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The Western FRONT

where the gospel meets the world

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: FRANK YUEN



China's Changing Ministry Demands

By Frank Yuen, M.Div. alumnus from the class of 2007

"Brother Yuen, would you like to visit us? We have a Bible school in the countryside to train young ministers from poor villages in our province."

"Peter," a pastor about my age, approached me as I was visiting my missionary friend in a seminar that he organized for pastors from China in Hong Kong. Three weeks later, I was riding on a train to see Peter in his hometown. "Am I crazy? I barely know this guy. Could this be a trap, and am I bringing my family right into it?" I became a little nervous when I was sitting on the train without knowing what would be waiting for us.

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ALUMNI CONNECT EVENTS

Western alumni gathered in December at an "Alumni Connect" event to discuss how graduates in various roles complement one another in ministry and how they can network to provide a more integrative approach to a person's overall ministerial care.

The next "Alumni Connect" event will be on Thursday, March 22 from 6:30-9pm at the San Jose campus. We will share an update about the integrative ministerial approach and the Western referral/network system. RSVP opens on February 9. More details will follow.

REGIONAL ALUMNI GATHERINGS

Western faculty and staff will be hosting "Alumni Gatherings" around the Bay Area. Come fellowship with Western grads, staff and faculty at a location nearest to you. Drop in anytime between 11:30am-1:15pm. We will end our time together at 1:15pm.

Tuesday, January 31 - San Jose

Location: Sweet Tomatoes, 625 Coleman Ave., San Jose, near Trader Joe's. Come purchase your lunch. This month marks the 24th year that Dr. Tuck has taught at Western Seminary. He will be the host. RSVP to [Charmaine Williams](#) to reserve your seat.

Wednesday, February 29 - Los Altos

Dr. Judith Needham-Penrose, San Jose's MFT Program Director, will host it at her home.

Thursday, March 22 - San Jose campus (see above)

Tuesday, April 24 - Millbrae/San Francisco area

Dr. Jeff Louie, Associate Professor of Theology, will be the host.

Tuesday, May 22 - Los Gatos/Santa Cruz area

Dr. Steve Korch, Director of Pastoral Training, will be the host.

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Peter was waiting for us at the train station. I was relieved when I did not see any police around him. He settled us in a hotel as we were all exhausted from the long journey.

The next day was Sunday. Peter took us to his church in the morning and asked if I would like to share a message with the church. I told him I would love to. The first half hour of the service was a time for meditation and prayers, followed by praise songs, more prayers, and testimonies. After Peter gave a testimony about how God miraculously provided everything for the church, two hours had gone by. When it was my turn to speak it was 4 o'clock already. I was wondering how many people would remain in the audience. To my amazement, 90% of the congregation was still there by the time I finished preaching.

The next day, Peter brought me to visit his Bible school. As he was driving, he shared with me his stories. Peter was imprisoned and tortured for his faith when he was in his twenties. During his imprisonment, his fingernails were plucked out by the authority. But that did not diminish his zeal for evangelism. After his release, he often shared the Gospel in poor, remote villages. During those trips, Peter found out the tremendous need for pastors in those poor villages. About seven years ago, Peter seized an opportunity to make a handsome fortune in the real estate boom. Since then, he has established and financed this Bible school for young ministers from poor villages.

The school was in a relatively hidden location. As I walked into the school, I was greeted by a huge, ferocious dog. Cameras were installed in various locations to keep an eye on the surroundings. After I finished teaching for the day, Peter told me there was a window of escape. If the police came, someone would bring me out through that window to hide in the mountains. I thanked him for telling me only after I had finished teaching, and not before.

There were about twenty students in the school. Almost all of them were in their early twenties. They have a vigorous daily routine. They get up at 5:00 a.m. for prayer, devotions, and various chores. They have 6 classes, 50 minutes each, everyday, which pretty much takes up all morning and afternoon. They also have to hand-wash their own clothes, cook, clean, and do homework. For security reasons, they can only have one half day of free time outside the campus every month. They can only call home once a week and go home once a year.



