



CHINA
OUTREACH
MINISTRIES

WINTER 2019

IMPACT

Together, Giving Christ to China's Future Leaders

Students and Scholars Returning to China

News, Testimonies, and
What We Can Do



IMPACT

Together, Giving Christ to China's Future Leaders

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Please share your stories!

How has God given you opportunity to be involved in the work of China Outreach Ministries?

Email Editor Tara Miller: tmiller@chinaoutreach.net.

We encourage you to keep this issue of IMPACT in your favorite prayer place that the content may guide you to pray steadfastly for our work together in giving Christ to China's future leaders.



A higher standard
a higher purpose

COM is a member of the
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Will the Journey Continue After Returning Home?

By Daniel Su, COM President

DID YOU EVER WONDER what happens to students and scholars when they return to China from America? In this issue, we try to give you a glimpse of that picture.

As you may have read in the news, in recent years the Chinese government has sought a tighter control of society, thus creating a disturbing environment for Chinese Christians. That is the environment the returnees are facing, and it makes them think twice about continuing their spiritual journey that started in America. They need our prayers more than ever before!

What happens in China also carries implications for COM's ministry in America, as many Chinese students and scholars may be more reluctant to associate with Christians or participate in Christian activities. Ultimately, this is a spiritual battle—for the hearts of China's future leaders.

God knows there will be times more challenging than other times. Praise God that our COM missionaries are faithful in preaching the Word and sharing his love through every season. God has prepared the hearts of the Chinese. Among all international students here in America, the Chinese continue to be the most interested in the Christian message.

As this new year arrives with all its challenges and opportunities, may I encourage you to continue to stand with our COM missionaries in prayer and financial support? The battle belongs to the Lord—and he uses people like you and me. ■

Returning to China

Many of the students and scholars who are reached by COM staff return to China. Some go back as believers, eager to share their new faith. Others leave with seeds of the gospel planted in their hearts.



■ Last summer Glenn baptized our friend P, who we had the blessing of leading to the Lord. In his public profession of faith, P shared what his life was like before becoming a Christian, how he met Jesus, and what his new life in Christ is like. Now he and his wife have returned to China. Pray for P's wife, who is not a Christian . . . yet.

— *Glenn and Erin Niedergall*
Kent State, Ohio

■ Please pray for H and K as they return to China. We were able to share the gospel with both of them, but they were not quite ready to accept the Lord as their Savior. One thing we know—God has begun to change these two, and we know that He will finish the work He has begun.

— *Kirk and Julie Zuercher*
Penn State University,
State College, Pennsylvania



■ Pray for Christians as they face a challenging time in China. Pray for our returnees to realize the importance of Christian fellowship, to go to a good church regularly, grow well, and witness.

— *Campus ministry worker*
University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland



■ On our recent trip to China we visited and encouraged 30+ people we had gotten to know in the US, especially those that went back as young believers in Christ. One of the most valuable visits was with X, who returned to China with big plans as a young Christian and is now being challenged to help minister to other returnees.

— *Duane and Jodi Decker*
Portland State University and Oregon Health & Science University, Oregon

NEWS YOU CAN USE

When Students and Scholars Return to China

By Glen Osborn, Minister at Large

I recently returned from a trip to China where I met with a variety of people, including pastors, returnees in professional positions, business people, and those directly involved in returnee ministry.

First, the good news. There are wonderful things happening among Christian returnees in China. Here are a few examples from this recent trip:

- A doctor who was in the US as a visiting scholar came to Christ, along with his family. They were baptized and are now leading a returnee fellowship and incorporating people into the local house church.
- A professor who was a visiting scholar in France is attending the local house church and growing in the Lord. She has brought two other professors to the fellowship.
- A returnee who came to Christ in the US is now doing PhD work and is helping others connect with Christians there.
- A successful business person (not a returnee) employs returnees and has a weekly prayer time for whoever wants to come. They are also developing a new business, with local government approval, and are employing Christians in this.
- Many pastors are committed to helping returnees. A leader in the house church movement encourages other pastors to help.
- Many Christian organizations outside of China, and some within, are cooperating to increase effectiveness in this key ministry area.

But there are also challenges.

Connecting people who have never met is usually not effective. Trusting relationships need to be in place. Also, local Chinese churches are usually busy with ministries there, so they have a difficult time giving a specific focus to returnee ministry. It is often very hard for a returnee to find a Chinese church, let alone one that fits their needs.

