



***Members of the Friends of the Church in China are Christians in Britain and Ireland who seek to promote contact, partnership and mutual understanding with Christians in China.***

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## **Annual Report for 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020 to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021**

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# ***The Annual Report 2021***

## **Introduction:**

For a second successive year, mutual visits with China have not been possible. And this has been disappointing and made it difficult to develop some aspects of the Friends of the Church in China's (FCC's) charitable work. However regular exchanges by various digital means have meant that FCC in the British Isles still feels connected with friends in China. Indeed, in some ways our connectivity has been enriched. Committee meetings, members' meetings and the annual meeting have all been by Zoom, with some input from Chinese friends direct from China.

In FCC, we are friends with our sisters and brothers in China because we are all friends of Jesus. We are called actively and prayerfully to share in God's family business.

*"I no longer call you servants because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you"*  
*John 15v16.*

The FCC prayer calendar ([November 2021 edition](#)) draws attention to the ongoing work of training new pastors at seminaries, and the way seminary staff are upgrading their academic qualifications. We request prayer for senior leaders in the national church, and for those undergoing a significant time of change in Hong Kong. We note more briefly the projects supported by FCC that demonstrate Christ's love in Chinese society.

This Annual Report 2021 reflects this year's Annual Meeting in developing some of these themes in more detail. 2021 has been a year with three key themes: A year of Learning, a year when FCC projects have developed, and a year in which support for seminaries has continued. Under each heading, alongside some challenges, there have been encouragements, and we recognise reasons for real gratitude.

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## **Theme 1: A Year of learning**

One of the starting points for this year have been some of the priorities chosen by the China Christian Council (CCC) and the national Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) for 2021. These included marking in some suitable way the centenary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and reflecting how, and to what extent, the church of Christ resonates with 'core values of socialism' both in its spoken proclamation during worship and its practical actions in Chinese society.

On July 1<sup>st</sup>, President Xi Jining gave an important speech celebrating the achievements of the CCP. The CCC/TSPM leadership responded to this in a patriotic manner. (See the Appendix for two online assessments, one from a Protestant, and the other from a Catholic, viewpoint). This provides the contemporary context within which our sisters and brothers preach, teach, study, and serve ... required as they are to continue to reflect on what it might mean for the Christian church to explore further the 'Sinicization of Christianity'.

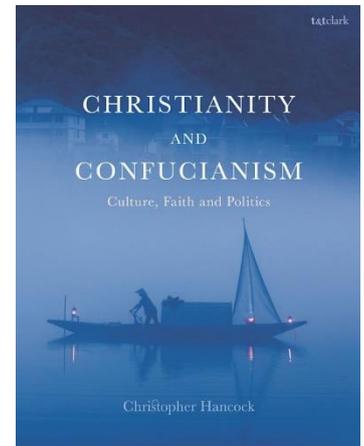
While the events arranged by FCC this year have tried to be aware of this national Chinese context, we have also tried to provide a broader agenda – whether historical, theological, spiritual, or cultural – illustrating other dimensions to the Chinese context which also challenge the believer, preacher, teacher and writer, and which also affect how (for example) the Bible is read, believed, understood and taught. Five examples are listed in what follows:

1.1: At an online meeting in April, at which FCC were invited to join ‘Church and Academy’ (part of the ministry of the Glasgow and Galloway Diocese of the Scottish Episcopal church), Christopher Hancock spoke eloquently about his long-awaited book:

‘Christianity and Confucianism: Culture, Faith and Politics’.

<https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/christianity-and-confucianism-9780567657640/>

- Christopher Hancock provides occasional briefings on China and offers to FCC members free access to the Oxford House Weekly Briefings on [www.oxfordhousereseach.com](http://www.oxfordhousereseach.com)



1.2: At a subsequent meeting of ‘Church and Academy’, FCC members joined online to hear Pastor Du Nana give a detailed outline of the Shandong Christian Council, its history, development, and current priorities. Those attending were through Nana’s exposition given a detailed and specific example of how the church is pursuing Christian discipleship in one of the large provinces of the People’s Republic of China.

