exposure to China is that where the Chinese house church is strong, the church in the West is weak, and where the Chinese house church is weak, the church in the West is strong. There is an inverse relationship of our strengths and weaknesses. By coming together we can mutually encourage and help each other in our areas of weakness. When Paul writes about the body of Christ in 1 Corinthians 12, we tend to think he is talking about the different parts within a local church. While that might apply, the passage also refers to the universal Body of Christ, the global Church. Different local churches have different gifts, services and workings. Only when different local churches begin to work together will the entire body be func-

tioning properly.

So how can the church in China realistically help us? I think a lot will happen simply through relationship. By spending time together we will learn from one another. We plan to pursue education and business exchanges where some Chinese from the focus city can come to the States for a visit. We hope to bring to the States some representatives of the Chinese churches who can speak into our lives out of their perspective and experiences. We would like to facilitate the contextualized translation of writings and training materials from the Chinese house church movements to be introduced into our churches for spiritual challenge, encouragement and edification. In the West, we tend to think that we have all the best training materials, but I suspect we could learn a lot from some of the training materials the Chinese House churches have developed.

**CS: *What are your next steps?***

CL: Another trip to China. We are planning a fall trip to our focus city with a larger representation of the Harvest Network. We still need to learn more about who from the West is already working in the city so we can identify possible ministry partners. We know we can't possibly be very effective if we don't have help from others who are already on the ground and working in the city and region. We are inviting others who are currently in the States with much greater knowledge and experience in China to come to our city and help us think through our next steps.

We are looking for one or two ministry areas as initial start-up areas. A businessman from our network was in China in June visiting our focus city and exploring some business opportunities. I have a hunch we will start with some kind of business presence and charity effort. This summer we are forming a prayer group to undergird our vision, plans and next steps with prayer. We don't want to get ahead of God! We want to follow His leading in this. We realize that we could easily mess this up by too eagerly charging ahead as Americans can do!

**The Power of Prayer Partnership**  
continued from page 5

table role to play. They go where few full-time Christian workers can enter, and their lives and work touch every stratum of society. Like salt and light they can permeate the whole. The people of Antioch were so impressed by the lives of the new believers among them, they called them "Christians"—little Christs. Paul told the Colossian converts he had not stopped praying for them, "asking God that they would live a life worthy of the Lord and please Him in every way; bearing fruit in every good work." (Colossians 1:9-10) Paul knew the power of prayer partnership. We too can experience it as we form prayer groups for mutual intercession, accountability and encouragement. In this partnership we need to include prayer for Christian professionals, businessmen, civil servants, teachers, workers and housewives in our churches; that they will integrate their faith and life so effectively and winsomely that others will be drawn to Christ. Doctors, lawyers, businessmen and people in government and politics are exposed to insidious temptations to compromise biblical, ethical and moral standards. But if we support them in prayer as we do full-time Christian workers, the difference for them, their families and for the advance of the Kingdom would be profound.

When we understand this, it will not be difficult for us to do the same for Christian professionals, people in the corporate world, businessmen, civil servants, teachers, and others who, at personal sacrifice and risk, have left home and serve overseas for the Kingdom.

The Lord has invited us to experience the limitless opportunities of His power in prayer partnership. How will we respond?

*James H. Taylor III is president of MSI Professional Services. He was born in China, educated at Chefoo Schools, Greenville College, Asbury Seminary and Yale University and served as founding president of China Evangelical Seminary and general director of OMF International. This article is reprinted from the MSI Bulletin. Used with permission.*

When Westerners come to China, how can they adapt to the Chinese culture? Many people immediately think of the language issue. Although language is crucial to interpersonal relationships and communication, it alone is not sufficient in dealing with Chinese people. Language is only the starting point for understanding the Chinese culture. Even a foreigner who has lived and worked in China may still have difficulty figuring it out. Following is an attempt to help one better understand the Chinese culture and how to relate to Chinese people.

### Taiji: a conversation of hidden strength

Any morning, before the city is awakened by the business and noise of the day, look at the parks throughout China. You cannot miss the crowds of people working out—among them the most visible are the *Taiji* (*Taichi*) lovers. These people slowly, yet constantly and gracefully, change the positions of their arms and legs as they concentrate and breathe deeply. Some of their slow movements seem useless and one might wonder what purpose they serve. Yet, those who understand Chinese martial arts know of the strength hidden in *Taiji* whose principles are “apparent softness overtakes toughness” and “gentle but firm.”

