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2024

iMPACT

Together, Giving Christ to China's Future Leaders

Loving Our Neighbors

God Uses Good
Neighbors
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CHINA
OUTREACH
MINISTRIES



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From Strangers to Neighbors

By Daniel Su, COM President

If a lawyer, after hearing the biblical command to “love your neighbor as yourself,” presses you to define a “neighbor,” what should you do? Challenge the question—Ask instead if he or she has been a good neighbor!

That’s how Jesus handled the lawyer who asked, “And who is my neighbor?”

Could it be that the lawyer in the story had no neighbors? In the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), Jesus shifted the focus by emphasizing not the semantics, but the active demonstration of neighborly love. He must have shocked the Jewish lawyer by making a hero out of a Samaritan, whom the Jewish community then viewed with disdain. By doing so, Jesus also challenges you and me today to ask ourselves: *Are we being good neighbors?*

This insight is particularly relevant for us as we reach out to over 300,000 students and scholars from China studying here in America. Instead of debating complex geopolitical issues and national interests, as Christ’s followers, we are called to share the gospel of love and hope by extending hospitality to those in our midst who are far from home.

In this way, we exemplify the essence of being good neighbors, despite US-China tensions or cultural differences. And in the process, we’re blessed to see many coming to faith in Christ and being transformed.

As we heed Jesus’ call to be good neighbors, let us embrace our opportunity to enact the timeless message of the Good Samaritan: *that true neighborliness transcends boundaries and embraces our common humanity.*

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"We are called to share the gospel of love and hope by extending hospitality to those in our midst who are far from home."

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COM ANNUAL REPORT

God Uses Good Neighbors

Across the country, God has called COM staff members, volunteers, and churches to befriend and love their Chinese **neighbors**. As he honors their faithfulness, we see stories of lives forever changed.

Mike Reynolds, Southeast Area

Coffee shops around campus are a common place for me to meet up with Chen—an undergraduate student from China. When Chen and I sit down together for coffee, the conversations reflect the relationship that has developed over the last few years. We chat about his family in China, his plans after graduation, and his interest in motorcycles (although I know nothing about motorcycles).

One afternoon recently, our conversation reached a new level of depth. We spoke about his impressions of the Christian faith and his experiences with Christians over the last couple of years, and I shared about my experiences of church in China. Throughout the conversation, he indicated an openness to the Good News of Jesus.



Staff member in the Northeast Area

We developed a friendship with Amy, a scholar from Asia, after she attended a gospel camp in another state and was referred to us by COM co-workers! She was welcomed by Americans in a local church here and began participating in our partnering

Erin Niedergall, North Central Area

I recently met a lovely Chinese lady, Li, a visiting scholar who would soon be returning to China. I began to pray for her and invited her on a couple of hikes to get to know one another. I learned that she was very open to God and Christianity, so I asked if she would like to meet to go through a Bible study to answer some of her questions. She said yes!

Our church nearby was glad to provide a room, and I picked her up once a week for our meetings. Some weeks we met for two hours, and we became good friends. She told me she will be reading the Bible in China and would like to meet with me by video. I am overjoyed that God gave me this opportunity to sow seeds.



Photo from Mike Reynolds

campus ministry. As we have gotten to know her, we have learned that she is a follower of Jesus. Amy and her daughter have engaged in many activities, including the church's children's choir. She also faithfully participated in a recent online Bible discussion. Amy's joyful spirit is a blessing to those around her.

Nick Romanin, Midwest Area

Late last semester we met Teresa and her two teenage sons. Though the boys were raised in China, they were born in the United States when their father was a graduate student. As American citizens, it was almost impossible for them to go to college in China and to navigate many other issues—so their father sent them back here.

But not having grown up in the United States, these young men have moderate English language skills and very little knowledge of how to thrive in this country. This family has become precious to us, and we have begun to see the church take care of the marginalized as we have participated with our local body to minister to them. Recognizing the heart of Christ in the church, the family has committed to worship at our fellowship and to study the Bible with us, and they have even begun to invite other friends to church.

God Uses Good Neighbors

God often encourages us through Chinese **neighbors** in our ministries who share their stories with us and with others. Here are some recent testimonies we've heard.

