



基督工人中心

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## July 2024 Prayer Letter

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Peace to you in the Lord!

As I mentioned in the last issue, if we want to talk about the second busiest season of the year for the Christian Witness Center, it has to be the summer! There are two discipleship camps in May, followed by youth camp in June, Bible Camp and another Discipleship Training in August. And then right after the school starts, there will be short-term mission teams in August and September coming to share the gospel on campuses in the Midwest. However in this May, I observed that many of the brothers and sisters seem to be only keen to participate in the Lay-minister Training in May and the Bible Camp in August. The reasons for choosing the former are: it's short, the participants are older, and it can be counted as a discipleship training to qualify for the Bible Camp. The reason for choosing the latter is that Bible Camp seems to be deemed as "advanced class" for spiritual growth! I do not know since when there is a misconception on the regular Discipleship Training camps that "they are for young students, not for the non-school aged older people"! This truly went beyond me.

In the past, brothers and sisters had the misconception that Discipleship Training is for the "new believers". For this reason Pastor Ko intentionally put a note on the cover of the Discipleship Training saying: "Discipleship Training is designed for those who have hearts to pursuit spiritual growth, not limited for new believers!" I have often reminded brothers and sisters that: As the so-called "old Christians", we must be especially vigilant and fearful, and keep equipping ourselves. Otherwise we will really be like what Jesus said: "many {who are} first will be last; and {the} last, first."! I was thinking that maybe during the pandemic, Chinese Christians felt so comfortable to have meetings online at home, that now they had the excuses for not going back to in-person meetings. Their excuses are: "Ah! I'm old, I can't see clearly, and I doze off easily while sitting in the classroom!" Today I myself have been upgraded to "senior", I would like to share some of my thoughts.

After the government announced the lifting of the pandemic lockdown, I saw that the American brothers and sisters around me were joyfully returning to their churches, while Chinese churches had been indulging in high-tech "zoom meetings" for a long time, and dared not to stop. And many "elders" did not want to go back to in-person meetings because they said they were "afraid of being infected"! At that time, God reminded me of Paul's encouragement to Timothy. In First Timothy 4:12, it says, "Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but {rather} in speech, conduct, love, faith {and} purity, show yourself an example of those who believe." In the same way, we, the "elders," "should not let anyone look down on our old age, but {rather} in speech, conduct, love, faith {and} purity, show ourselves an example of those who believe."

Recently in Taiwan, there has been controversial arguments over the "Designated Seats" set up on the MRT and buses. In the past, the purpose was for those who are elderly, the weak, pregnant women and children. But in the past few months, there have been several cases of senior people forcing some young people to give up their seats, but the young people refused, saying, "I am not feeling well today", or "I am very tired from a day's work, why should I give up my seat to you?" So, the two sides clashed and even into a fight. Lots of discussions of these cases were posted on social media. And the majority think that "the Designated Seats should be for the needy". Some people even take France and Japan as examples saying: You should be very careful when you give up your seat to the "older people" in these two countries. Because some "older people" do not appreciate it, and think why do you say that I am old? This argument has forced The Ministry of Health and Welfare of Taiwan to formally revise the law a few weeks ago: The "Designated Seat" was renamed as "Priority Seat", which is no longer limited to the elderly, weak, pregnant women and children, but extended to "other people in need".

Coincidentally, the two candidates for this year's U.S. presidential election, one is 81 years old and the other is 78 years old. They are actively running for the election without flinching. Both candidates are very confident and insist that they are still sharp and sound in mind and physically fit for leading the country. Truly! If a person in his early 60s comes out to run today, many may think that this person is "a little young" and classify him as strong "young man"! I remember last December, when a sister in her 80s came to the Discipleship Training, I kindly exempted her from the service of washing dishes, cleaning the table, and sweeping the floor. But she still spontaneously helped to sweep the floor and clean the table. When I said to her, "You don't have to do it", and she insisted that she could do it, saying, "I do this at home, too"! I immediately learned a lesson: Serving or pursuing the Lord is not about age, but about the heart! I often tell older brothers and sisters that: If you feel that at the age of 65, you are retired and no longer obligated to serve (spiritually or physically) and deserve to do nothing but enjoy traveling around, and gardening, how about "IF" (and the odds are getting higher, also your deep desire) that God bless you to live to be 90s. And when you look back at the past 25 (90-65=25) years that were wasted, you will regret it so much: Why haven't I make good use of these 25 years to be equipped for the Lord?

