



Church Planting Ministry in Montgomery, Alabama

Rev. Dawson Zhang

(Translated by Rev. Anselm Siao)

Three years ago, the Rev. Jeremy Sin commented on the fact that not a single Chinese Baptist church existed in the State of Alabama, and if the state capital of Montgomery would have such a church, it could serve as the impetus for church-planting ministries in the neighboring vicinities. I was quite “shaken up” by the comment, since at the time, our church planting and shepherding efforts at Hattiesburg, MS, had become matured and stable, seemingly without much new challenges in the days ahead. I felt I should not be too complacent, or content with the status quo, and “loitering” all day, but should do more for the Kingdom. I then went online to do some more searching, and found that in addition to Montgomery, the surrounding cities of Auburn and Tuscaloosa had only Chinese Christian fellowships or Bible study groups, and indeed without a single autonomous Chinese church.



It then dawned on me that I should pursue church-planting in Montgomery. Pastor Sin provided a connection in the person of Neal Hughes, the enthusiastic Director of Missions of Montgomery Baptist Association. Neal was particularly burdened with ministering to the local ethnic Chinese population. He told me, via emails, that he had long prayed for a Chinese church in Montgomery. We finally arranged to meet. I found him easy-going, energetic and enthusiastic.



With Neal’s wide relationship network, I got to know several Chinese Christian colleagues in the area. And from them, I learned that there were about 1,000 ethnic Chinese in Montgomery, originally from Southeast Asia, Taiwan, Hong Kong and mainland China. Among them were college professors, retail entrepreneurs, restaurant owners/workers, and some retirees. Indeed, about a decade ago there was an autonomous Chinese church, which was later disbanded and split into two groups due to various issues. One was called AUM (Auburn University Montgomery) Christian Campus Fellowship, and the



other was referred to simply as Chinese Ministry of Frazer United Methodist Church. Evidently, the two groups had not communicated with each other since.

Through Neal's assistance, I was able to "connect" with the leadership of the two respective groups. It was agreed that I would join the Bible-study group on the last Friday evening of the month, and would supply the Sunday pulpit of the Chinese Ministry of Frazer United Methodist Church. Thus, by serving as a bridge, I was able to gradually enhance mutual trust and acceptance of the two sides to the extent that they were both willing to restart a church together, achieving unity in Christ. They then began searching for a suitable meeting venue among the Caucasian churches. In the meantime, Neal helped arranged a temporary location at the Baptist Student Center of the AUM Campus, but it had no Sunday School classrooms, and was deficient in audio equipment.



In the second half of 2019, while lunching with Neal in a restaurant, we talked about Montgomery's Pike Road district where many ethnic Chinese lived. Neal then recalled a century-old building owned by a defunct Caucasian church, with a vacant mission house right next door. Though both had not been used for more than a decade, with inside facilities, wall paint, lightings, and carpets in great disrepair and needing substantial renovation and cleaning before becoming usable again, we knew we had found a building for our new church!

The original plan was to open the new church on Easter Sunday 2020, inviting Pastors Amos Lee of the Chinese Baptist Fellowship and Jeremy Sin of NAMB as honored guests for the opening ceremony. However, the outbreak of COVID-19 changed all activities to the online, virtual format but it provided sufficient time for us to do all the necessary repairs and remodeling work on the two buildings, including a complete repainting of the wall and ceiling, replacing the old carpets with new floorings, and installing new lighting. At the end of 2020, I moved my family from Hattiesburg to Montgomery.



We resumed in-person meetings in September 2020, and were thankful to have no confirmed cases of COVID 19 among our people. Praise the Lord, we have been growing steadily through visitation and caregiving, meeting some of the people's needs, and getting to know others so as to share the faith and the Gospel with them. May the Lord's name be uplifted and exalted, Amen!

Please pray for the Zhangs as they minister in Montgomery:

- 1. They will be homeschooling their two children (11 and 14) in the new school year. Pray for wisdom and patience to be able to do a good job at it and helping them to grow in the Lord.***
- 2. Pray for some members of his congregation that they will move beyond their past hurts in their former association with each other and to look forward to a new beginning and glorify the Lord in this new church.***

Rev. Dawson Zhang hails from Hubei, China and has a degree in Computer Science. He became a believer in Jesus Christ in 1999 and felt called to the ministry in 2002. He graduated from the Moody Theological Seminary in 2011 with an M.Div. degree and planted the Hattiesburg Chinese Christian Church in 2012. and now, the Montgomery Chinese Christian Church in 2020.