**Shared by a Chinese friend of
Duane and Jodi Decker,**
West Coast Area

I arrived in the United States as an international student several years ago and was immediately embraced by the incredible staff and volunteers in our local international student ministry. Their warm hospitality made me feel right at home.

Engaging in a variety of events and activities, including English conversation classes, Friday gatherings, and Bible study sessions, enriched my experience. Their invitations to celebrate holidays like Thanksgiving and Christmas in their homes created unforgettable memories. Moreover, this group orchestrated fantastic getaway trips, from skiing adventures to scenic explorations.

Through my connections with these remarkable individuals, I deepened my understanding of Christ and God. It was three years later I made the profound decision to become

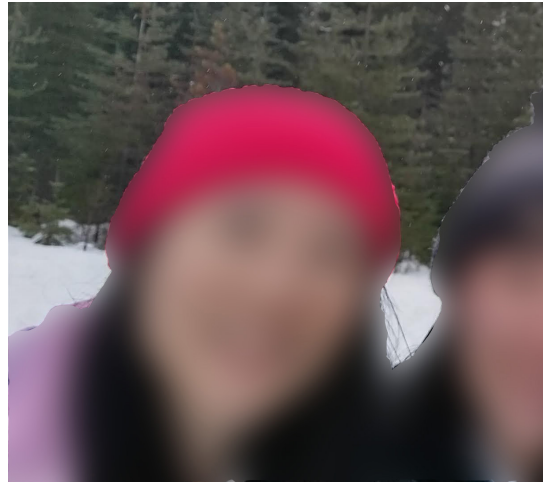


Photo from Jodi Decker

a follower of Jesus. Since then, Christ has been my guiding light, leading me to embrace a new life of surrender and unwavering trust in Him, regardless of life's twists and turns. I am immensely grateful for the presence of these wonderful people and for the transformative role of Christ in my life.

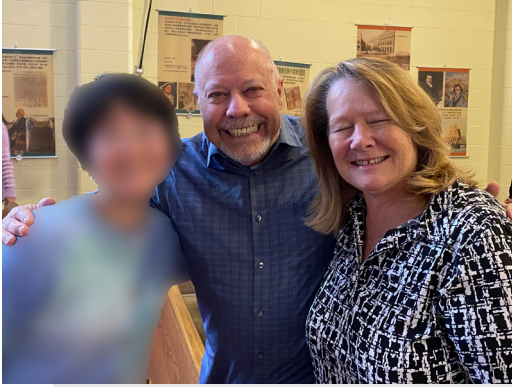


Photo from Susan Forte



**Shared by a Chinese friend of
Susan Forte, Northeast Area**

Through continuous study of the Bible, I came to understand that the God I believe in is Jesus Christ. I want to express special gratitude to Susan and Danny for their guidance on the path of faith.

Initially, I was just learning English

from Susan and Danny, and occasionally, they would share the gospel with me. However, their approach was natural, without any coercion. Through their actions, they exemplified what it means to be a Christian, and I found myself wanting to follow.

Last year, my husband was baptized. When I was hesitating about whether to be baptized along with him, I asked Danny. His response was calm yet powerful. I understood that I could pray and ask God to continue working in me, to show me his power and goodness, and to touch me when I was ready. I remembered his words, and gradually, as I drew closer to God under his care, Susan provided me an opportunity to study the Bible and to help me improve my English.

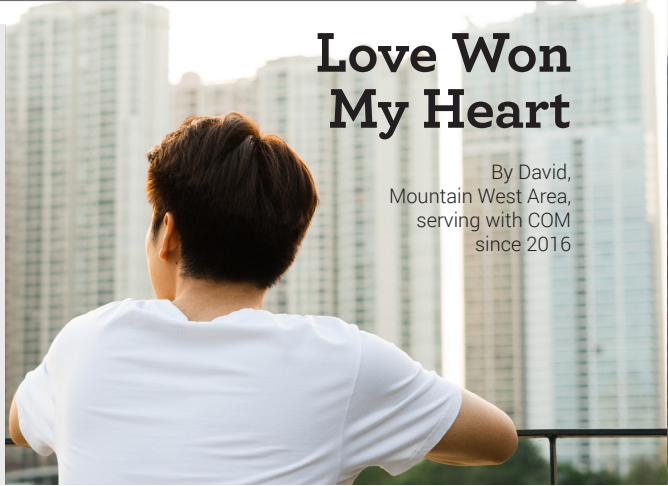
Throughout the entire summer, Susan and I spent many wonderful moments together, meeting once a week for study. Susan was incredibly warm and patient. She always connected God's words with my current life at the right moments. She consistently prayed for me and my family.