Colossians 4:5 says, "redeeming the time" (NKJV), and the LUV translation says "seize the opportunity," and the Greek word is "the time redeeming". Time is fleeting! We must try very hard to redeem the wasted time in the past! Let us encourage each other, seize the time, and don't let others look down upon your old age.

This year's prayer letter messages have been focusing on the theme of "Turn to God for Revival". This topic needs to be approached and understood from different angles. This issue we have invited one of our board members Pastor Dennis Wong to share "Expecting Spiritual Revival".

### **Expecting Spiritual Revival** (Rev. Dennis Wong)

Spiritual Revival is what many of children of God long for. From Ezra, the leader of the Second Return from the exile of Israel in the Old Testament (Ezra 7-10; Nehemiah 8), we can learn the lesson of expecting revival. For the sake of the revival of God's people, Ezra made the following choices :

#### **Ezra's choice**

I. Ezra valued his status as a priest of Levite before God (Ezra 7:1-5) Ezra's father, Seraiah, was a high priest in the days of King Zedekiah, but he was captured and slain during Israel's last exile (2 Kings 25:18-20. In such background and circumstance, few Levites valued their status as servants of God (Ezra 8:15), not to mention that Ezra was highly valued by King Artaxerxes of Persia (Ezra 7:11-26), the status of the priesthood would have been of little value to him. Ezra, however, still valued his status before God very much.

II. Ezra chose to make the Word of God his priority (Ezra 6-10) At that time, Persia was much more advanced and superior than Israel—in science, mathematics, and philosophy. From a human point of view, learning any knowledge of Persian could bring a good future and high status. Yet, Ezra "set his heart" to "study and practice" God's law and to "teach" it to the Israelites (Ezra 7:10). "Study" means studying God's Word and examining it carefully in order to accurately understand it. But Ezra's mind was not just to gain head knowledge, but to be able to live out God's Word and to teach the Israelites.

III. Ezra chose to return to Jerusalem (Ezra 7:6-10) After the fall of Judah, Jerusalem became a desolate place. Even after their return, the people faced a series of afflictions. The return was not easy: they had sown much but brought in little. Haggai 1:6 described it as: "ate, but did not have enough; drunk, but not with drink; clothe themselves, but no one was warm". They constantly suffered from drought, locusts, and famine (Haggai 2:17. Later, the temple was built, but the remnant had not seen the expected new grain and wine, nor the glory of the temple (Haggai 2:3). Returning from the Persian Empire to Jerusalem is like returning from an advanced country to the land of the Third World. Yet, as he awaited revival, Ezra chose to return to God's promised land.

IV. Ezra chose to pray and put his trust in God's hand (Ezra 8:21-23) When heading back to Jerusalem, Ezra could have asked troops and horsemen to protect them from the enemy on the way, but he was ashamed to request it from the king, for he knew he should trust the Lord all the more. Therefore, Ezra was determined to look to God's gracious hand alone. For this reason, he fasted and prayed to God with the remnants, and indeed, God protected them and delivered them from the hand of the enemy and the ambushes by the way (Ezra 8:31).

V. Ezra chose to be consecrated, to be vigilant and faithful (Ezra 8:28-34) Ezra demanded that all who serve God be consecrated to the Lord and that they should be vigilant and faithful in their duties entrusted to them. In addition, Ezra wanted the Israelites to keep their holy status as God's people, to do God's will, and to separate themselves from the foreign wives (Ezra 10:10-11).

#### **Expecting Revival**

Besides Ezra's choice, expecting revival requires a persistent heart to wait. Though with small revivals in the returning people—the stirring of heart from God to bring them back to the land and build the temple (Ezra 1:5; Hag. 1:14) and the Word of God repeatedly leading them to repent and making covenant before God (Ezra 10:1-4; Nehemiah 8-9), the people still fell into sin again and again. Particularly in the marriage relationship with the Gentiles, it had to be dealt with many times when the people had done it over and over again (Ezra 9-10; Nehemiah 9:2; 10:28-30; 13:3-4) .

In this time of age, do we look forward to revival? Do we value our holy status of the royal priesthood before the Lord? Have we set our heart to study God's Word carefully and do according to His will? Do we choose to practice prayer more, trust in God's gracious hand, consecrate ourselves to be vigilant and faithful? Lay aside the sin which so easily entangles us in our daily living? May we keep turning to the Lord and looking forward to the day of revival. May God remember all that we have done in the Lord (Nehemiah 5:19; 13:14, 22, 31) and give us the strength with the joy of the Lord (Nehemiah 8:10).