So what do we do? Over the last 15 years, I have had many discussions with people and have attempted to develop programs and materials to help Chinese who become Christians and then return to China. It is a very challenging issue, due to the unique security factors for Christians in China.

We can do our best to stay connected. One of the returnees I met shared how the friend who led him to Christ while he was in the United States has stayed very close to him. They have connected online, and the friend has visited him annually in China. This has encouraged him to move forward in his Christian life and to get involved in a local church.



We also must do all we can to help disciple new Chinese Christians

here before they return. This means not only involving them in Bible study, but also in leadership and ministry themselves. It also involves helping them develop in personal spiritual disciplines and think through the dynamics of facing persecution for their faith. ■



Please pray with us for those who have returned and for our staff who are helping those who will return. Christians are facing increasing pressures in China, but God is at work. One returnee shared this: "I hope you could pray for us, especially at this crucial period when communications have been monitored, which makes communication among disciples more difficult. But we firmly believe no matter how difficult the persecution is, there's nothing that could separate us from connecting with Him, and above all, He is in control."

Back to China, Forever Changed

By Xie, a returnee to China

I AM A DOCTOR in China. I grew up in a Christian family. My grandparents and my mother are devout Christians, but I didn't personally know God. When I went to Boston as a visiting scholar a few years ago, I attended church irregularly because of "busyness" and "inconvenience."

Then a friend named Steven invited me to a fellowship led by COM staff member Rose Chiu, which met near my work. I felt that could be God's calling, and I started to attend regularly. Through the teaching of Rose and her husband, Ben, Steven's creative games, and the testimony of Elaine, Steven's wife, I became eager to know God and his Word more. I gradually realized what tortured me from the past was my sin of pride, insecurity, and self-sufficiency. I understood that Jesus loves me unconditionally and had died for me on the cross.



"I am not afraid of political repression, for God is in my heart."

I confessed my sins to Jesus, began to pray, and learned to trust him whenever I felt burdened. God answered my prayers. My son came to Boston and did well at a public primary school. My father-in-law was granted a visa, so he could come to help me take care of my son. My research papers were all accepted. Also, my sister-in-law finally gave birth to their first baby. The blessings were too many to count, and my heart was filled with peace and joy.

Finally, I decided to follow my heart and accept the Lord. I was baptized in a church in Boston just one month before I returned to China. Though many people told me that there is strict control of religious beliefs in China, I was not afraid because I knew God's calling.

When I returned to China, I was eager to find a good church. And I was blessed that God was arranging everything. With Rose's help, I found brothers and sisters in a church close to my home and hospital. When I joined the fellowship, I fell in love with such a group of people. They do charity like character camps for children, a free clinic, and programs for poor college students—following God's will to help people in every corner of the world. I was also moved by the worship. When I heard the song "Mercy of the Lord," I couldn't help crying. And when I stood up as a freshman at the church, the cheerful "God chose you" gave me the warmth of going home.

However, due to busy work and family business, I missed a lot of church activities. Now I am thinking about how to overcome those problems and be closer to God. In my hospital, the government now scrutinizes religious beliefs and has been pressuring Christians to abandon their faith. I am not afraid of political repression, for God is in my heart. I will never part with my faith, and by the love and power of God I will strive to become a better doctor, mother, and wife to contribute to society and family.

As I look back, God has always been there for me. Everything that has happened and everyone I have encountered are his work. There will be ups and downs, but Jesus will never leave me. I will follow Him all the days of my life. All glory goes to God. ■

Please pray for returnees like Dr. Xie, that they may continue their faith journey in China despite the harsh environment.





The New Chapter of Our COM Story

Reflections from Debbie and Robert Walz, retired COM staff members

THROUGH THE YEARS we've seen the Lord call people from many walks of life to serve as COM campus workers. Through their outreach, Chinese students and scholars have experienced "hands-on" Christian love. Many times the question "why are you doing this for us?" has been answered, "because God loves you, and we love you."

Robert grew up in the Baltimore, Maryland, area where he came to the Lord and offered himself for the Lord's service at an early age. Joining COM in the mid 70s, Robert spent many years as caretaker of the mission's retreat center in Fairfax, Virginia. He and Debbie met at a ministry event, and they corresponded for eight years. They only saw each other once during that time and eventually lost touch when Robert left COM for awhile.