One day during the summer, Susan felt that I was ready and led me in a prayer of commitment. I came to realize that I am a sinner, and I believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross for my sins, rose again, and is the living God. I willingly invited Jesus Christ into my life as my Savior and Lord.

From my worldview as a young PhD student, a key philosophy of my life was “no free love”—everything has a price. If people are good to you, I believed, they must want something. My philosophy was broken, however, when I met Christians.

Love Won My Heart

By David,
Mountain West Area,
serving with COM
since 2016



When I arrived in the United States from China, I was surprised when a local Christian group offered free furniture for international students. The experience intrigued me. *Why were they doing this?*

As I got to know the free-furniture people, I saw something different about the love they had, but I didn't understand the source. I had no interest in Christianity, and their Bible studies seemed a waste of time.

Then I met a Chinese student in my lab. He was a Christian, and I noticed a difference in his life, too. He was happy, even when experiences were not happy. And he was always ready to help others, even if helping disrupted his schedule. God used him to begin changing my heart.

At this time, I also experienced culture shock and pressure in my research. My old pattern of self-improvement and striving for success was no longer working, and I realized I couldn't overcome every problem.

Soon, I found the answer—I decided to follow Jesus. I prayed to trust in Him, and I was baptized just three weeks later. I started going to a student fellowship and church. Later I met the young lady who would become my wife, and she also trusted Jesus. I met other Christians who helped me, including John from China Outreach Ministries.

As I continued my PhD program, I grew to be a leader in the local ministry. God directed me in ways that seemed uncomfortable at first, but he was building my faith. He began to show me that caring for Chinese students was truly a leading priority in my life—more important to me than my scientific research. Eventually, I left my job to enter full-time ministry with COM.

As I look back to how God guided me, I see that it wasn't knowledge or debating with Christians that finally convinced me. It was love—God's love through people—that won my heart.



God Is the Best Director

By Merlyne, Northeast Area,
serving with COM since 2019

College campus experiences have been a common theme in my life. It was on a campus in China where I first caught a glimpse of Jesus. Now it is on American campuses where I often have opportunities to share Jesus with others.

During my own college years in China, I was selected as a teaching assistant for an American English teacher. Working closely with this visiting teacher, I was attracted by her beautiful lifestyle. She was joyful and faithful in her work, and she respected everyone regardless of status or performance. I wanted to be like her.

Over time, I came to understand that the qualities I admired in my teacher were a reflection of her relationship with Jesus. When she left China, she gave me a Bible and a card with this verse: "... having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you ..." (Ephesians 1:17-18). This

was the divine initiation of my spiritual journey.

Another teaching assistant knew of my interest in Christianity and introduced me to a Chinese Christian couple. Through a caring relationship, they led me to trust in Jesus, and they became my spiritual parents. I became active in church, and I grew in my faith.

Having tasted God's love, this motivated me to love others. I desired theological education to enter full-time ministry, and God opened the doors for me to study in the United States. My intention after seminary was to move to the Middle East as a missionary, and I even took a vision trip to Lebanon.

But God is the best director, and his amazing hand always guides.

When I arrived in America, God led me to a local Chinese church. There I met staff members of China Outreach Ministries, and I began to volunteer with them. In our church there were many Chinese scholars, and I understood their struggles.

God was redirecting my path. There was a need for more workers among Chinese students and scholars in my city, and I began to consider if this is where I was called to serve. COM workers prayed earnestly with me.

Eventually, I completed seminary and followed God's leading to join COM staff full-time. It was then that I felt true peace about God's plans. I could connect the dots and say, "God, you prepared the way for me!"