To some extent, *Taiji* reflects the Chinese culture and its way of solving problems. No matter what changes the rest of the society has gone through during hundreds of years of history, *Taiji* remains exactly the same. Year after year Chinese practice *Taiji* in the morning. Some principles drawn from *Taiji* have been gradually made known to society. These principles, that go beyond the physical aspect, tell us that “the use of quietness overcomes motion,” “apparent softness overtakes toughness,” “apparent looseness outside, actual tightness inside,” “avoid tough hands but attack weak spots,” “surprise and win,” and “withheld strength may go unnoticed.”

Later, when people described these skills or ploys adapted by politicians, warlords, entrepreneurs or merchants to be the winners in their respective fields, they used the term *Quanshu* (clever stratagems for politics and business). *Quanshu* also has the meaning of hidden conflict as drawn from *Taiji*'s character of hidden strength. When two individuals are in an unannounced struggle, they are said to be “playing *Taiji*.” Chinese often rely on this nonverbal message to make themselves understood in the struggle to protect their interests. This way of dealing with others is not found in the West; nevertheless, it is at the core of Chinese culture. Not knowing about it may be

costly to the Westerner.

China continues to be in a technological growth period; it now boasts millions of Internet subscribers. Fashionable young people may care nothing about *Taiji* but admire basketball players like Jordan and Johnson; however, *Taiji* culture is still prevalent. When a Chinese responds to you slowly, you need patience. Practicing *Taiji* requires “inner strength.” “Inner strength” refers to the resilience that can absorb a

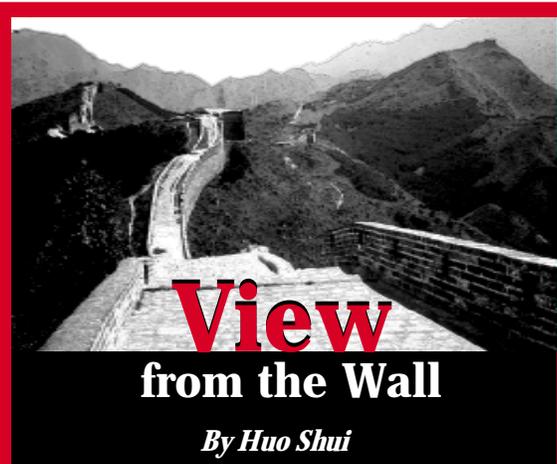
punch as well as hit back, but in a pleasant manner. A fast-acting person often finds himself having to change his mind; but one who restrains himself from making a quick response usually has well balanced ideas for decision-making. The individual using this type of thought process is referred to by the Chinese as a “master of calculation” and cunning. He will never strike up an argument with you nor clearly announce his intentions. He never forgets to smile—but his smile is a bit mysterious. He does not necessarily have evil purposes in mind and cannot simply be labeled as a “good” or “bad person”; however, for self-protection he feels that “beating around the bush” is his only op-

tion. You may find that this person is more likely to be middle-aged and fits into a *Taiji* lovers category. This mental practice of *Taiji* is a part of Chinese wisdom; it follows the Chinese wherever they go.

### Eating and drinking: the passport to Chinese society

“Have you eaten yet?” used to be the most common greeting in China. This greeting has now faded from use. Eating, however, still enjoys unshakable status in Chinese culture. No other people of the world are more serious about eating, more focused on eating or more capable of getting the best out of eating. Over 2000 years ago Confucius said: “Never settle on an imperfect meal.” China gave birth to world famous cuisines including Sichuan, Cantonese, Shandong, and others. China also has MacDonalds, KFC and pizza. Wherever you go in China you will be impressed by the number of restaurant signs—even in poor backwoods areas. Likewise, Chinese restaurants are found in distant places.

Chinese love eating. Why? Eating in China is not just a simple personal activity; rather, it fits together the unrelated pieces of life. Eating is a cultural and social activity. Many events in life require a large get-together meal that is in accord with tradition, fosters the accomplishment of other activities and allows people to express their emotions. These events include Spring Festival celebrations, family or class re-



## View from the Wall

By Huo Shui

## If You're Going to Partner in China...

unions, weddings, funerals, admission to the Communist Party, promotions to leadership, asking for help, thanking others for help, opening a business, settling in a new home, farewells, conflict resolutions, celebrating successes—and the list goes on. Anything can be an excuse to go out for dinner.

