

## **The Unsaid Words Behind the Postcard**

### **Pigment Stained Hands**



#### *The artist's story ...*

*Ke Li is the artist who created this gouache painting.*

*Ke Li is an evangelist in China. He is very committed to serving ethnic minorities and teaching the Bible. He studied art before he responded to his calling, and he travelled extensively in China thereafter, using photography to document local customs and colours. Now he uses painting as a means to partner with CCL, allowing the life and ministry of field evangelists to be seen, and to promote missionary education so that Hong Kong Christians can learn more about God's work in China.*

I once met a Christian looking for a retirement gift for her pastor in a marketplace. She finally chose this painting. She shared, *"The hands in this painting drew my attention! After listening to a co-worker share the story behind the painting, it made me think of how my pastor dedicated his heart to God and his hands to serving people!"*

A frontline co-worker who traveled to various provinces visiting evangelists in China recalled what he saw and shared, *"After long hours of traveling, I arrived at my destination. As soon as I got off the bus, the evangelist was there waiting for me. He is not very tall, has a rather dark complexion, and the skin of his hands is very rough with some of his finger tips lacerated. I was deeply touched upon seeing such hands!"*

In remote areas, most evangelists have to take up other jobs while serving the church. A Christian curiously asked, *"What kind of work do they do?"* Every fall, during the walnut harvest period, these evangelists take up the labour of walnut shell removal. They use their bare hands to crack open the thick green outer shells of the harvested walnuts. Their fingers become stained by the pinkish pigment released from the shells, and their hands look like those depicted on the postcard.

*Although these evangelists lead a difficult life, the painting shown here is bright and colourful. The artist is expressing the joy in their hearts, and the hands reflect the glorious privilege of serving God and the satisfaction of serving people.*

The hands in the painting represent shepherds whose hearts focus on God and whose hands are dedicated to tending to the sheep. The shepherds nurture, coach and strengthen the flock with the love and truth of Christ.

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Partners in Action

## **Keep Going! Don't Give Up!**

We wish to help evangelists in China realize their dream of "faithfully serving the Lord for life", it would be such a shame if they have to give it up prematurely due to financial reasons. Providing them with a living subsidy is just the first step. What they need next is peer support and life mentors. Such companionship is crucial to them.

## Genuine Companionship Makes Lasting Journey

Churches in China have "too many sheep and too few shepherds". Excessive workload may subconsciously push the evangelists toward the verge of exhaustion. The author has heard of the experience of many seminary graduates who went back to their hometowns to serve. Not only do they have to take care of churches in the county all by themselves, they also have to travel to the countryside. **What is tormenting to them is not just the heavy workload but also the chronic loneliness!**

We pay personal visits to each of the evangelists we support on a regular basis. For evangelists in urban areas, we encourage them to form their own "student union" and build up a support network. For those who are in remote areas, we travel and serve with them together while they visit various places. **Even though each trip only lasts for a few days, the companionship will fuel them to press on with their ministry!**

At the beginning of July, when heavy flooding occurred in the South Central region, the local evangelist contacted us immediately. The unexpected disaster made him feel helpless, and he told us about the situation of the church, his feelings and his needs. We try to shoulder the sorrow and stress together with him, and we pray for the local church.

## Pitfalls are Avoided by Reminders from Mentors

**The younger generation of evangelists need to be coached by experienced life mentors.** To serve effectively requires more than just technical skills. They need also to be able to deal with the "people" factors, for example, church traditions, interpersonal relations, cooperation and communication, and "interactions" with local officials, or else tension will arise. There was a pastor in China who once valued the "church" so much that he spent a lot of energy on maintaining the physical building. Later, his mentor came to visit him and gently reminded him, *"Wouldn't it be more important to devote more of your attention to training believer leaders?"* The pastor was suddenly awakened and realized how fortunate he was to have his mentor correcting him in time.

A novice evangelist once thought that "serving faithfully" was to keep "doing". After a period of time, she accumulated a huge store of negative emotions and even wanted to give up her ministry. When her mentor (a seminary teacher) learned of her situation, he visited her during the summer vacation and recommended that she read the book "The Call to Joy and Pain"<sup>1</sup> in her daily devotion. **Her spirit and concept of ministry was renewed, and she began to understand the importance of perpetual nurturing and growth in her relationship with God towards her ministry.**

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<sup>1</sup> Ajith Fernando, "The Call to Joy and Pain", in simplified Chinese (Nanjing: Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, 2019). From 2020 onward, the Book Gifting package includes this book.

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## Pastors Serving in Remote Areas are Combating Financial Hardship



In order for evangelists in China to continue serving at their churches, they have to find ways to maintain a meager living. The manual labour of cracking open the green shells of walnuts with their bare hands is one of them.



The wife of an evangelist in the Southwestern region sews ethnic clothing or accessories by hand in order to support her husband's ministry, but she has not been able to sell much in recent years.



# Prayers: Walking with serving pastors

## 1. Young preachers with heavy responsibilities

In remote areas with a shortage of preachers, some young preachers are willing to return to their hometowns to serve after graduating from seminaries. In addition to pastoring believers, they nurture local leaders through basic Bible training programs.

Pray that the Lord strengthens this group of young pastors who are among the few theologically equipped pastors in the area and who have to take on various responsibilities including Bible teaching, pastoral care of believers, church administration, etc. This is an extremely heavy ministry; may the Lord keep them from being burnt out by their busy schedules.

## 2. Preachers serving ethnic minorities

Preachers serving in ethnic minority churches face great challenges due to their different languages, cultures, and lives. When evangelizing, the preacher needs to recognize the situation of the ethnic group and make flexible adjustments for them to understand the truth of the Bible.

Pray for the Lord's acceptance of preachers willing to serve in areas of scarce material where ethnic minorities live, preachers dedicated to leading their people to the Lord. Pray also that the Lord looks after the preachers so that their commitment would continue to make an impact on their localities, nurturing generations of believers.

## 3. Preachers need to be constantly equipped

The religious environment in China has changes in recent years, and training courses for serving pastors have also been affected. In addition, pastors in some districts cannot receive their salaries due to limited income from church offerings. As a result, financial support for pastors to receive materials with which to equip themselves is out of the question. Even if they find a suitable course, they may not have the spare time to attend it due to their busy ministries.

Pray that the Lord remembers the need for ministers to be equipped and that through doing so, pastors will be fed spiritually and be able to reflect on and renew their ministries so that they can bring to the believers teaching and pastoral care that meet the needs of the times and respond to the problems in different contexts.

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## Consolidate the Support of All Parties to Partner with Field Evangelists

*Nurturing and supporting field evangelists in China is not something that can be accomplished by the efforts of one party. By the grace of our Heavenly Father, we hope that you will partner with us to share our Father's love and care of the evangelists, so that there is as little interruption as possible to the evangelists as they serve in the frontline!*

### Your donation support is needed

If it is the Lord's will, this year we hope to achieve the following:

#### (1) Provide living subsidy to 40 field evangelists

Each will receive USD 577 per month

Total cost: USD 276,960

[Project name: Support for Evangelists]

#### (2) Provide comprehensive training to 100 senior pastors

This includes training on the "Living Word" bible teaching materials, marketplace, family and church leadership

Training cost for each participant is USD 2,051 per year

Total cost: USD 205,130

[Project name: Leadership Development Ministry]

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~The above is part of the content of PFC issue376, if you would like to read the full newsletter,  
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