Jesus Is Always with Me

By Tony, a Chinese Student in the Northeast Area

When I arrived from China a few years ago, I was curious about the local culture. I visited a nearby church where I met new friends. This was my first time to ever know Christians. The brothers and sisters shared their daily experiences to show the importance of knowing and following Jesus, but this was all new to me.

Paula, a leader in the church fellowship group, was one of my new friends. We talked about Jesus and the Bible, and she helped my friends and me, like taking us to the Asian market.

When the pandemic began, the campus shut down and I had no place to live. A kind man in the church owned a house that was typically used for group fellowship activities. He invited me, along with four other students, to live in the house.

When the campus re-opened, I returned there. I also joined a Christian fellowship at the school, which was mostly Chinese students.

Some of my Christian friends gave me books and videos about the Bible. I began to realize that the creation and the resurrection of Jesus are true. But at that time, the biggest obstacle before accepting Jesus was my family. More than half of them believe in Buddhism, so I was torn between my new faith and my family. But



"This was
my first
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Christians."

my belief continued to strengthen.

Then the summer break came, and I could not live on campus. A friend in the fellowship helped me find a Christian family that had a spare room where I could stay. The whole family was very kind to me.

That summer was also a time of suffering for me, though. I was struggling with anxiety, and I even applied for a leave of absence from school because of my mental and physical health. My parents were very worried about me, and I could not get an airline ticket to return to China because of Covid travel restrictions.

During that time, my host family cared for me, and they were a very important part of my life.

I started to wonder, *why do all the nice people believe in Jesus?* I realized that something believed by good people must be more trustworthy than those things believed by bad people. Then I understood the answer—Because of their faith in Jesus, they want to follow him and do good as he did. I wanted to be part of these people.

By the middle of the summer, I confessed myself to Jesus. I accepted him as my Savior.

As I began to spend time each morning reading the Bible, I felt Jesus was always with me, and my anxieties relaxed. Though I had feared failure in my studies, now I found that I could face obstacles and overcome them.

Then, even my parents were supportive of my decision to follow Jesus. They saw the change in my life and realized if this was something that would release my anxiety, that would be wonderful. I introduced God to them. After reading some of the Bible, they began to understand why Jesus is such a great man.

Now my grandparents have also accepted my faith decision. I plan to share my faith with other family members and try my best to introduce Jesus to them. Please pray for their salvation!

What Will I Say?

Overcoming Fear in Cross-Cultural Ministry

By Brenda Harris, West Coast Area

"And over here," I jokingly remark, "on this side of the freeway, we have the ugly brown hills of southern California, brought to you by a ten-year drought!"

The Chinese students I am transporting from the airport laugh. I pretend to be their tour guide as we traverse the laborious 91 freeway that invariably has enough traffic to drag an hour and fifteen-minute drive into a two and a half-hour crawl.

"You know how much rain Guangdong gets in a day? We get five minutes of that a YEAR!" I tell them. They gasp, their eyes widen, and then they laugh again.

"They like
being in our
American home
and being loved
by us."

Meeting new international students every year for airport pickups can be a bit intimidating. For me, breaking the ice is awkward, but it is a powerful way to connect.

On this hot August day, after picking up a group from the airport, I had wondered what to say as I looked at the brown hills of SoCal thinking, how could they appreciate this when so much of China is green and lush? Suddenly the tour guide role seemed a good way to lighten the mood. After enduring thirteen-hour flights and two hours through customs, a little humor might reassure them they have a friend in this scary new country.

For many of our staff and volunteers, we face insecurities and fears in building cross-cultural relationships. Intentionally overcoming these barriers takes ongoing commitment and reliance on the Holy Spirit.

For Anna Seeger, my colleague in Washington State, the first time talking with Chinese students felt a bit daunting. "My major concern was that I felt unqualified for this type of work," she explained.

Anna had experience in leading Bible studies and going on short-term missions trips, but she questioned how that gave her enough background to relate to students who were generally older than her. Many of our students are graduate students or post-doctoral



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scholars, and Anna was only 24 at the time.

“My first day in the ministry, I was partnered with two scholars who were moms, and the topic was childhood experiences,” she explained. “I shared that I was homeschooled, and I could tell they thought that was interesting—and maybe weird.”