“Money reigns supreme in China, and the people are aligning themselves after it.”

Certainly, these students have sacrificed a lot for their two year Bible training. I commended their faith, which sprouted in the midst of persecution. I told them that the believers in the Western world, who have a much easier life, should learn from them. At the end of my teaching, they blessed me by singing a song from Psalm 1. I was deeply moved with gratitude and their dedication to the Word of God. Stories like these are encouraging. However, during my time in China, I also discovered stories that make me worry.

Before going to China, I had often heard exciting reports of how the Christian population in China had grown rapidly in recent years. One report even claimed that 10% of the population in China is Christian. How realistic that number is I do not know, but from what I have seen and heard in China, apart from a glamorous view from outside, there are a few issues that concern me.

First, materialism is winning the heart of people, even the heart of many Christians. Year after year of nearly double digits in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth, China has become the second largest economy in the world. Wealth has improved the standard of living for the general public tremendously, but it has also created a lot of social problems. In short, money reigns supreme in China, and the people are aligning themselves after it. Morals and ethics take a back seat when it comes to financial gain. Living in such an environment, Christians in China are losing their pure devotion to the Lord that they used to have. One pastor told me that many Christians in his church do not have time for the Word of God. If someone can spare a few minutes reading some devotional materials on the bus going to work it is considered very good.

Secondly, many people, though they have accepted the Lord, remain biblically illiterate, especially in poor areas. Superstitions and witchcraft are common. When I was teaching a class in another location, one of the students received a phone call from her parents saying that her aunt, a Christian, asked for 100,000 RMB (about US \$15,000) so that she could ask God to solve a chronic problem in the student's family. I also heard that some Christians would tear a page from the Bible, burn the page, mix the ash with water, and then drink it, thinking that the Bible has magical powers to cure incurable diseases.

Missions in China are facing new challenges. Sending lay believers as missionaries to share the Four Spiritual Laws is no longer sufficient. Modern day missionaries must have in-depth theological and biblical knowledge. They need to understand local culture and the rising social challenges, so that they can proclaim biblical truth in culturally relevant terms.

This awareness will help develop true disciples of Christ. I am thankful that Western Seminary has provided me with sound and relevant biblical training to meet the rising demands in China today.

Out of Alignment

By Fred Mok,

M.Div. alumnus from the class of 2007

When a car's tires are out of alignment, it can be tough to notice. When the car is driving in a straight line, the steering wheel is not centered. The tire wear is uneven and the steering wheel vibrates. If you're like me and drive an older car, you might think it's the natural condition of your vehicle. Sometimes it takes a third-party to point out the deficiency.

When I asked Dr. Jeff Louie to mentor me as a preacher, he said yes on a couple of conditions. The main condition was that I be open to gospel-centered preaching. "Huh?," I thought. Of course I'm open to gospel-centered preaching – in fact, I am quite sure I'm already doing it. I talk about Jesus all the time.

Months later, as we sat together with other Western alumni and church leaders, I realized how far out of alignment I had been. Until that point, I hadn't noticed how my messages emphasized personal application rather than the completed work of Christ. Until that point, I had little notion of all the ways in which the Old Testament pointed to Jesus. Until that point, I had written off typology as the sole domain of reformed theologians. It was scary realizing that people who listened to me would come out thinking Jesus' death and resurrection was only about salvation and not transformation.

Dr. Louie, along with my colleagues in the gospel-centered preaching fellowship, helped me to see how all of Scripture points to the gospel. Although much of the Bible talks about law and works, it only forms the backdrop for the overarching message of the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

My journey toward gospel-centeredness is only just beginning and I'd like to invite you to join me in the process of alignment. Our groups meets the first and third Tuesdays of the month from 12-2 pm at Western Seminary San Jose, room 203. For more details, write me: fredtmok@gmail.com.



From left to right: Linda Miller, Jane Creswell, current coaching student Charmaine Williams, and alumni Geri Kinstler and Sarah Germain.