- For an update about Du Nana, see later in this Annual Report.

1.3: Visiting scholar: Dr Chloe Starr is Professor of Asian Christianity and Theology at Yale University. Her website (<https://divinity.yale.edu/faculty-and-research/yds-faculty/chlo-starr>) tells that she is currently editing and translating a reader in Chinese Christian theology and working on a volume on Chinese Christian Fiction.

FCC was privileged to have Dr Starr drawing on both these areas of interest at two on-line meetings during 2021.

In May, she addressed FCC’s first online members’ meeting. Her topic was **‘The Bible in Modern Chinese Fiction: Lucky Talisman, Political Allegory, Spiritual Inspiration’.**



Among other writers, she referred in more detail to Bei Cun (born 1955) author of *The Baptising River* (施洗的河) (1992). Her overall conclusion is that it is difficult to generalise or systematise how the Bible is used in Chinese literature, because literary engagement with the Bible runs the gamut from direct quotation of Scripture through to diffuse Christian imaginary.

But its importance is in bringing Christianity into the ‘cultural public space’, forcing readers to consider links between faith and our human existence. In literature, the interior life is exposed, and a collective malaise, and the absence of the spiritual, is highlighted. Literature can use the lives of characters as witnesses to a different model of how to live.

At the Annual Meeting in November, Dr Starr introduced two friends from Beijing to help with a discussion around the way the Bible is read, understood, and explained in the contemporary church. One spoke passionately about her journey to faith, and her experience of handling the Bible in church life. The other responded eloquently with a theological reflection on how the varied aspects of Christian living include a commitment to corporate action in society, thereby affirming some of the theological as well as historical roots of socialism.

Chloe Starr preceded this wider discussion by referring to a fascinating collection of historical posters (*sample right*: [www.ccpsters.com/pg/home](http://www.ccpsters.com/pg/home)). This historical collection of posters can be searched and accessed through using one of the different headings: biblical, nationalist, Christian instruction, social issues, evangelism and traditional art.



For further reading, Chloe mentioned the following:

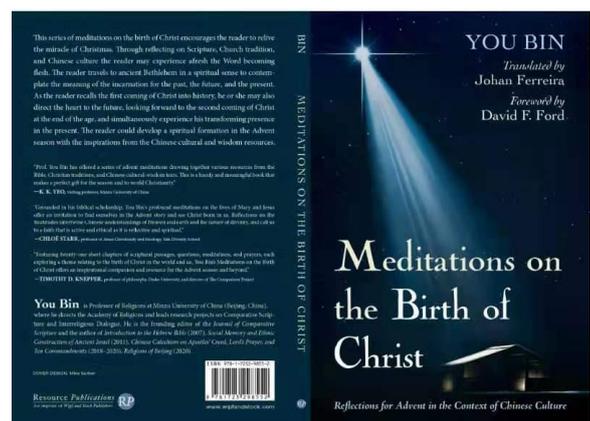
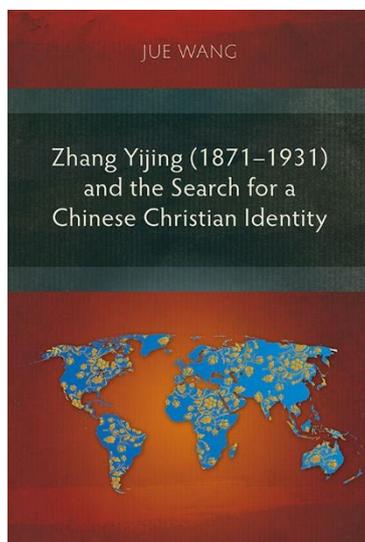
- a) The Oxford Handbook of the Bible in China, edited by K. K. Yeo (2021) <https://global.oup.com/academic/product/the-oxford-handbook-of-the-bible-in-china-9780190909796?q=yeo&lang=en&cc=us#>
- b) Chloe Starr has an article forthcoming in a book by Daryl Ireland called 'Saving China: Chinese Christian Propaganda Posters in an Age of Revolution', 1919-1950.

Chloe comments: "Every chapter is based on the posters, looking at the art, history, politics etc."

