

# Far East Broadcaster

## Blossoms in the Wilderness

An Overview of Theological Education on the Mainland

Jia'en Wu

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Chief Editor: Raymond Lo Editor: Ministry Department Translator: Louise Lo · Vicki Chung Graphic Design: Kerry Lau

10/F, Midas Plaza, 1 Tai Yau Street, San Po Kong, Kowloon, Hong Kong



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10/F, Midas Plaza, 1 Tai Yau Street, San Po Kong, Kowloon, Hong Kong Tel: (852) 3717 1818 Fax: (852) 3717 1919  
E-mail: [febcb@febchk.org](mailto:febcb@febchk.org) Website: <http://www.febchk.org> • <http://www.febccm.org>

**CHRIST TO THE WORLD BY RADIO**



We cannot visualize what theological education is like on the mainland as their situation is vastly different from ours. Yet theological education is still essential for nurturing believers, training up leaders, and developing churches in the long run. That is why many predecessors concerned for the church in China have participated in or supported theological education on the mainland, or written on relevant issues. In this article we are having a brief look at that too.

### Setting up training institutions

Ever since liberation, churches on the mainland are no longer named by denomination. Seminaries do not normally affiliate themselves with any denomination, but whether they are part of the Three-Self Church or the house church will be clearly spelled out. Theological education of both entities was relaunched after the Cultural Revolution, but has since gained momentum in development.

The leading institution of the Three-Self entity is Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, which was reopened in 1980. Since then the number of seminaries has been rising. Now there is a graduate-level seminary in almost every province. Apart from that, all hierarchies of the Three-Self Church have their own regional schools to train up volunteers who may not have the opportunity to enroll in seminaries. These schools are often called training centers or training points.

As for the house church, theological education stems from the grassroots, and subsequently involves more training points. In 1983, the rural churches were blessed with a great revival, but cults were springing up too. Churches everywhere sensed the urgency of theological education and began to co-organize Bible schools or seminaries that train not only believers but also church ministers, with the aims of stabilizing the church and expanding missions. Training points of the 80s and 90s did not have fixed campuses, but they worked with very high flexibility and grew extremely fast. At the turn of this century, there was an estimate of over 1,000 house church seminaries and training points already.

### Upgrading program levels


Books and instructors are indispensable in theological education. When both were in limited supply, mainland seminaries adopted spiritual and discipleship training modes in the early stages. However, as more resources came in, systematic curriculums were set up. In the 90s, house churches even attempted to develop standard seminaries. With the assistance of overseas lecturers, they now have seminaries offering master's programs. Quite some lecturers initially trained on the mainland have obtained further education overseas. Three-Self

seminaries also keep upgrading and have optimized the two or three-year programs into four-year undergraduate programs. National seminaries even offer master's or doctoral degrees.

Such development should be attributed to the macro environmental factor of China's reform and opening. In the past 20 years, mainland believers have been able to access more and more reference materials and overseas lecturers entering China has also been made easier, which are true benefits for the advance of theological education. A new force called the "urban churches" arisen recently has also helped spur the growth of theological education. Many intellectuals have committed themselves to Christ. They think independently and do not feel like belonging to the Three-Self community, but they have outpaced the mode of care in traditional house churches. So they gather to form their own churches and a new generation pastoral ministers gradually emerge among them. In these few years, many churches are calling for better academic accreditation from their pastors. Rural ministers are also aspiring to standard or advanced theological training. This has a lot to do with the rapid urban sprawl and thriving urban churches.

### The rugged way ahead

Theological education on the mainland has definitely got life and energy, but the massive threshing floor also signifies indiscernible trials and setbacks. The campuses of the Three-Self seminaries offer good ground, especially those in the lead. However, staff lacking expertise will affect students' achievement. This is also a worry among house church schools. The more established ones sometimes recruit better educators on their own, which should guarantee higher quality instructions. The problem is, their programs have to be conducted out of the public eye and often intensively, covering six to eight hours a day and completing one course in a couple of days. Sometimes undergraduate, master's and diploma courses are all done in the same class, which is really undesirable.