## **Future Meetings**

### **(1) August Bible Camp (7/28-8/3)**

This time we are going to study “the Life of Christ – The Four Gospels”. Thank the Lord for sending Pastor Daniel Shen and Sister Grace Lee to teach in the camp. The registration deadline is over. If you have missed it, please register August Discipleship Training to prepare for the January Bible Camp (Book of Acts). At present, more than 70 have registered and are preparing for the final assignment: the special report since June 1. Currently the CWC coworkers, speakers, and other advisors are reading these reports. We pray that the Lord will not only give the students wisdom from heaven to write those special reports, but also help the coworkers to have the wisdom to guide these students in addition to their busy ministry.

### **(2) August Discipleship Training (8/4-8/10)**

In the aftermath of the pandemic, we have found that there has been a significant decline in Chinese students at universities in the Midwest (or other areas, too). It may have been affected by the impact of the pandemic, or the U.S.-China relationship. But “Preach the Word; be ready in season and out of season!” to do what the Lord has entrusted to us: to train more elite soldiers for the Lord's use. August Discipleship Training Camp is a great opportunity to better equip Christians before the beginning of the Fall semester. Some have asked me “Why not schedule the Discipleship Training before the Bible Camp so that I can be eligible to attend the Bible camp after the Discipleship Camp?” Actually, this was a thoughtful arrangement by Pastor Ko many years ago. Because some Summer schools would not be finished until the early August. But for most of the colleges, Summer schools ended on the second week of August. And on the third week of August, most of the churches would start busy preparing for the coming of new students, etc. With all these reasons, we would rather “sacrifice” the August Bible Camp so that everyone can come to participate in the August discipleship camp, which shows how we value Discipleship Training.

Praise the Lord! Pastor David Wu and Pastor Jiasong Huang are to come and teach in the camp. They will share: the Book of James (Works of the Faith), the Interpersonal Relationship in Church Ministry, Spiritual Equipping at the End Time, an Introduction of Spiritual Formation, and evening revival messages will include: the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ, Rise up and Shine, etc. This is an opportunity for old, middle aged, and young Christians to be equipped, please do not miss it. The registration form has been posted on CWC website, please [download and register](#), not only for yourself, but also invite the brothers and sisters of your church.

## **New Online Donation**

In the past few years, brothers and sisters have asked whether they can make donation online. However, because the Christian Witness Center is located in a rural area. The local bank we have is small and do not have the advanced fund transfer systems. Now we finally opened an account that allows using Zelle to make donations in a larger bank in Kansas City (Missouri) so that we could save brothers and sisters the trouble of writing checks and mailing them. For how to do this, [please click here](#). In the past months, not only we have seen brothers and sisters donating with QR codes from their cell phones when they came to the meetings, but also using Zelle transfer from their homes. Please make good use of this channel of contribution if your heart is burdened to support the CWC financially.

## **August & September Short-term Missions**

Praise the Lord! In the past few years (even in 2020 and 2021 when the pandemic was severe), God have continued to move churches in the East and West Coast to send mission teams to the Midwest. That's why when we mentioned “short-term mission teams”, it was natural to respond: “short-term mission teams are from California”. But it has a big change in past two years. More churches from Texas start involving in the mission to student

ministry. We thank the Lord for all the mission team members that they came to share the gospel at their own expense and in their 10 precious vacation days. This year we have two tiers: one from August 16 to 25 and one from September 6 to 15. So far, seven churches will send teams for August, and four churches in September (could be arranged into 5 teams). August teams will be going to “the near” states such as: Missouri, Kansas, Iowa, Arkansas, Illinois (also Kentucky, Alabama), etc., And in September we will go to “the farther” states. Since the number of students in various places is decreasing, our goal this year is not limited to students or new students, the short-term mission team will reach any gospel seekers. I often use 3 John 5-8 to encourage those churches in the Midwest who team up with the mission teams " For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore, we ought to support such men, so that we may be fellow workers with the truth." Their itinerary will be posted on the August and September prayer calendars. Please remember their footsteps in evangelism in your prayer (Romans 10:15).

## **Past Meeting Reports**

### **June Youth Camp (6/9-15)**

Praise the Lord! 25 young people participated in the camp. And through the speakers: Brother Edwin and Sister Elanor Lin and Pastor Berry Edwards, the theme "Perspectives from Above" had been brought out to the youngsters. In addition to messages in class, they also went on missions to "nearby" (some of which took an hour) nursing homes on Wednesday afternoons. And on Thursday afternoons they also had rafting activities. Camp counselors had led the participants in morning devotions and small group sharing in the evening. May the Word of the Lord be deeply rooted in the hearts of these young people, so that they can faithfully follow the footsteps of the Lord in this age of value disturbance! Although this year's Youth Camp has come to an end, please continue to pray for these young people who live and are educated in the United States.