1.4: At the Annual Meeting, FCC member John Austen presented a review of a new book, edited by Alex Chow from Edinburgh (with Easten Law), and entitled 'Ecclesial Diversity in Chinese Christianity'. This book is based on a gathering from 2016, entitled 'Christianity and Religions in China: Past, Present & Future'. (John wondered in retrospect if Philip Wickeri's epilogue, with its optimism about the future of the church in China, may prove to be misplaced – though two of FCC's friends in China in turn questioned this assessment!)

1.5: The following two books have also been brought to our attention:

a) Professor You Bin from Minzu University in Beijing has recently published (in English) 'Meditations on the Birth of Christ' (2021). In the Foreword by Professor David Ford, he writes 'The book draws on classic Christian thinkers like Origen, Augustine, Anselm, St Francis ... St Therese of Lisieux' ... (and engages with) such thinkers and writers and Confucius, Mencius, Laozi, Lao Tzu, Zhang Zai, Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming.'



b) Dr Wang Jue has published a version of his recent doctoral thesis with its focus on an important issue. Through consideration of the life and writings of one Christian leader in 1920s China, Wang explores how Zhang Yijing handled the question of what it might mean to be both Christian and Chinese.

Readers may wish to explore this theme in a contemporary and international context through an associated website. See Appendix 2.

## Theme 2: Projects supported by FCC in 2021

**Working together for a greener China** At the November COP 26 UN Glasgow meeting, there was a surprise, but welcome, agreement between China and the USA to work together for a greener future. These two countries currently make up 40% of all carbon emissions, so any progress together towards a carbon-free future is fundamental.

US climate envoy John Kerry said that China's willingness to cooperate, its current state of emissions and its history of "outperforming its own goals" makes this agreement more ambitious than its critics realize. He also pointed out the importance of the agreement to reduce methane emissions. It is the first time the Chinese government has pledged to address the issue.

China has pledged that the 2022 Winter Olympic Games (February 4-20 in 2022) will be the first to be totally powered by green energy.



### 2.1: FCC environmental projects:

In 2021 FCC, in partnership with the Amity Foundation, saw the completion of our first environmental project. This project arose in part from the FCC-sponsored visit to the UK by Amity staff member Ms Xie Jie. The project concerned rural waste management in Yunnan SW China. At the Annual Meeting, FCC member Antony Rose explained that this project had achieved most of its objectives, cascading ideas about waste management beyond the 40 - 100 families in Long Nai village (mostly amongst the 'Wa' minority group) to neighbouring communities.



FCC has a close relationship with the Scottish Churches China Group (SCCG). It has been agreed that where possible, it would be good for FCC and SCCG to work together in partnership. For 2022, FCC and SCCG are together exploring whether to join in supporting a project in Hunan Province called "Green Life Project".



This "Green Life Project" has a range of objectives including helping churches see the value of social action.

- The garbage bank aims to develop good waste management...
- while the foodbanks (so far only a pilot project in Changsha, Hunan province) distribute food that is near its expiry date, and collect second-hand clothes that are then washed and distributed to those in need.



## 2.2: Significant development in the Xi'an HIV/AIDS project

After a gap of a couple of years, FCC recommenced support for an HIV/AIDS project in Xi'an in 2019. This project entails the training of volunteers to work on the city streets with migrant workers and fellow students.

- For those contacted by the Project, there is the offer of testing.
- If people are found to be infected, appropriate medication is offered.
- To many others, volunteers distribute information about the disease, to prevent further spread through unsafe lifestyles.
- This work has continued throughout the pandemic, using additional protection.



- Volunteers (who represent no 'official' body) can win the confidence of those they meet, whether fellow students or migrant workers.

- The training of volunteers is taken very seriously. Sometimes those who have been helped by the project themselves become volunteers.
- In 2021, the project reached a point where 14 groups of volunteers are working on the streets each weekend.

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In 2021, the Xi'an Project was asked to provide support, guidance, and training for churches in 10 other locations as they explore undertaking social projects of various kinds in their own communities.

