



Steve's China Trip Jan '11

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. Pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ. (Colossians 4:2-3)

China

China is the world's largest country with 1.3bn people. It is divided into 23 provinces, five autonomous regions, 4 municipalities and 2 special administration regions. In some provinces, Christianity is thriving with an estimated 10% adherents. In other regions, particularly those to the west of the country, there can be as few as 0.2% Christians.

It is believed that the church in China is continuing to grow at a rapid rate. A survey of 46 house churches in Beijing showed that 41 had been set up since the year 2000. Some believers went to share the Gospel in a village in northern Anhui with a large proportion of AIDS sufferers; they had soon established a church of more than 70 people. One British academic described the growth as a "Christian explosion" that has "reshaped the religious landscape" in China. "The church in China is growing at a rate nearly unparalleled in the history of Christianity," according to China Source.



One China researcher says, "God is still forming their character but there is a tremendous zeal and love of God... The passion the Chinese Christians have for Jesus is not because they are in some way intrinsically more Godly than the rest of us. Rather, the passion and wholehearted commitment of the Chinese believers has come about as God has orchestrated events in China that have brought about a tremendous revival and hunger for Him... Before the arrival of Communism and the subsequent persecution, the Church in China was much like the Church in other parts of the world now. The pressure Christians were forced to live under resulted in a sifting. Many believers abandoned their faith, but many more became serious, wholehearted disciples of Christ. Revival has resulted." (Asia Link)

However, in the midst of such amazing growth, the church in China also faces some challenges that call for our committed prayers:

1. Few trained and experienced leaders.
2. A lack of Bibles, Biblical teaching and training materials.
3. The threat of cults and heresies.
4. The mixing of traditional folk religion with Christian beliefs.
5. Materialism.
6. A lack of men. According to one survey, around 75% of Christians in China are female.
7. Restrictions and persecution from the governmental authorities.
8. Persecution from non-Christian family members.



Purpose of Steve's Trip

To encourage some of the Western workers in China, and to teach at the Antioch School of Missions. The Antioch School of Missions has 8 students this year, all from Western countries. They are learning Chinese, and testing out the possibility of a longer term calling to work and serve in China. For the first three months, the students have been receiving teaching on a whole range of mission-related topics, as well as attending daily Chinese language classes.

A previous student shared: "I came to ASM expecting a year full of serving God, learning to love the Chinese, and in general making a difference in the world. In many ways, all three were born out... I learned a lot of things this year, about God and about myself. I feel like I've learned on a daily basis that God loves me more than I can imagine, and loves each and every one of His children in the same passionate, faithful way. I also learned that I still have a lot of rough edges, which He has been smoothing out this year. While I feel the Lord has crystallized a vision in my mind of how I can serve Him here, I am still continuing to wait on Him, and still learning how to love Him above all. Thank you, ASM, for showing me more of God's love!" We pray that each of this year's students might also experience the Lord's powerful work in and through them.

Itinerary (Due to security issues, precise details of Steve's trip are not given)

Steve flies to Beijing on Sun 9th January and will then take a flight to a city in North West China. He will stay there for two days, spending time with a couple of Western workers, and is hoping to visit a Children's Centre which provides help and therapy to children with severe physical disabilities. He will catch an overnight train on Weds 12th January to a large city in central China and will stay there for 7 days, encouraging some of the Western workers and teaching at ASM. He also hopes to visit the Doves Wing orphanage which specialises in taking in very sick orphaned babies. He flies back to England on Thursday 20th January.

He will pass on the monetary gift from OBF, as well as presents the children have bought.



Itinerary at a glance

Sun 9 th Jan	Steve flies to China (arrives in city in North West China on Mon 10 th Jan)
11 th – 12 th Jan	Spending time with a couple of Western workers and hopefully visiting a Children's Centre which offers help and support to children with severe physical disabilities
Weds 12 th Jan	Overnight train to city in central China
13 th – 19 th Jan	Pastoral ministry with Western workers and teaching at ASM
Weds 19 th Jan	pm travel to Beijing
Thurs 19 th Jan	Flight back to UK

Prayer Requests

1. Please pray for Carolyn, Emily, Alice and Tom; for protection and for peace of mind during the trip.
2. Pray for Steve that his ministry will be effective and helpful to those he visits.
3. Pray for wisdom and discernment.
4. Pray for Steve's travel arrangements as he travels around China on his own at times.
5. Pray for protection from illness and spiritual attack.
6. Pray for the workers Steve will visit.