

# CHINA: Chinese Christians Imprisoned for Selling Religious Devotional Books

By Julie Brown Patton

The Gospel Herald Ministries (10.03.2017) – <http://bit.ly/2m0NrHi> – Five Christian leaders in China's northeastern Liaoning province, who were arrested for allegedly purchasing and selling Christian books, now received prison sentences for doing so.

Four women and one man, all members of Chaoguang Church, also known as Chaoguang Village Christian Gathering Place, were sentenced for allegedly buying and selling “officially forbidden Christian devotional books,” according to ChinaAid sources. ChinaAid is an international nonprofit whose employees expose abuses of persecuted Christians and promotes religious freedom, human rights and rule of law in China.

Pastor Li Dongzhe, and his wife, Piao Shunnan, received seven years each with a fine of \$14,500, according to China Aid. The church's accountant, Zhao Chunxia, and a secretary, Li Yuan, were given five years each and fined \$10,200. Another member, Shi Jinyan, was sentenced to three years with a fine of \$7,300.

Most of the defendants belong to a Korean ethnic minority group that resides within China, according to ChinaAid. They were arrested last June.

Johan Oeyangen, on social media, invited others to imagine this same development happening in a democratic nation.

Ingrid Jarrett Tater asked online: “If America is a Christian

country, why are we doing business with China?"

Chaoguang Church is an officially registered church within China's government-run Protestant church system, the Three-Self Patriotic Movement. The church also received a fine of \$29,000 associated with the allegedly offense of these devotional books. Despite the church's registered status, the courts declared the Christians illegally conducted business because they intended to make a profit while selling Christian literature.

Following the conviction, Chaoguang Church has closed down, reports ChinaAid.

Convicting registered church members is perceived as a change from prior actions, in that charges such as "illegal business operations" were typically levied against attendees of unregistered house churches to limit their freedom.

"Christian convicts of crimes like 'illegal business operations' and 'participating in cults' are [usually] brought against house church members," said Ren Quanniu, a lawyer who often works on such cases. "[The government] simply comes up with random legal excuses to detain them. I've heard of a similar case, in which the believers were arrested because of illegally publishing religious materials."

ChinaAid was founded in 2002 after the announcement of death sentences for five Chinese house church leaders. Some of the group's first actions involved a letter-writing campaign, and sending trained human rights lawyers to defend those being persecuted. In the end, the five death sentences of these leaders were overturned.

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