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New Regulations On Religious Activities No Departure From Prior Policy Says CCC

Two new sets of regulations on religion, "Regulation Governing The Religious Activities Of Foreign Nationals In China," and "Regulation Governing Venues For Religious Activities," were issued by the State Council and signed by Premier Li Peng on January 31. (See also ANS Documentation.)

On February 21, a spokesperson for the China Christian Council told ANS that the CCC could "see no departure from the practices which have existed for years." Speaking about the "Regulations Governing The Religious Activities Of Foreign Nationals in China", the spokesperson added: "We think people are surely reading too much into the document if they surmise it is meant to separate Chinese Christians from their sisters and brothers abroad, or to prevent foreign church people from being invited to preach in Chinese churches or lecture in Chinese theological schools. We do not see any change in the status and work of Amity teachers or church visitors from overseas whom we receive." The CCC has stressed that all contacts with Christians abroad were conducted in an open and above board way. Overseas church relationships have continued to develop over the last three years.

Commenting on the "Regulation Governing Venues For Religious Activities," the CCC said that it was too sweeping to assert that by asking all religious venues to be registered, the Regulations would "outlaw all house churches." "On the contrary, the Regulation will protect a large number of such meeting points by giving them a legal status." The spokesperson pointed out that Wan Yaobing, Deputy Director of the Religious Affairs Bureau of the State Council, had assured the General Committee of the CCC and TSPM in an official speech that "the government would treat unregistered meeting points with discretion and in consultation with church leaders."

The spokesperson added that religious bodies in China, including the CCC, had been consulted in the process of formulating the regulations, and that their suggestions had been well received by the government bodies involved. [ANS]

Churcches Grow In Northern Ningxia

A Chinese visitor who recently returned from northern Ningxia Province reports that churches there have been growing strongly since the early eighties. Yao Zhengqing reports that the number of Christians in the Dawukou area has grown from about 100 in 1981 to more than 1,200 today. In neighbouring Pingluo County, there are now more than 1,800 believers, and Shitanjing and Shizuishan have about 800 and 2,000 Christians respectively. Yao adds that many new churches have been built in northern Ningxia over the last years, but that many Christians also meet in home worship gatherings. Bibles and Christian literature are plentiful everywhere, and the churches are distributing the CCC-published tape series "Introduction Into The Christian Faith." [ANS]
Bishop Ting Spells Out Meaning Of "Run The Church Well"

Without a democratic leadership, the churches in China cannot be run well. This was stressed by Bishop K.H.Ting in a speech addressing the General Committee of the CCC and the TSPM meeting in Shanghai in December, 1993. Ting argued that the principle of democracy is part of the Christian faith tradition, and that autocratic leaders who in some cases do not follow the "Church Order For Trial Use In Local Churches" guidelines do great harm to the churches. Ting added that financial accountability also has to be a part of a democratic leadership style in the churches.

Talking about the role of the pastors, Ting stressed that their main responsibility is spiritual rather than administrative. Pastors should take time to study the Bible and theological writings, and they should make great efforts to prepare good sermons.

Lay training is another important responsibility of the churches, Ting added. He also urged Christians from different traditions to respect each other and not try to force each other into uniformity. People meeting in home worship gatherings, even if they refuse to relate to the churches, should be seen as brothers and sisters as long as they recognize Jesus Christ as their Lord. "Unless they break the law, they deserve our service, our help, our protection and our unity... even when they criticize our three-self organizations or the people working in them, even if they misunderstand us or keep their distance from us." Ting showed himself concerned about believers who left churches because of bad leadership or unresolved conflicts. He stressed that Christians should not just be concerned about winning new converts, but also about building their churches well by training and educating new believers. [ANS]

Church In "New City" Model For Others

The church in Longgang City has been cited as a model for other congregations in the February edition of the Christian Magazine, Tian Feng.