Reports say that several hundred billion Chinese *yuan* are spent on banquets in China each year. Restaurants have become a performing stage for people eager to achieve their ends. They display intimate feelings, cope with bosses, negotiate prices and resolve conflicts. Obviously, food is not the real issue for either the host or the guest. Refusing to “perform” on this stage means that many things one may want to see happen will not be accomplished. Not understanding the significance of eating in Chinese culture means you will miss a valuable shortcut to getting complicated things done in China.

Eating is also a means for friends to express friendship and gratitude. If you would like to expand your network of relationships rapidly, invite your friends to the neighborhood eateries for simple meals. Over time you will acquire a long list of people interacting with you. If you do not take initiatives or accept invitations, you may be misunderstood and though difficult to relate to as a person. Remember, the most appropriate occasion to exchange information, improve communication, resolve conflicts and affirm friendships is always at the dinner table.

### ***Mian Zi* (face): the treasure that never wears out**

No one wants to be *diu ren* (embarrassed in front of people, a “lost person”); every individual has a sense of self-esteem. This human characteristic is extremely pronounced in Chinese culture; it has been observed to an extent that is beyond a Westerner’s imagination. For example, a Chinese may wrong you and be fully aware of his wrongdoing, but if you point this out to him or criticize him with another person present, he will desperately defend himself denying any offense. However, if the conversation takes place between

just the two of you, he will readily accept your criticism. The facts you point out are the same, but his reaction is different due to the changed situation. The reason: *mian zi*. This comes out in other situations as well. For example, if you ask someone for help, few people will give you a negative answer; most will say: “Sure, no problem.” Is it really “no problem?” In actuality, there may be many problems, but the individual will not admit it. When you follow up on the issue, the individual will say, “Oh, this needs to be delayed a little



Those who understand  
Chinese martial arts  
know of the  
strength  
hidden in *Taiji*.

bit. Please be patient, because...” Eventually, you will find that from the very beginning this person was unable to help you. Another common example is seen when friends go out for dinner together. When dinner is over, since they have not talked about who will pay for it, everyone will be fighting to pay the entire bill. Each one is afraid of being thought of as a tightwad.

A story goes that many years ago in Shanghai a man lived in the slums. He would go out on the street only after putting on his one decent jacket, combing and slicking his hair back, shining his shoes and spreading pork lard on his lips to pretend to be a wealthy man who had just enjoyed a greasy meal. That’s what *mian zi* is. To-

day, similar incidents occur, only in more subtle ways. For example, unemployed people actually “work” for *mian zi*. They leave home as usual in the morning as if they were going to work, but they do not end up at their previous workplaces but stay with friends or go to parks or cinemas to kill time.

When you invite friends over or to join you for an outing, you need to first examine each person’s special needs. How free is this person? Has he or she eaten yet? If expenses are involved, who will pay for them? You need to think these through and not ask your friends for information. Even if you do, you will only get polite answers that do not reflect what is truly on their mind. Chinese deem it a virtue not to bother others with questions. Between friends and acquaintances it is harder to ask for a favor precisely because of the relationship.

### ***Zhong Yong*: the moderate way**

*Zhong Yong*, or “being moderate,” is the most essential principle for living in China and the primary principle that the Chinese subscribe to. What does it mean to “be moderate” in the Chinese context? Put simply, it means never going to extremes, never confirming things absolutely (always leave some margin or wiggle room), never pushing ahead to be first—yet avoiding being left behind. People may say they see things in black and white, but in reality they favor gray. Gray seems less risky and allows flexibility.

Five thousand years of Chinese tradition defies anyone who tries to fully understand it. While one need not fully grasp the meaning of these traditions, these four seemingly simple principles discussed above should be taken seriously. It is wise to deal with the Chinese in the Chinese way. If you are not convinced, try it your way—and see what happens!

