

ACAT (Harrow group) – prayer case of the month (November 2020)

Please pray as you feel led for **Elder Qin Defu** (37) of Early Rain Covenant Church (ERCC) in Chengdu, capital of China’s southwestern Sichuan province. He was arrested following a raid on the church on 9 December 2018. In November 2019 he was sentenced to four years in prison.



Qin Defu was born in rural Deyang, Sichuan province, where his father was a preacher – he had become a Christian in 1989, became involved in the Three Self Patriotic Movement and many years later left to join the local house-church network. **Qin Defu** and his wife Xiao Hongliu settled in Chengdu, where he ran a shop until 2017, when he closed his business to serve full-time in Early Rain Covenant Church, first as a deacon and then as an elder with responsibility for church management. He was among at least 150 members detained following the raid on the church in December 2018.

Detained church members were held for various periods of time, some for several months, but all have been released except for **Qin Defu** and Pastor Wang Yi (our prayer case for February 2019), who is serving a nine-year prison sentence. Many released church members have lost their jobs, been evicted or had their bank accounts frozen, and some have been sent back to their home towns in an apparent attempt to weaken the church leadership.

ERCC is one of China’s most prominent unregistered churches, with more than eight hundred members plus an affiliated primary school and Bible school.

It emerged at his trial that the charge of “*illegal business operations*” related to the printing and publication of 20,000 hymnals, gospel pamphlets and other Christian books printed without official authorisation. The court asked him to plead guilty, but he refused. The authorities reneged on a promise to his family that if they accepted two state-assigned lawyers to replace **Qin Defu’s** own lawyer, he “*would only need to appear at the court before he can be released*”.