A native of Erie, Pennsylvania, Debbie had begun ministry work on a church staff in her hometown just a few years after coming to the Lord. When she was called to join the staff of COM in 1983 as secretary, she had no idea that Robert was back on staff.

Debbie's move to Virginia was also the renewal of her friendship with Robert. They had their first date in July, were engaged on Christmas Eve, and married in April 1984.

During their Virginia years, Robert and Debbie welcomed over 6,000 people who visited the Fairfax House, including hundreds of Chinese graduate students who came with campus workers to see the nation's capital. The visitors were presented with the gospel of Jesus Christ, and many came to saving faith.

One of the most moving moments for us was witnessing a Chinese lady receive her new Bible. As was our custom, we presented each guest with a Chinese/English New Testament. One of the graduate students had his mother with him, visiting from China. When we gave her the Bible, she held it to her chest and began to cry. Through a translator she explained, "I never thought I would ever SEE a Bible, and now I hold one in my hands." How precious is the Word of God. What a privilege to share with those who have never had access to it.



When the COM headquarters moved to Pennsylvania in 2004, Robert and Debbie moved, too—Debbie as office manager and Robert as a general clerk. They retired at the end of 2015, but they haven't stopped working.

We're thankful to still be involved with COM as volunteers in the headquarters office and as financial partners to many of the workers. Watching COM's ministry grow has been a deep blessing to us. As each new campus worker has come on staff, it has truly been answered prayer. Not only do Chinese on those campuses hear the message of salvation, but those who respond also have the opportunity to be discipled and equipped to return to China as witnesses for Christ. Having been on the "inside" for all these years, we know that COM is a good steward of funds, investing wisely in the cause of reaching China's future leaders. ■





Channels of Blessing

A Testimony of God's Work through One Family's Faithfulness

By Tara Miller, Editor

A LOVE FOR MISSIONS AND WORLD CULTURES has led Gray and Aileen Wirth to greater adventures—and bigger steps of faith—than they ever expected. As volunteers and as financial supporters of China Outreach Ministries, the Wirths are quick to acknowledge that their story is a testimony “all to God’s glory.”

Aileen began following Jesus as a child. She studied to be an English teacher with a dream of teaching overseas one day. Gray became a Christian in middle school, but God began working in his heart for missions only after he was well into his adult years. His interest in missions, business, and international travel eventually took Gray around the world, including several business trips to China.

Gray and Aileen Wirth have invested their time, gifts, and financial resources in the work of China Outreach Ministries for more than 20 years.

When Aileen’s parents, Ben and Cathy Bidelsbach, joined COM staff in 1996, Aileen and Gray caught the vision, too. Hosting Chinese students in their home in Philadelphia and contributing financially to the ministry, they began their joy-filled partnership with COM.

As God blessed Gray and Aileen with two children, a commitment to missions became a formative family value. Missionaries visited their home, they served on their church’s missions committee, and they took the children on international mission trips. The Wirths’ commitment to China Outreach Ministries also continued to grow.

After serving as an army officer and completing an MBA, Gray worked for 15 years in a Fortune 500 chemical company. As God blessed their family financially, the Wirths were able to increase their financial support to COM. When his company was acquired in a buyout, Gray took a severance package and followed God’s leading to change careers.

Gray left the corporate world behind and enrolled at Westminster Theological Seminary. Around this time, he was also invited to join the COM Board of Directors, serving in that capacity for six years. Upon graduation from seminary, he led a Christian nonprofit for five years. In yet another career turn, he later joined the consulting firm where he now serves as a management consultant for Christian nonprofit organizations and Christian-led businesses.

In 2016, the Wirths took another exciting new step when God brought three children from Bulgaria into their family by adoption. With their oldest two children at Grove City College, they now see their mission field primarily at home. Gray and Aileen look forward to introducing their adopted children (so far two of them have professed faith in Christ) to missions.

The Wirths’ giving to COM has included all types of support—campus staff, leadership staff, and the general operating fund. They encourage donors to consider supporting the organization in a variety of ways, including those behind-the-scenes administrative functions that are vital to the success of the organization.

Viewing themselves as stewards of the financial resources God has entrusted to them, the Wirths have already included COM in their will. Gray says he is thankful for the counseling they received in Christian estate planning (through a connection from COM’s Jeff Krimmel) which helped them re-evaluate their perspectives on passing down wealth.

