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Analysis of Current Trends in China



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ETHICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR CHINA SERVICE

Significant changes abound in China today. The last 10 years have specifically been significant in regard to change. Most China analysts (this one included) could not, in 1996, have predicted such great change in areas of China's economy, governance, religious affairs, international relations, and redistribution of rural populations to urban areas. Likewise, foreigner involvement in China non-profit service has changed significantly in its approach and scope. Many of the other significant changes have led to a re-evaluation of how non-profit organizations serving in China do their projects and activities. Many non-profit leaders are just now taking a look at the China they find themselves in and are revising the way their standard operating procedure works today. It is in the spirit of re-evaluation, cooperation and being most effective in China service that in June 2005, three China ministry leaders gathered in Arcadia, CA to begin crafting a 'statement paper' that would guide foreign organizations serving in China and would be used to help the foreign Christian community make the most of their service in China. The next level of meetings took place June 7-9, 2006 at Fuller Theological Seminary, and included more China leaders who were able to give wonderful insight into this process and confirmed the assumptions that the felt needs for these standards is growing in the 'China interested community.' In this edition of the China Resource Journal, we'd like to introduce you to the current edition of these standards. Our hope is that you may be able to apply these points in your own service in China, and use them as a guide in your own evaluation of your China service.

Ethical Foundations for China Service

Recognizing the changes in China, the significant growth in the Church in China and the complexity of Chinese society and its regulatory structures, we offer these guidelines for service in China and to support the Christian community in China.

We commit to the following:

- 1. We will demonstrate the credibility and relevance of Jesus Christ by our words and actions.**
- 2. We will strive to respect local government and regulations; and the culture, history, and aspirations of the Chinese people.**
- 3. We will serve the whole body of Christ in China and promote its harmony and self-sufficiency.**
- 4. We will promote a spirit of unity in the China-concerned Christian community.**
- 5. We will communicate accurately only information about which we have verifiable knowledge.**

Addendum Notes

(The numbers on these notes correspond with the numbers of each point from above)

1. It is well understood in government circles that most Westerners are Christians, and the implication is that how we act will reflect negatively/positively on Christianity. Most China watchers agree that there is no longer a need to hide our identity as Christians. In our attempt to be relevant, are we positioning our message about Christ in reference to what the Chinese people are asking for? Do we recognize that our credibility in China is earned?

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2. Are we figuring out how the system works in China? Are we investing in relationships in China? Are we being careful not to bring your own agenda before we learn of the agenda of the local Chinese agencies? Many times, the real needs of China are not the felt needs.... Where the two do coincide, the most fruitful outcomes result. Are we learning about what is already being done locally or by other outside agencies?

3. By choosing the word 'serve,' we as foreigners want to take the position of support and encouragement as Chinese Christians take the lead in the Christian community. Are we promoting the concept of indigenous Chinese Christianity? Are we recognizing the many facets of the Church in China including house church/open church, rural church/urban church and professional church/working class church, etc. and seeking to view the Church in China in its entirety? Are we challenging ourselves to view the Church in China as a whole? Are we communicating to the Chinese and to others from the perspective of how God wants us to be a part of the reconciliation of any tensions that exist in the body of Christ? Are we figuring out how to use our resources to support the concept of self-sufficiency in the Chinese Church in a God honoring way? Are we making sure that we are not allowing outside funds to set the agenda for Christians in China? Stories like Chinese church planters that became translators for Christian organizations, and Chinese seminarians became immigrants in the West. Are we being mindful of the intended and unintended consequences of financial investment in China? Do you have an exit strategy (how the work will continue with Chinese ownership after the money and foreign involvement are gone)? Are we perpetuating need in order to raise funds?

4. Do we have a sense of transparency, and are we getting people to come to China and see for themselves what God is doing? Are we attending Conferences, actively seeking information sharing, spending more time praying for other groups, visiting other groups? Can we use Biblical based conflict resolution principles when there is a difference in approach as opposed to taking our disagreements public? We should not question others' faith or calling into ministry even when approaches in China differ. How do we develop tolerance and mutual respect among diverse ministries to China?

5. Refer to ECFA Standard 7.1 on Fund-Raising Truthfulness in Communication. The standard reads, **"...narrative about events must be current, complete and accurate. References to past activities or events must be appropriately dated. There must be no material omissions or exaggerations of fact or use of misleading photographs or any other communication which would tend to create a false impression or misunderstanding."**

Additionally, have I put my information in an appropriate context? Was there an inappropriate inducement of the source? As new information comes to light, am I diligent to make it available? Am I sure my information is verifiable through reliable sources? Am I deliberately perpetuating old stereotypes (e.g. China is a police state, no Bibles available in China)? Am I corroborating my information with data from other reliable sources? Are we aware of potential conflict of interest, either because of fund-raising needs, organizational agendas, etc.?

ETHICAL FOUNDATIONS DISCUSSION OPPORTUNITIES

The China Resource Center will be involved in several opportunities for China-involved individuals to participate in 'town hall' type meetings to discuss the 'grass roots' effort now known as the Ethical Foundations for China Service. We will be sponsoring a discussion meeting in South Denver on September 1st at Cherry Hills Community Church, a meeting in Atlanta in mid-September (stay tuned for details), and will be one of two organizations leading a session on this topic at the China Challenge Conference October 11-13. For the latest information on any of these events, please email us at info@ChinaResourceCenter.org. We will also be posting information on our website about these events.

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1. We exist to serve the growth and development of the Church in China through theological training, Bible distribution, Church building and other partnership opportunities.

2. We exist to enhance the China ministry culture and clarify Western perceptions of Christianity in China through extensive research and education, thereby equipping China ministry leaders, workers and the Church in the West to more effectively advance the kingdom of God in China.

For more information about CRC, ways you can partner with us, or to inquire about our speaking schedule, please contact us at 303-332-8884 or Info@ChinaResourceCenter.org

