

# BUILDING UP THE NEXT GENERATION

## Outreach to Chinese students in Germany

*CBWOQ has committed to supporting Pastor Xiaodan Gang and her ministry to Chinese students in Germany. Our target is \$7,000. Read how to give at [baptistwomen.com/causes](http://baptistwomen.com/causes).*



*Map of Germany showing four cities where CBM's Chinese Ministries Team reaches out to Chinese students.*

*by Kristine Gonzalez (CBM)*

PASTOR XIAODAN GANG serves with Canadian Baptist Ministries (CBM) in Germany as part of its Chinese Ministries Team. Similar to the university students that she now cares for under her ministry, she was first exposed to the gospel as a Chinese national in a foreign land. Her walk with Christ first started while pursuing studies in Switzerland and it was there that she received theological training at St. Chrischona Theological Seminary in Basel.

Pastor Gang is based in Marburg, a town located north of Frankfurt. Idyllic and picturesque, university students make up a third of its total population.

### The harvest in Germany

There are hundreds of thousands of Chinese university students who have made Germany their temporary home while they advance their education. Germany is a popular academic destination for Chinese students because the country offers free quality education. And to them, Western education is still considered superior to the few higher learning opportunities that exist in China.

The ministry to Chinese students in Germany is a wonderful chance to make the gospel accessible to a mostly atheist people group. Chinese students are often the only children in their families. This often means that they are highly individualistic and unaccustomed to the concept of looking out for others. They may struggle with building relationships and being independent. Often their first year as a foreign student can be extremely difficult. Many of them experience discrimination, isolation and loneliness.

## CONNECT TO MISSION

Some turn to substance abuse, premarital relationships and even suicide attempts to find an escape from their predicament. They need the love and salvation of Jesus Christ to give them strength and hope.

This is what Pastor Gang is able to give them. The compassionate community she has built and nurtured is like a magnet for these students.

### Chinese ministries in Germany

In partnership with a local organization called Friends of Mission to Chinese in Germany (FMCD), and together with local churches, Pastor Gang and other church leaders have formed and nurtured spiritual communities in the cities of Marburg, Heidelberg, Goettingen and Kassel. These communities soak in God's Word through fellowship, Bible studies and Sunday services. These leaders have also created a training program to raise up leaders so that churches in Germany can become more sustainable.

### Sharing the gospel in word and deed

Director for International Partnerships John Chan shares, *"Pastor Gang is dedicated and she really persevered through many challenges. She braved the trials that ministry presented her. She really felt that God called her to minister to students, so even if it isn't easy, she pushes on. She's actually been offered more lucrative, stable*

*ministry positions but she chose this path, even if it's more difficult financially because she has to raise her own funds. Students take to her because she is someone who is genuinely interested in them. They feel safe and welcomed. They feel that she is an older sister that they can latch on."*

This ministry is especially tricky because the community changes so quickly—what with students graduating and going back home to China, then new students arrive, only to return home after a few years.

Before COVID-19 emerged, Pastor Gang's day-to-day was filled with building and maintaining relationships with Chinese students. She was usually preparing to teach the students about the Bible in one form or another, with food and fellowship as key components. Ministry in Marburg meant inviting people to Bible study, meeting with them during the week and talking about faith.

With relational community as an essential ingredient in leading students to Christ, COVID-19 posed a hurdle for the Chinese Ministries Team. Physical gatherings had to cease, school was shut down and students were making rushed plans to return to their home countries.

Pastor Gang turned to online Sunday services, banding together with other churches, and connecting all four core ministry locations. Fridays are designated for online Bible study classes while

one-on-one counselling is provided remotely. She says, "It's hard to build trusting relationships that way (online or over the phone), so people usually don't tell you about their questions and doubts concerning faith. I hope that staying in contact with them during the crisis will make them join our face-to-face meetings after the crisis, where we can get to talk about faith more seriously."