“China’s future leaders are here,” Gray says. Grasping the strategic nature of reaching these leaders, he says, **“that gets us excited.”** ■

Remembering China Outreach Ministries in Your Will

By Jeff Krimmel, Vice President of Development

A charitable bequest or will can be a once-in-a-lifetime legacy gift. After providing for the needs of your family, a bequest gives you the freedom to give to the ministries that you hold dearest. By designating China Outreach Ministries (COM) as a beneficiary, you can pass your “calling” to reach Chinese students to future generations, while also enjoying full control of your assets during your lifetime.

Writing your will using simple language can help you indicate a fixed dollar amount or a percentage of your estate to go to COM. You may even leave a percentage of what is left after all other recipients receive a gift from your estate. Here are some wording examples:

- **Specific dollar amount:** I hereby give to China Outreach Ministries, located in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, the sum of \$_____.
- **Percentage of estate:** I hereby give ____% of my estate to China Outreach Ministries, located in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania.
- **COM as contingent beneficiary:** If any of my above-named beneficiaries have not survived me, I hereby direct that their shares be given to China Outreach Ministries, located in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania.

If you have remembered China Outreach Ministries in your will, please let us know. We’d like to thank you appropriately. We may even be able to help you direct all or part of your bequest to an area of ministry you most want to support, such as a special project, staff outreach, or campus/regional ministry. If you have any questions, please contact Jeff Krimmel, VP of Development, at 717-591-3500 or jkrimmel@chinaoutreach.net.

For a variety of videos to help you plan your estate, check out our “donate” page at: www.chinaoutreach.org/donate. Thank YOU!

Gift Bearers *Special gifts and contributions to the ministry of COM*

In Memory of

Norma Jeanette Bidelspach
Dr. & Mrs. Glendon Osborn
Mr. & Mrs. John Zondlo

Ron Harness
Ms. June H. Petter

Marvin Hendrix
Mr. & Mrs. Charles Keller
Rev. & Mrs. Daniel Su
Mr. & Mrs. John Zondlo

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COM Staff Opening: Mobilization Coordinator

W E HEAR IT AGAIN AND AGAIN, “Please send us someone to reach Chinese students and scholars at this university,” or in university communities where COM already has staff, “Please send us more workers. There are so many Chinese here that we need help.” Clearly, as Jesus told His disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.”

Please join COM staff and leadership in praying for many more workers in the Harvest, as Jesus commanded us to do (Luke 10:2).

To help meet these needs, **COM is seeking a mobilization coordinator to join COM’s Human Resources team.** A mobilizer is one who communicates the vision and inspires action. COM’s mobilization coordinator will be responsible to help assess human resource needs, recruit, coach, and mobilize workers to reach out to the Chinese at US universities, and to conduct related administrative functions, including processing applications. He or she should share our burden for reaching the Chinese, have good communication and interpersonal skills, and be able to serve within driving distance of the COM Leadership Center in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania. For more information, please contact Don or Myrna Hines, or Jesse Burns, at employment@chinaoutreach.net.

Please join us at one of our *Spring 2019*
Ministry Celebration Banquets

■ **HARRISBURG, PA, Area**

Thursday, March 28, 2019, at 6:30 p.m.
Sheraton Hotel, Harrisburg, PA

■ **WASHINGTON, DC, Area**

Friday, March 29, 2019, at 7:20 p.m.
Fairview Park Marriott, 3111 Fairview Park Drive,
Falls Church, VA

■ **BALTIMORE, MD, Area**

Saturday, March 30, 2019, at 6:30 p.m.
Martin's Valley Mansion, 594 Cranbrook Road,
Cockeysville, MD

■ **CANTON, OHIO, Area**

Monday, April 8, 2019, at 6:30 p.m.
Hartville Kitchen, 1015 Edison Street NW,
Hartville, OH

■ **ERIE, PA, Area**

Tuesday, April 9, 2019, at 6:30 p.m.
Sheraton Erie Bayfront Hotel, 55 West Bay Drive, Erie, PA

To Make a Reservation

Visit our website:
www.chinaoutreach.org

-or-

Call our office: 717-591-3500

-or-

Email Kim Baer:
kimbaer@chinaoutreach.net

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is complimentary.
Thank you for joining us!*

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