A couple of churches have already obtained government permission to undertake this work and it is hoped that by 2023, another half dozen churches will be suitably trained, and their work recognised by due authority.

From July 17 to 21 2021, torrential rain fell around the city of Zhengzhou (in Henan Province) east of Xi'an. Widespread flooding resulted, affecting many people. National NGOs like the Amity Foundation became involved in providing support and help, and FCC sent a donation towards their relief work. Some local churches like the Xinxiang Church (right) also started



to take action. This church initially helped with flood relief. But when wanting further training in this kind of social action, it was to the Xi'an Project that they turned for guidance and support.

FCC gladly acknowledges the support of the Barbour Trustees with this project in Xi'an. Application has been made to the Barbour Trust for a continuation of this partnership.

## 2.3: European Network of Amity Partners (ENAP)

# SOLIDARITY

### RELIANCE 公益的心跳

- We must and we can rely on each other
- Philanthropic orientation, Idealism
- Willingness to serve and to share
- Education, Equal Opportunities, Poverty Alleviation, Climate Justice
- Social Gospel



In the summer of 2021, FCC was represented by two committee members at the ENAP conference.

Here is one of the key slides presented at the meeting.

Relationships were developed and sustained between partners across Europe, and with colleagues at Amity from within China.

Meeting on-line allowed for a good number of people from both regions to participate.

It is hoped that an in-person meeting will be possible in 2022.

This illustration shows the distribution of materials by Amity workers through the Hubei Christian Council.



## Theme 3: Support for seminaries

### 3.1: Update on Pastor Du Nana:

- FCC has provided a small amount of financial support for Nana as she continues her studies at Tyndale House in Cambridge.
- FCC gladly acknowledges financial partnership in this with the Li Tim Oi Foundation, and the Scottish Episcopal Church.
- Nana is moving towards the first draft of her doctoral thesis on the Old Testament book of Isaiah.
- She is making good use of the specialist library that Tyndale House offers. Here (left) she is seen sharing a tea-break in the grounds of the library.



### **3.2: Celebrating the award of doctoral degrees to Chinese seminary staff**

FCC is glad to celebrate the success of four friends in China awarded their doctoral degrees this year. It is important that the quality of teaching at Chinese seminaries is continually upgraded. One way towards this goal is the staff obtaining wider experience of the Christian church and suitable further academic qualifications.

- a. 'Jenny' Zhao Qiufen, Dean of Zhongnan Seminary in Wuhan, was a guest of FCC in 2014, and has welcomed FCC visitors to Wuhan on several occasions. Her doctorate has taken a long time ... but she has finished, despite the challenges of the Pandemic.



- b. Dr Gao Ming, President of the Shandong Christian Council, was awarded his doctoral degree this year.

He has welcomed FCC visits and has written with gratitude for FCC's support for Du Nana over recent years.

- c. Wang Jiawei and Luo Chengzan spent three months in the UK in 2019 as guests of FCC.

It was good to see them receive their degrees this year at the Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, the first doctorates at a mainland Chinese Christian institution.



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### **3.3: A year without visits ... but a year when seminary life continues**

At the time of writing, it remains unclear when visits to China will again be possible. Opinions vary ... from the most optimistic ('after the Winter Olympics are over in spring 2022') to the most pessimistic ('not until well into 2023').

Either way, and assuming suitable visas can be obtained, the FCC committee is hoping to take up the many warm invitations that have been sent over the last two years.

As to visitors arriving from China in the British Isles, the hope is that July 2022 may see the first visitors. This in turn may again allow for a meeting for FCC members in-person.

In the meantime, it has been good news to see new cohorts of seminary students taking their places at the provincial, regional, and national seminaries. The following illustrations were provided for FCC by CCC/TSPM in the autumn of 2021 for Wuhan, Chengdu, and Shanghai. These are places where FCC has strong personal connections. Photographs were also sent for the Yanjing seminary in Beijing (see also the graduation photograph in the prayer diary), and the Fujian seminary in Fuzhou.