These bits and pieces do not suffice to even suggest the great and unsearchable questions: how to prevent brain drain among the lecturers, how to boost enrolment, how to go about accreditation. And how to persist in the face of mounting adversities is another ordeal! But we know the God of miracles has been raising mainland theological educators in the wilderness and He will surely guide them and watch over them, and one day, open up for them streams in the wasteland. 

*(Ms Wu is an experienced scholar in theological education and for many years has dedicated herself to theological training ministries.)*







# New Wings for Gospel Broadcasting

## Afterthoughts on FEBC Chinese Ministries New Media Workshop

**Zenobia Wong (Senior Web Officer I)**

At the end of May through early June, FEBC's Chinese Ministries Office held for the first time the New Media Workshop (NMW). The Chinese Ministries Office works under FEBC Hong Kong with teams in Taiwan, the US, Canada and China. In the NMW, besides delegations from these teams, many partner organizations were also present, like Trans World Radio, Voice of Salvation (Taiwan), Alliance Bible Seminary, Chinese Christian Mission (Hong Kong), Sansa Media Mission Messengers, and of course our colleagues from FEBC International.


The chief note of this NMW was "idea exchange", with ample opportunities for each participant to share and talk. In the past years, FEBC's Chinese Ministries as well as other sectors have been employing new media diversely to various extents. So good we were able to meet and tell each other how God had been with us in bringing more souls to Him via new media.

New media are ever-changing, which means we cannot just keep talking about past experiences, but get to know more to expand our ministries. We had invited three keynote speakers to speak to us on that. They shared with us insight from various perspectives – the trend of new media, hardware and software, technical knowhow, content crawling, brand building and strategies on promotion. We co-workers not only got a better understanding of the state of affairs on international levels, but also delved deeper into new media for gospel work in China.

The last session in the NMW was for group work. Participants were to use their imagination based on past experience and insight gained in the event to design and map out new projects that could be implemented with the concerted effort of all partner teams in FEBC Chinese Ministries. In the process, it was endowment of the zeal and commitment to serve that we witnessed.

As a matter of fact, just one NMW is not enough to get everybody trained up on new media and employing them comprehensively to preach the gospel. And we know full well new media are just a tool God has put in our hands. If God is absent in the contents dispatched through new media, what point is there to uphold them blindly? Two characteristic terms in the media read O2O (Online to Offline) and IoT (Internet of Things). The earliest form of O2O on earth is "Jesus Christ became flesh". IoT links up things using the web, and for us it is linking up God and man, and man and man, with "love"

If we use new media without God, or without the Christ-like immersion in the crowd, or without love, then...

New media is of the heart and for the heart. 



*Footprints of broadcasting  
Witnesses of accompany*

# SLE in Pregnancy

**Sister Zhou, Jiangsu Province**

Being pregnant was big good news to me and my family shared the happiness with me. However I am a patient with Systemic lupus erthematosus (SLE) and unable to bear children. I had a relapse of SLE after having follow-up consultations for four months. Firstly I got rashes on my face and then my skin was broken and festering. Continuing my pregnancy would put my life as well as my child's life at risk. Therefore the first child was aborted.

With medication, my immune system had gradually recovered. A relative talked to me about the Gospel at that time and I tried to believe in Jesus. Then I bore my second child, but had heavy bleeding after three-month pregnancy and finally had a miscarriage. The caring love and encouragement from brothers

and sisters and the Bible verses boosted my confidence to keep building faith in Jesus.

After that, when I wanted to have a child, God answered my prayer and I bore the third child. Extreme dangers were detected during my pregnancy. My liver and kidneys became overloaded. I again got rashes on my face. However, God's mercy kept me once again. When I held my daughter for the first time, I could not hold back my tears. Although my immune system is still weak that resulted in severe anemia and various symptoms, I have survived since then. I have seldom got a flu or cough. Even the doctor cannot believe that I am in a state of such good health. Thank God indeed!

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