Our own stories do connect with students, however. Even if they can't relate to the topic —like being homeschooled—they will likely be intrigued enough to ask questions.

Other ministry workers may feel insecure about their own academic experience. Chinese students who study abroad are usually highly intelligent and intensely committed to their studies. Many in the United States are earning advanced degrees or conducting groundbreaking research. Here at the University of California, Riverside, many pursue studies in physics, chemistry, and environmental science.

How do we develop conversations,

and how do we share the gospel with the world's future leaders?

Susan Forte, a COM staffer in New York, felt this way at first. Then she realized how students so far from home are often lonely and homesick. “They just want to spend time with us and be able to practice their English skills in a safe setting. They like being in our American home and being loved by us.”

Susan thought being older might be a relationship barrier, but she found that more often, she could fill a parent-type role. A sweet aspect of Chinese culture is a high respect for older people and teachers. So those of us with a bit of life lessons behind us provide a nurturing home-away-from-home. It is a perfect cradle to nurture the love of Christ in the hearts of students.

By God's grace, we overcome the fears of our own hearts. Sharing our lives is the bridge that connects us, and simple conversations can lead to an everlasting relationship with Christ.

Memorial Gifts

Memorials are contributions to China Outreach Ministries in memory of a person specified by the donor.

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COM is a member of the
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New Staff Members

We celebrate the addition of two new COM missionaries. Please include these new workers in your prayers.

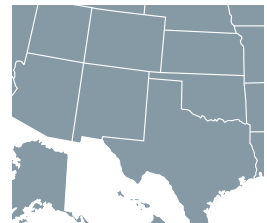


West Coast Area

After a successful business career in China, followed by seminary studies in North America, **AZ** joins COM staff in reaching Chinese students in the United States.

Mountain West Area

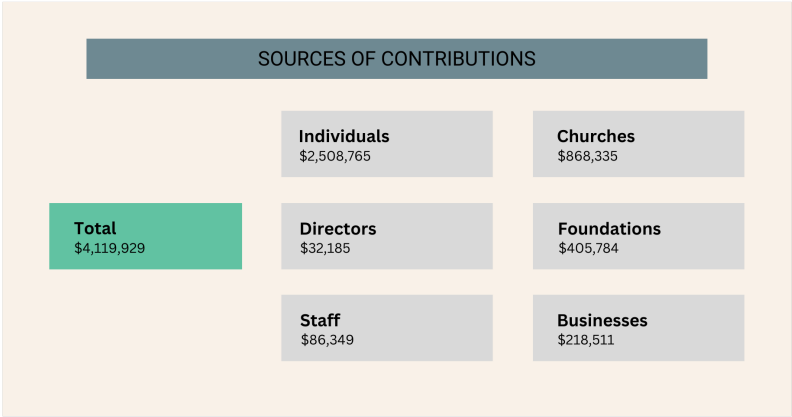
With a background in English Literature studies in China, **KW** is completing seminary



training in the United States in preparation for vocational ministry.

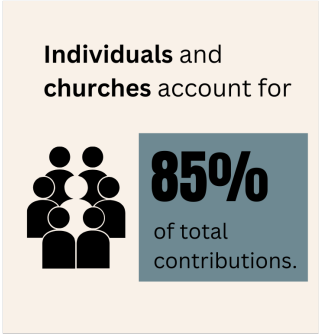
2023 Annual Report

Thank you for your partnership with China Outreach Ministries.



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To obtain a copy of the audited version when available, please contact the COM Leadership Center at 717-591-3500 or com@chinaoutreach.net.

From an IMPACT Reader:
I think this ministry is more important than it has ever been. I'm praying for the seeds being planted to fall on fertile soil.
—Ariel L. in Briscoe, Texas

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China's Future Leaders Are Here. Will They See Jesus in Us?

In this issue of *IMPACT*, you'll read stories of how God is at work among the Chinese students and scholars he has brought to our doorsteps. Often, he uses the faithfulness of good **neighbors**.



Their warm hospitality made me feel right at home. —page 4

Through their actions, they exemplified what it means to be a Christian, and I found myself wanting to follow. —page 5

Then I understood—because of their faith in Jesus, they want to follow him and do good as he did. —page 9