Pastor Gang's concerns were soon put to rest. Despite her misgivings, she has seen a greater pull towards the gospel. With students in isolation, online connections through Bible study groups suddenly became more enticing. COVID-19 forced students who stayed in Germany to self-quarantine in their apartments. "During the crisis I'm staying in contact with non-believers who talk with me about their fears and

▼ *Pastor Xiaodan Gang*



loneliness,” Pastor Gang shares.

“I recognized that many of them developed a greater desire to join our (online) events regularly. After two months of quarantine many students have become less and less emotionally stable and struggle with depression. Luckily, I still have the opportunity, together with other people from our church, to prepare food and go around the town to meet students at the doorstep to bring them food, talk a little and pray for them.”

### Hope in extraordinary times

Prior to COVID-19, a Chinese Ministries team member met a student on the bus who seemed especially interested in hearing the gospel. As they parted ways, they continued to pray for the gentleman, who later showed up to one of the Bible group meetings and continues to attend online meetings to this day. He struggles with remote contact as he prefers face-to-face fellowship, but remains in touch with the team.

Connection online has continued even as lockdown restrictions have eased.

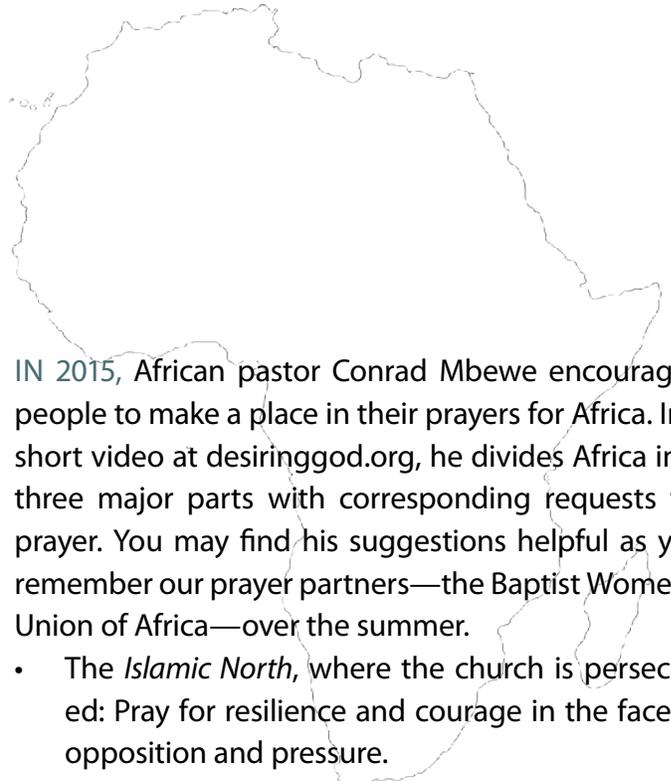
“Since the middle of May groups of 50 people are allowed to meet again, but under a lot of regulations,” shares Pastor Gang.

“For example, visitors need to keep a distance of 1.5 metres from each other. Services can’t be longer than 60 minutes and we are only allowed to sing wearing face masks. We can’t really have any group talks or meetings.

What the students long for most is close relationship. Right now, if we continue to meet online we are able to reach more people.” ■

---

## A WINDOW ON AFRICA



IN 2015, African pastor Conrad Mbeve encouraged people to make a place in their prayers for Africa. In a short video at [desiringgod.org](http://desiringgod.org), he divides Africa into three major parts with corresponding requests for prayer. You may find his suggestions helpful as you remember our prayer partners—the Baptist Women’s Union of Africa—over the summer.

- *The Islamic North*, where the church is persecuted: Pray for resilience and courage in the face of opposition and pressure.
- *Urban Africa*, where there is increasing development, young professionals, and Western influence: Pray that God would keep the young, growing church’s focus on Jesus and His mission.
- *Rural Africa*, where there is poverty and lack of basic amenities (like running water, electricity and ease of communication): Pray that the Church will not end up in syncretism, but embrace the gospel in all its purity, not as a covering for false religion. ■