

三藩市播道會家書

親愛的弟兄姊妹

教會決定採用了中國內地會總幹事華福蘭主教所寫的一首詩 *Facing a Task Unfinished* 作為我們 30 周年紀念及本年度夏令會的主題曲。這首聖詩寫於 1930 年代的中國，影響了千千萬萬的信徒。事實上這首聖詩是一首非常震撼的詩歌。

1930 年代的中國是多事之秋，充滿了內憂外患。在外患方面，1931 年的九一八事變，整個東三省都在日本人手裡。其他列強在中國瓜分利益，往往在租界橫行，不用理會中國的主權。在內憂方面，自從蔣介石北伐成功，繼而進行清黨運動，導致國共內戰。除此之外，各省各區的軍閥弄權，以致國家一片混亂，再加上天災，人民生活苦困。

中國教會面對着這樣的挑戰，是一個嚴峻的考驗。然而奇怪的是：正如雙城記這本小說所載，最壞的時間往往又是最好的機會，最幽暗的時刻往往又是最光明的日子。1930 年代也是中國教會大復興的時代，宋尚節，王明道，倪析聲，楊紹唐等傳道人帶領整個中國教會復興，千千萬萬的中國人悔改認罪，是歷史上不常見的現象。內地會的宣教士亦有復興的跡象，雖然不少傳教士被殺，被綁架，受虐待，他們應勇往直前，為主犧牲。教會經歷從沒有見過的復興現象。

這首聖詩在當時激勵了不少信徒，無論在中國或在中國以外的地方，感動了千千萬萬的信徒委身基督。盼望我們這首主題曲亦帶來我們的警醒和復興。

蘇穎睿

The Historical Background of *Facing a Task Unfinished*

(Written by the China Inland Mission Director Bishop Frank Houghton)

Our Church has decided to choose Bishop Frank Houghton's *Facing a Task Unfinished* as our theme song for our 30th anniversary and our Summer Retreat.

Charles Dickens' words in *A Tale of Two Cities* perhaps best describe the situation of the Chinese church in the 1930s when this hymn *Facing a Task Unfinished* was written:

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way.

On the one hand, Guomindang, under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石 1887-1975), succeeded in its North Expedition and was able to set up its new national government in Nanjing. In general, the Nanjing Government proved much less radical in its attitude towards foreigners and Christianity than the Qing government before. Furthermore, in 1931, the Premier himself was baptized into the Methodist Church and missionaries were optimistic about the future of the Chinese Church. In fact, the CIM made great progress in its ministry during this period. In 1932, there were 1326 missionaries, 18 new stations were opened, and several thousand were baptized including opium addicts, soldiers, Buddhist devotees and prisoners. On the other hand, in 1927, the National Government began to purge the Communists resulting in the civil war that lasted until 1936. These red soldiers together with bandits presented the greatest threat to the missionaries. In 1930, three Finnish associate missionaries were murdered and numerous Christians died as a result of Communist ill-treatment. In July 1930, the Communist army captured Changsha in Hunan and sacked the city, taking over the CIM Bible Training Institute as their temporary headquarters. The most dramatic example of martyrdom in China mission history occurred in 1934. An attractive American couple, John and Betty Stam, missionaries of the CIM were beheaded publicly by the Communists in Qingdeh, Anhui while their three-month old baby was miraculously saved by a local pastor and spirited to safety at a nearby mission station. This story gained much publicity, and paradoxically motivated many more young people to go to the mission field. Many other CIM missionaries were also martyred or kidnapped by the Communists during this dangerous period. R.H. Glazier, a CIM missionary wrote: "During the first half of 1937, I took part in eight special evangelistic campaigns. Three of these places in the south of Kiangsi had been under Communist control for several years and were hardly recovered. Ruined and abandoned houses, piles of debris not yet removed from some streets bore evidence of havoc that had been wrought. The churches in these places suffered much, some died or were killed, others left and never returned."

The paradox is that despite such chaotic and unfavorable conditions for missionary activity, this period also marked great revival and rapid development especially among independent Chinese churches and churches founded by the China Inland Mission. It was against such a historical background that this hymn was written and it touched the heart of thousands of Christians both within and without China. I hope that this hymn will also touch our heart to dedicate our life to Him for His glory.

In Christ
Wing So