***Huo Shui* is a former government political analyst who writes from outside China. Translation is by Ping Dong. Reprinted from ChinaSource, Fall 2000, Vol. 2, No. 3 and originally titled “Living Wisely in China.”**

## Book Review

# Understanding the Chinese Church

*The Resurrection of the Chinese Church* by Tony Lambert. Hodder & Stoughton, 1991. Revised edition: Harold Shaw Publishers/OMF, 1994. 353 pp. ISBN 0-87788-728-4, paperback. Cost: \$9.99 at [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com).

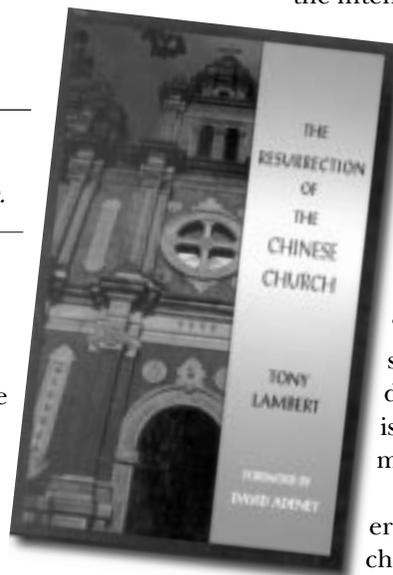
### A Review by Joe Laird

At any gathering of pastors discussing the spiritual situation in China, the same questions appear with regularity:

- What is happening in the house church in China?
- What is the difference between the house church and the State sponsored church?
- Is anybody currently being persecuted in China today?
- Is it dangerous for a North American to travel to China?
- Can North Americans engage in evangelistic activity while over there?
- Is there still a need to smuggle Bibles into China?
- What does the Chinese church really need from us?

Tony Lambert's *The Resurrection of the Chinese Church* answers many of these questions. Don't be put off by the early date of publication (1994)—this is the type of resource that can make foolish mission pastors appear wise and will help prevent many of the costly errors that initial forays into the People's Republic often produce. This book, along with his follow-up volume, *China's Christian Millions*, provides insightful information to those just beginning to educate themselves about China. Yet, those who have long been engaged in Chinese ministry will find it useful in better understanding the revival and growth that has characterized the Chinese church.

*Resurrection* is a well-documented story of the rapid development of the Chinese church between the years 1974 and 1994. As a British diplomat, Lambert spent four years living in Beijing in the late '70s. After 1983, he visited China several times each year maintaining contact with his friends and associates. Based on personal conversations, interviews with church leaders and state documents pertaining to religion, *Resurrection* tells a fascinating yet scholarly story.



Work Department), to the RAB (Religious Affairs Bureau), down to the TSPM (Three Self Patriotic Movement) and CCC (China Christian Council), Lambert makes this complex labyrinth seem understandable. Another fascinating aspect to his description is his use of government documents showing

the intent of each of these organizations. Based on documents from the local up through the national level, Lambert relays to the reader the truth of what the government's real intent toward the suppression of religion has always been. He shows how the infamous "Document 19," which is supposed to protect the freedom of religious expression, is being used by the government to actually hinder it.

Another thread is the literal explosion of the house churches at different points across China. This explosion is even more astounding considering the attempts by the government to curtail its establishment and growth. With great insight Lambert suggests that: "Freed from Western forms and traditions, the Christian message took on new life and meaning, spread by the lives and words of ordinary believers." The growth of

### WITH GREAT INSIGHT LAMBERT SUGGESTS THAT:

"Freed from Western forms and traditions, the Christian message took on new life and meaning, spread by the lives and words of ordinary believers."

Basically chronological in the telling, Lambert weaves four distinct threads throughout his story. One thread is the development of religious policy by the central government that sought to control the remnants of the Chinese church following the Cultural Revolution. Using charts and descriptions, even I was able to follow the birth and expansion of the different structures designed to keep the church in check. From the CCP (Central Communist Party) to the UFWD (United Front

the house church in China along with Lambert's insight made me wonder what forms and traditions may be keeping the Spirit's work in check in my life or the life of the Western church.

