

Mission Sonlight- 4th Quarter 2008 - Chinese Hope Channel

Narrator: Welcome to Mission Sonlight. Today our travels take us the Chinese Union Mission. This Mission encompasses Mainland China, Hong Kong, Macao, Matsu, Pescadores, Quemoy and Taiwan.

The histories of Taiwan, the island and Taiwan as the Republic of China can be a bit confusing to the onlooker. Portuguese ships arrived on the island of Taiwan in 1517 and quickly named it Ilha Formosa or Beautiful Island. That began a struggle of numerous countries and dynasties to maintain control of the island.

Taiwan's tumultuous history continued with the rise of Communism on the Chinese mainland in 1949. Chiang Kai-shek was China's President and was forced to flee to Taiwan as Mao Tse Tung took control.

The work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Taiwan was officially begun in 1949. Today the Chinese Union Mission is comprised of the Hong-Kong-Macao Conference and the Taiwan Conference. Although mainland China is a part of the union, there is no organizational structure of the Church in the country at the present time.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church operates several schools, including Taipei Adventist Preparatory Academy and Hong Kong Adventist Academy, both primarily used as outreach English learning schools, as well as Taiwan Adventist College and Hong Kong Adventist College. The health ministry of the church is carried out through the work of hospitals such as Taiwan Adventist Hospital. Spiritual materials in the form of the written word are produced regularly at the Signs of the Times Publishing Association also in Taiwan.

One of the challenges that the China Union Mission faces today is reaching over 1 billion Mandarin speaking Chinese. Church leaders have examined the methods that would best reach this population group. They have chosen to use modern technology as a tool to make a major impact of telling the story of Jesus to Mandarin speaking Chinese.

As a means of reaching such a large language group, plans are being made to launch Chinese Hope channel on the Internet. James Wu, President of the Chinese Union Mission, says the potential to reach the masses through the Internet is growing daily.

James Wu: We know that the Chinese community worldwide is connected to the Internet and is growing very fast. Through the Internet, as well as satellite broadcasting, the Chinese Hope Channel will reach by the millions, especially the billions of Chinese that are getting online to hear the gospel through this very important ministry.

Narrator: During the planning process for Chinese Hope Channel, it became evident that there were factors that would prevent the usage of typical means of broadcasting.

Satellite time was too expensive and impractical because Mandarin speaking Chinese are scattered throughout the world.

Narrator: Robert Christensen of Chinese Hope Channel explains the choice to go with Internet.

Robert Christensen: 00:22- “We ran into two pretty major issues that we had to address. One is the Chinese speaking population that we want to reach is not limited to just one geographic area, like Mainland China. They’re scattered all the way from the northern part of Asia, all the way down to Indonesia, Singapore. Then if you go to the Diaspora you have to deal with Australia, the US west coast and South America.

Narrator: The Internet is the fastest growing means of communication, particularly among Asian young people.

Robert Christensen: 3:47-4:10- The long answer and the short answer is Internet is the future. Internet is the way by which the youth of Asia, the up and coming urban Chinese, this is the technology, this is the means by which they access information and the news and entertainment that they have come to expect in their lives.

Narrator: The second challenge that had to be faced was cost. To be able to reach all of the groups around the world it would have been necessary to use multiple transponders and this wasn't good stewardship.

Robert Christensen: Not one single satellite would be able to reach off of these target audiences. We would end up having to pay for multiple transponder leasings. The prices that were being quoted were around \$20,000 US per month, per transponder.

Narrator: With such a large language group it was also necessary to narrow the scope of who was going to be reached through programming. The programming is being designed to meet the needs of the target group of the 550 million urban Chinese worldwide. Most urban Chinese use the latest technology and are daily users of this mode of communication. They are also used to accessing their entertainment online.

Robert Christensen: (5:09-5:23) This is where our target audience is. This is where the young, the successful, the up and coming gather in the target areas that we want to go to. If they're there, then we as a Church, need to be there also.

(5:25-5:31) We want to be there to be able to present our beliefs, our messages to the people who really need us.

Narrator: Chinese Hope Channel will be a worldwide network of partnership studios which can easily be set-up and operated anywhere in the world. These will be available to local churches, youth centers, hospitals and even in homes. It is in these studios that programming content will be produced and sent out worldwide on the Internet.

Robert Christensen: (8:47-9:06)-The Adventist Church started as a grass roots movement. And we at Hope Channel also believe that we need to harness into the power of that and to use the community of Adventist out there to create content that is relevant and contextual to our viewers.

Narrator: The CHC is introducing reality programming to their viewers. One program will be a program that follow the lives of several public school teachers who are teaching the English language, and learning accent correction. Another program will follow an overweight man who is learning to eat better, so he can live better. These programs will aid the viewers in their English languages skills and healthful living, key ministries for the Adventist Church in this part of the world.

Robert Christensen: (10:05-10:18)-Developing programs that are relevant but subtly introduce who we are, what we offer and our values I think is going to be a very key part of what we do in the future.

Narrator: With so many different Chinese dialects, one might wonder why Chinese Hope Channel is focusing on the Mandarin language.

Robert Christensen: 02:14-02:30-People ask us why we are focusing on the Mandarin speakers. Well let me give you a number—1 in 6000. That is the ratio of Adventists in the Mandarin speaking community.

02:44-02:53- Another number is 40 million plus. These are the number of Chinese that are being born every year.

Narrator: It's necessary to reach a mass-market audience and Jesus told us we are to go into the entire world. Reaching the Mandarin speaking Chinese through the Internet presents opportunities that might otherwise be impossible.

Robert Christensen: (02:53-3:11) If we are to follow Jesus' request that we reach everybody in the world before He can come again, the question I ask is are we coming anywhere close to reaching 40 million Chinese a year?

Narrator: Programming for the Chinese Hope Channel will include a message very much focused on lifestyles. It will tell how Adventist Christianity can help improve lives through health, fitness, family and values. As the Internet users are exposed to each of these areas, they will also become acquainted with Adventists and the story of Jesus.

James Wu: (00:41-00:52) On behalf of the Chinese Union Mission I would like to thank the world Adventist Church for your generosity in giving the 13th Sabbath School offering.

Narrator: With a population and language group that is expanding by 40 million people a year, how can we do anything but move ahead and find new ways to tell the story of Jesus. If not now-when? If not through Chinese Hope Channel-how? What will you place into your offering envelope on Sabbath, December 27? There is a young urban Chinese waiting to hear the good news of Jesus. Reporting from Taipei and Hong Kong in the Northern Asia Pacific Division, this is Mission Sonlight.