Coaching Discovered

In November, two instructors, Linda Miller and Jane Creswell, who were instrumental in helping Western get off the ground with its Coaching program, were reunited at Western. Jane taught the Language of Coaching course (MCS 517S) and both co-facilitated a "Discover Coaching" event, an introduction to Christian coaching for the wider community.

We have a Discover Coaching Webinar this Wednesday, January 11 at 10am. Our next campus event will be on June 13 from 6:30-8:30pm. [Register here](#) for either event or email [Lisa Mueller](#).



Women in Community

Several Western alumni organized a networking event for women in November to discuss today's current ministry issues unique to women. The response to this gathering is prompting future quarterly events. Stay tuned.

By the way, it's not too late to audit the "Women in Leadership" (PCW 513S) course, which begins in March. It will be taught this spring semester by Dr. Bev Hislop. The [syllabus](#) is available. You may use your free annual "[Alumni Audit Opportunity](#)." See page 4 for information.



Support the Mission

To the many alumni, church and parachurch ministries, and individuals who faithfully support the seminary with their time, talents and financial resources, I express my deepest gratitude for your ongoing support of our vision. There is no season in the life of our mission where we can afford to shrink back in our quest to provide advanced training to our students so they can be better equipped agents of spiritual transformation in the lives of others. This goal of personal spiritual transformation forms the basis of this seminary's purpose, mission and purpose.

As we consider the "big picture" aspect of our role as a seminary, I also want to challenge each of us to recognize the smaller details that can enhance our campus for current and future students. Please read over this active list of projects and the associated material/labor costs and consider what role you might play in growing the role of Western Seminary, San Jose, in the Bay Area and beyond.

If you are able to respond with a financial gift, please pay by check or you can [make a gift to Western](#) online by credit card. Designate a "one time gift" to the San Jose campus of any amount and specify under "other" what item/s the funds are going towards. If paying by check, make checks payable to Western Seminary and mail to the San Jose campus (address below). In the memo section, designate "San Jose campus" and list which item/s you would like the funds to go towards.

- ~~Library: painting and labor: \$300~~
- Shampooing carpets: \$540
- Steam cleaning classroom chairs: \$525
- Replacing 15 classroom chairs: \$1300
- Adding additional electrical outlets and labor: \$600
- Adding one PC work station in library: \$650
- ~~Coffee maker for kitchen/student lounge: \$50~~
- Wall prints and frames: \$400
- Book re-binding machine for library: \$895
- ~~Flatbed document scanner: \$175~~
- Reception/work station cubicle in entrance area: \$3000

In His grace,

Dan Ruiz
Site Director
Western Seminary, San Jose

P.S. Painting and labor for the library and a flatbed document scanner have already been donated. A coffee maker has been provided by current Western Seminary students and faculty. The class of 2011 is working on donating a bookcase for the San Jose campus library and additional gifts to the Western Seminary fund. Thank you for your support!

Blogging about Gospel Living

by Marc Cortez, Academic Dean

I am pleased and excited to announce the launch of a new blog from Western Seminary: [Trans•formed | Living the Gospel in an Everyday World](#) (www.westernseminary.edu/transformed).

This blog is a resource from faculty and friends of [Western Seminary](#) focused on "living the Gospel in an everyday world." In other words, we're here to help you think through the implications of the Gospel for leading God's people in everyday life and ministry.

Our goal is to create relevant, insightful, Gospel-centered content that you can put to use in your ministry. If you are involved in Christian leadership in any capacity, then this blog is for you.

Need a Transcript?

If you would like to obtain a copy of your official or unofficial transcript, please print the following [Transcript Request Form](#), fill it out completely, and submit it, with payment, to the address or fax number at the bottom of the form. Thank you!

Audit a Class for Free!

Alumni can take one eligible course per academic year free as an audit course. You need only complete the [Non-Credit Application](#) form and the [Alumni Audit Opportunity](#) and submit them to [Carrie Priest](#), Student Services Coordinator. Email or call her at 408.368.6889 ext 405.



Congratulations
to Jeff Mammen and his
new bride, Trisha Hubbs
Mammen, on tying the
knot last month.

- From your friends at Western

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