- Zhongnan Theological seminary in Wuhan welcomed 28 new students on October 13<sup>th</sup>
- The Dean 'Jenny' Zhao Qiufen is seated in the middle of the students, with the seminary's New Testament tutor (who oversees this cohort of the student body)

- At Chengdu, Sichuan, SW China 32 students graduated in June, with these 36 new students arriving in September.
- 'Peter' Yuan Shiguo (in academic dress) came to the UK as a guest of FCC in 2019, and has been a warm host to several FCC members in Chengdu.



- This photograph shows the student body last summer at the HuaDong seminary in Shanghai.
- Chen Qirui teaches the History of Christian Thought at this seminary, and (with the pandemic) has been restricted to studying at home in China rather than continuing her doctoral studies at Helsinki. However, she was able to join the FCC Annual Meeting online in November.

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### Conclusion

#### Additional jottings about the year 2020-2021

- At the May members' meeting, the Revd Harry Ching (chaplain to the Chinese communities in London at St Martin in the Field) gave a short presentation about the 'Hong Kong Ready Church' programme, in which UK churches are welcoming arrivals from Hong Kong.

- The committee continued the practice of inviting special guests and making one-off co-options to its meetings this year.
  - a) A Chinese graduate from the of the University of Birmingham shared a synopsis of her research into 'reformed' urban churches which sprung up in the 1990s and early 2000s.
  - b) Mark McLeister of the University of Edinburgh spoke about his anthropological research, and his experience of visiting China as an academic.
  - c) Ms Arleen Luo of the British & Foreign Bible Society explained her work on international mission amongst the Chinese in China and amongst the global diaspora within the UK.
- Two electronic newsletters were sent to members in April and October respectively, carrying news from the China curated by Lawrence Braschi from a myriad of journalistic outlets and 'family' news from our membership and the Committee, edited by the Secretary. Thanks go to Peggy Sidebotham for distributing the hard copy to those unable to receive it electronically.
- The website and FCC Twitter feed were kept up to date with news of events and appeals – do follow us on Twitter (@FriendsCChina).
- For anyone who would like to become a member of FCC, please contact the Membership Secretary by email [membership@thefcc.org](mailto:membership@thefcc.org) or by phone on 07810 585450

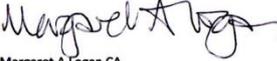
Friends of the Church in China  
Summary accounts - Year ended 31 August 2021

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds				Total Restricted Funds £	Grand Total 2021 £	Grand Total 2020
		Amity £	Xian £	Trav sch'ship (SW China) £	Theolog Educn £			
<b>Income</b>								
Subs and donations	4,255			3,000	3,000	7,255	12,987	
Legacies	6,500				-	6,500		
Tax reclaimed	478				-	478	1,338	
AGM fees	-				-	-	257	
Interest and dividends	1,475				-	1,475	1,410	
	<u>12,708</u>			<u>3,000</u>	<u>3,000</u>	<u>15,708</u>	<u>15,992</u>	
<b>Expenditure</b>								
Accounts and AGM	16				-	16	482	
Committee expenses	-				-	-	748	
CTBI	-				-	-	-	
Postage etc	136				-	136	253	
Website	403				-	403	512	
Project expenditure	500	4,000		4,545	8,545	9,045	9,265	
	<u>1,055</u>	<u>4,000</u>		<u>4,545</u>	<u>8,545</u>	<u>9,600</u>	<u>11,260</u>	
Net income / (deficit)	11,653	(4,000)	-	(1,545)	(5,545)	6,108	4,732	
Transfers	(1,314)			1,314	1,314	-	-	
Capital growth in Ethical Fund	7,653				-	7,653	1,606	
Balance brought forward	70,780	4,500	-	231	4,731	75,511	69,173	
Balance carried forward	<u>88,772</u>	<u>500</u>			<u>500</u>	<u>89,272</u>	<u>75,511</u>	
representing funds held in:								
Co-op bank	24,068	500	-	-	500	24,568	18,461	
CCLA deposit	10,592				-	10,592	10,591	
CCLA ethical fund	54,112				-	54,112	46,459	
	<u>88,772</u>	<u>500</u>			<u>500</u>	<u>89,272</u>	<u>75,511</u>	

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3 November 2021

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3 November 2021