阿拉巴马州蒙哥马利植堂事工

張道山牧師

记得 3 年之前，有一次冼志俭牧师和我分享说，阿拉巴马州到现在还没有一间华人浸信会被建立起来，特别是州府蒙哥马利，更需要建立一间华人教会，这样就可以去带动周边地区的植堂工作。我听了之后心里很受震动。看到目前我们一家在密西西比 Hattiesburg 的植堂/牧会事工已经稳定下来，以后就没有多少挑战性的事情了，觉得不能太安于现状，不能太过于舒适，闲着也是闲着，不如多为神国出点力。后来我在网上做了一些搜索，发现除了蒙哥马利外，周边的城市如 Auburn, Tuscaloosa, 也是没有独立的华人教会，只有华人事工如团契，查经班等。



于是我就有感动想在蒙哥马利植堂，冼牧师也帮我牵线认识了 Neal Hughes，他是蒙城的区联会 Montgomery Baptist Association 负责人。Neal 很热心，对华人事情很有异象，他 email 告诉我，他为着能在蒙城建立一间华人教会，已经在神面前祷告了好久。于是我们约定一个时间碰了面，彼此增进了很多的了解，发现他是一个很随和的人，浑身上下洋溢着活力和热情。



Neal 运用他的人脉关系，介绍我认识了几家华人基督徒同工，从而从他们口中了解到，蒙城的华人大概有 1000 人，有来自东南亚的，来自港台的，来自大陆的也不少；有从事大学教育的，自己创业开零售店和餐馆的，还有退休在家的。而且在



10 多年以前这里是有一间独立的华人教会的，因为各种原因，这间教会解散了，后来进一步分裂成 2 个团体，一个团体叫 AUM (Auburn University Montgomery) 基督徒校园团契，另一个团体是依附在 Frazer United Methodist church 下面的华人事工，而且两者互不往来。

我透过 Neal 分别和两边的主要同工取得了联系，于是和他们约定：每个月的最后一个礼拜五晚上和校园团契的弟兄姊妹们一起查经，主日崇拜的时候到 Frazer 的华人事工那里证道。这样慢慢地我和两边的同工增强了彼此的信任，大家都彼此接纳，也同意一起建立教会，在主里面达成合一。并且开始寻找愿意提供聚会场所给我们使用的白人教会，在没有找到之前，Neal 帮我们暂时安排在 AUM 校园的 BSC (Baptist Students Center)，但是没有主日学教室，聚会场所的音响设备也不齐备。



2019 年下半年，有一次和 Neal 在餐馆吃饭的时候，我们聊到了蒙城华人居住集中地是在 Pike Road 这个 Town，于是 Neal 想起来在 Pike Road 有一个百年历史的白人教会，他们那里有一个老的聚会所，有 10 多年没有人使用了，在教会旁边也有一个 mission house，也是空了很多年，没有人居住。但是里面墙壁油漆剥落、破损；灯具或者开关也不能使用；地毯也是脏兮兮邹巴巴的，需要修缮一下还是可以使用的。

原本计划在 2020 年复活节我们新教会开张，打算邀请 CBF 的李英柏牧师和 NAMB 的冼志俭牧师来参加典礼。但是因为 COVID-19 疫情大爆发的原因，我们全部的活动和敬拜都转移到网络上举行。于是我们可以腾出很多的时间，对聚会的场所和 mission house 进行了大规模的装修：粉刷天花板和墙壁，更换电器和灯具，移走地毯，在地上全部铺上仿木胶板。在 2020 年底我们从哈蒂斯堡搬到了蒙哥马利。



在 2020 年 9 月份我们开始恢复了实体聚会，感谢主的眷顾和保守，知道如今都没有出现有人确诊的情况；赞美主，我们聚会的人数慢慢地在增长中，同时我们透过探访和关怀的方式，关怀一些有需要的人，认识一些人，找机会把福音介绍给他们。愿主的名在这里被尊崇，被高举。阿门！



- 請代禱:**
1. 我們的兩個孩子（11 歲和 14 歲），下學期我們準備在家教育他們。求主賜我們智慧和耐心，知道如何教導他們，使他們主裡成長。
 2. 主賜福給弟兄姊妹們在這個新的教會裡面忘記背後，努力面前，向著標竿直跑，在這個地方去榮耀天父的聖名。

張道山牧師來自中國湖北，畢業於計算機科學專業。他於 1999 年成為基督徒，並於 2002 年蒙召作傳道人。他在 2011 年畢業於穆迪神學院取得神學碩士學位及於 2012 年植哈蒂斯堡華人基督教會。