Another thread that is woven throughout these twenty years is that of the persecution of believers—both Protestant and Catholic. Using published reports of arrests, letters from believers, conversations with local church leaders and even party officials, Lambert shows how believers have

been arrested, jailed and tortured for their faith. What I found most interesting is that, despite reports to the contrary, persecution in the first part of the 1990s intensified and, according to sources with which I recently checked, has not abated in any significant fashion in the last few years. This leftward (more antagonistic toward Christianity) move originated in conjunction with the events at Tiananmen in 1989. Many are watching to see if the new change in leadership that is currently underway will continue this leftward leaning or result in a more relaxed view of religious freedom. Right now the jury is still out.

A final thread that emerges is the Three Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM), the official organization charged with overseeing Protestant Christianity in China. Lambert shows how on one hand many of the churches that had been closed down during the Cultural Revolution have been opened and are enjoying great success, even attracting young people from the cities. Yet, some of the fiercest persecution of the house churches is coming from some of the leaders of the TSPM-affiliated churches. This is a complex situation and *Resurrection* does not seek to simplify it. Lambert points to the good and the bad within the official church, and the reader is left needing to pray for discernment as he or she decides how best to relate to the church in China.

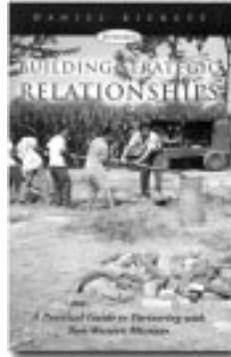
Scattered as gems throughout the book are Lambert's reflections on why this resurrection has taken place. He is too much the scholar to devote much time to ramblings of speculation, yet you wish he had speculated more. *The Resurrection of the Chinese Church* is a must-read for anybody who aspires to understand today's Chinese church. It is a primer for those beginning to look to China and a reference book to those who have been there for years. Read it with your coffee but do not forget your map of China.

**Joe Laird** is a foolish missions pastor at Intown Community Church in Atlanta, Georgia. Joe spent almost six years in the People's Republic of China during the 1980s.

# Resource Corner

## Resources for Creating Healthy Partnerships

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# That They May Be One

The past decade has seen a significant shift among churches and organizations involved in China. Recognizing the enormity of the task and the need for interdependence among the various parts of the Body, many have moved (albeit cautiously) from working alone to dialogue with others, sharing information and resources, collaborating on specific projects and finally, long-term partnership.

From a practical standpoint, partnership makes a lot of sense.

Carefully conceived, with clear goals and good ongoing communication, a partnership can allow churches and organizations to accomplish far more together than they could alone.

Partnerships are also hard work. Much time must be invested in building relationships, clarifying objectives and deciding who is best suited for various parts of the overall mission. Partnerships do not usually produce quick results. Issues of finance or control, hidden agendas, miscommunication and differing opinions on the outcomes sought by the partnership can all hinder or even derail the process.



Brent Fulton

Based on purely practical considerations, the decision of whether or not to partner may come back negative. When relationships get messy it is much easier to simply let others do their thing while we do ours. Sometimes this is necessary. However, there is a deeper spiritual dynamic that must also be considered, and herein lies the key to success of any partnership.

Jesus' prayer for all believers, recorded in John 17:21, was that they "may be one" that the world may believe that you have sent me." He went on to declare, "I have given them the glory that you gave me, that

they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."

There is a profound spiritual connection between the quality of our relationships as believers and the ability of an unbelieving world to understand who Christ is. Christ's commission to invite all peoples into relationship with Himself can only be accomplished as we demonstrate among ourselves the oneness we have in Him. Our unity is both a fact of our being in Christ and a future goal as we "make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the

bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3).<sup>1</sup>

Ajith Fernando says in his book *Jesus-Driven Ministry*, "The distinctive of Christian love is a willingness to go against our natural inclinations and take that extra step to bring Christ's love into an otherwise irredeemable situation. As leaders persevere in doing that, they will be able to see true Christian community at work."<sup>2</sup>

Particularly in a relationship-based culture such as China's, how we relate to one another will speak much louder than anything we say. Partnerships provide the context in which our unity may be lived out. Our partnerships will be successful to the extent that they are a reflection of the love we have received from the Father through Christ.

#### Endnotes

1. [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com) *IVP Bible Commentaries: John 17*. InterVarsity Press and Gospel Communications International, 1995-2002.

2. Ajith Fernando, *Jesus-Driven Ministry*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2002, p. 176.

**Brent Fulton, Ph.D.**, is the president of *ChinaSource* and the editor of the *ChinaSource journal*.

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