

## Joseph Yang from China, Mainland



# “MY CALLING TO GOD’S MISSION IN SUPPORTING GAY CHRISTIANS STRUGGLING WITH THEIR SEXUAL ORIENTATION”

I grew up in a traditional Christian family in Xiamen, Fujian Province, China, which followed the Presbyterian tradition. In 1998, I was baptized in a house church named Xiamen Xunsideing Church, where I used to join Bible study with my grandfather during my childhood. My parents dedicated me to God when I was a baby. One day I accidentally fell from my father's arms and passed out. Not knowing what to do, my parents pleaded with God and promised to dedicate me to the Lord if I survived. My father kept this secret from me until my mother passed away in 2002 from a traffic accident.

JOSEPH YANG

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After graduating from vocational high school I worked at the Bank of China. However, my life could only be described as comfortable but lacking passion. I received a sign from God to call me into the full ministry. I was still in the closet while studying theology at Theology Centre for Asia in Singapore (TCA). I was greatly encouraged by Rev. Ngeo Boon Lin, a Chinese Malaysian gay pastor who came out in the same year. Gradually, I learned to embrace myself and my sexuality.

I studied Theology in Singapore and Hong Kong for seven years; it was at Divinity School of Chung Chi that I started my research on the challenges faced by gay Christian community in Mainland China. After I graduated, I began as a fulltime unpaid pastor and served a sexual minority group in mainland China for eight years.

In 2010, I launched the first QQ (a live chat social media platform popular in China) live chatting group on the internet (now known as CTK public chatting group). By the end of 2011, over 400 people had joined the group. I felt the call to continue and expand my ministry to Chinese Christians struggling with their sexual orientation.

2012 became a milestone for me. Together with some gay Christians in Xiamen, I helped set up Xiamen CTK Fellowship, the first of its kind led by a gay pastor in China. It was time to stand together with other gay Christians to encourage and affirm each other. I was also actively engaged in online prayer networks, conversations and dialogues through online forums dedicated to LGBT Christians in Mainland China.

In 2019, I prayed to God to prepare me for a deeper training to serve gay Christians in the Mainland after my sabbatical year. I set up the following three goals for myself: First, I hope to explore the topic of ministry to LGBT Christians from an evangelical perspective. Second, I hope to undertake an in-depth study in church planting and relational ministry for the purpose of more effective ministry to LGBT Christians in China. Lastly, I will continue to explore queer theology and broaden my spiritual horizon for future theological education of mainland China.

Coming to terms with my sexuality is not easy. Beyond my imagination, in light of my own experience, I will continue to envision my calling to God's mission in supporting gay Chinese Christians struggling with their sexual orientation.

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