## **Sunday Online Bible Study & Prayer Meeting**

During the pandemic, many churches' meetings were held online, that was why Pastor Ko started this Sunday evening Bible study and prayer meeting to lead brothers and sisters continue to have a life of Bible reading, prayer, and spiritual sharing. After the August Bible Camp, CWC coworkers have decided to utilize this platform, not only to help brothers and sisters to prepare for the next Bible Camp (we will teach how to study the Bible, how to do the outlines, and how to write the assigned topic reports), but also spend some time to pray for the need of CWC ministry. We will shorten the meeting to one hour (7:00-8:00PM CT) so that it will not affect your next day schedule. We will study “Life of the Christ – The Four Gospels”. Zoom ID is: 85888709271, passcode: 567482. Please come and study the Bible together that we will be equipped in the Lord.

## **Thanksgiving and Prayer Requests**

1. After half a year of prayer and searching for a venue, with your prayers, God has provided a venue for this year's Winter Conference, the Embassy Suites in Rogers, Arkansas. More details will be shared in the next issue of monthly newsletter. Please mark your calendar and reserve time (December 21-25) to attend. This is a new change. Please continue to pray for the adaptations we have to the new venue, and for a good working relationship with the hotel.
2. Please continue to pray for the preparation of the August Bible Camp and Discipleship Training Camp. Pray for brothers and sisters to prepare their hearts for the meetings.
3. Pray for the August and September mission teams that the Lord opens the way of evangelism and add numbers of saved to churches.
4. Pray for the mid-term missionary: Brother Simon Cheng from Chinese Christian in Christ-Sunnyvale (California) has committed to come to the Midwest for four months (April 15 to August 10). In the next one and a half months, beside supporting in the CWC's August Bible Camp and August Discipleship Training, Brother Cheng will be stationed in Columbia, MO helping the church, and visiting nearby campuses (Kirksville, Hannibal MO). Please remember him and his ministry in the Midwest in your prayers that he will be a blessing to many.
5. For Coworkers:
  - \* Mrs. Ko: Thank the Lord, with acupuncture and chiropractic treatments, the pain has been relieved, and although it still will take a longer course of treatment, it is gradually becoming effective. Thank the Lord for answering prayers. Due to my health condition, I need to take a break of taking care of my grandson. Now he has gone to daycare, and is gradually adapting to the new environment, and his physical condition is fine. Thank the Lord. Thank you for your prayers.
  - \* Sister Cindy Chiang: For the many summer camps, please pray that the Lord will not only bless every meeting, but also give me enough physical and spiritual strength, wisdom and knowledge, especially for the planning and preparation of various meetings, the arrangement of short-term mission teams in August and September, the weekend's Word ministry on campus, and the CWC administrative work on weekdays.

\* Brother Qinglong Liang: Pray that God watches over the preparation of messages and advice the brothers and sisters in report writing for the Bible Camp; invite heart-ready children of God to the August Discipleship Training; serve Columbia Chinese Christian Church according to God's will, especially in Children's and Youth ministry; pray for my wife when she home schools the children; also pray for the green card application process.

\* Pastor Charles Huang: Please pray for the new sermon series, Book of Acts, in July at the church in Champaign (IL), and ask the Lord for His Word. Please pray for the campus outreach ministry in the new school year, and pray that the Lord will use the church and the Short-Term Mission Team to have a beautiful match to prosper the gospel. Please pray for my wife who are back to Taiwan with our three children visiting families, and pray that the Lord will keep them safe and provide the opportunity to share the gospel with my parents.

\* American coworker Scott Jerome: Becci will undergo second surgery on her shoulder July 11. Pray for quick recovery and for pain relief. Continue pray for Scott's parents' health. Praise the Lord that baby Ellie is doing really well.

6. Pray for the CWC monthly financial need (General fund, Building fund, Training fund, etc.) asking the Lord to manifest His abundant provision and allow more brothers and sisters to experience the blessings of giving.
7. For CWC: Pray that the Lord will bring more co-workers to the CWC ministry for the furtherance of the gospel ministry in the Midwest.

Emmanuel  
In the Lord,  
Sister Cindy Chiang