Longgang City in the Wenzhou Region of southern Zhejiang Province has been newly built by peasants from the surrounding villages over the last ten years. The strong Christian presence there is very visible: The doors of many of the four or five-story houses are adorned with Christian pictures or calendars. There have been Christians in the Longgang area for a long time, and even during the Cultural Revolution home worship gatherings never ceased. In 1991, the Longgang believers finished building their new church, a huge structure named "God's Grace Church," which is packed with worshippers every Sunday. [OVER]
Church In "New City" Model For Others/2

In quoting the situation in Longgang as exemplary, the Tian Feng article stresses several points: Firstly, the church is run by a well-organized church council which manages all church affairs in a democratic and accountable way. Besides, there is no intrusion by Religious Affairs officials into church affairs. The election of officials and the making of a budget are solely organized by the Christians according to their own criteria. Longgang believers appreciate the fact that the local RAB is "up to standard" in implementing the policy of religious freedom. Thirdly, Christians in Longgang do not just meet for Sunday service, Bible study and prayer meetings. There are many groups who regularly make home visits to help the weak and pray for the sick. Finally, Sunday offerings in Longgang are very high, with the Christmas offering exceeding 60,000 RMB. The church income is used in equal parts for church affairs, to help other churches, and social projects like disaster relief. [ANS]

Problems Of Poor Rural Churches Highlighted

Hechi Prefecture in Guangxi Province is a poor, mountainous area populated mostly by Zhuang, Maonan, Mulam and Yao people. Christians in the area are few and far between. There is no pastor in the prefecture, and only one elder who was ordained last year. This lack of trained Christian leadership has resulted in heresies and disorder: Last year, more than 600 believers from the area sold all their belongings and went away expecting the imminent return of Jesus Christ. Many of them were brought back to Hechi by the police, others have disappeared. In another case, a self-appointed "pastor" randomly baptized new believers, preached heresies, raped women and children and defrauded churches of money until he was finally arrested and punished.

A fundamental problem of the churches in this area is their poverty. Several new church buildings that were erected in the last years have almost completely been funded from abroad. Evangelists who formerly worked in the area were not paid, but given a piece of land to grow their own food. As this did not leave them much time for their pastoral work, believers were not satisfied, and the evangelists left for other areas. The churches seem to be unable to solve the problem of paying for a pastor, therefore the only theological student from Hechi has chosen not to return to the prefecture. [ANS]
News In Brief

According to the Jiangsu Christian Council, there are now about 800,000 Protestants in the province. They meet in 1,468 churches and meeting points and are served by 92 pastors, 17 of whom are women.

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In 1993, 172 pastors were ordained in China, 70 of whom were women. There are now about 1,200 ordained pastors in China.

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Two churches that had been occupied by factories since the Cultural Revolution were returned to the Christians in Tianjin in December, 1993.

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A four member preaching team was organized by the Christian Council and the TSPM in Luohu City, Henan Province, to strengthen local Christians' spiritual life and deepen their understanding of the Bible. The team members spoke in more than 20 churches and home worship gatherings in the area, reaching out to many believers who had left the church due to false teaching.

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Two young women were ordained as pastors in Leshan, Sichuan Province, in November, 1993. They are the first women pastors in the area.

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Five churches were built in Min County, Gansu Province, during the last five years. Most of the Christians in the county, who used to meet in homes, can now attend a church close to where they live.

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A two-week course was held in Laizhou, Shandong Province, to train preachers for Sunday services in the area. Many of the participants were young people.

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The first Christian meeting point was recently set up in Xichong County, Sichuan Province. Christians from the area report that government authorities were very helpful in the process. Before, believers from Xichong had to travel to Nanchong or Nanbu to participate in worship services.
Zion Church in Kunming, the capital of Yunnan Province, was established in 1921. After the Cultural Revolution, it was returned to the local Christians, but in 1991 it was destroyed by fire due to an electrical fault. A new Zion Church has now been erected in place of the old one, with seating for 1,200 persons. Behind the church, a five-story guest house has been built which will house believers who come to Kunming to visit or do business.

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The Hainan Provincial Christian Conference was held in October, 1993, and a new provincial church leadership was democratically elected.

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New teaching methods were tried out in a lay training course recently held in Ningde City, Fujian Province. Instead of simply listening to lectures, the trainees, many of whom are young people, did supervised preaching practice and afterwards discussed what they had done and heard.

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Bethel Church in Shantou, established in 1921, was turned over to be used as a primary school in 1958. Damaged during the Cultural Revolution, it was repaired several years ago and again used as a primary school. Recently, Hongkong tycoon Li Ka-Shing donated 4 million RMB to the school for a new building, and another 3 million RMB for the restoration of Bethel Church. With encouragement and help from the government in Shantou, Bethel Church will soon be restored to its original splendour.

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Chingpu Church on the outskirts of Shanghai was opened in late 1993. The church seats 1,200 people, but more than 5,000 came for the dedication service. [ANS]

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International Exchanges

On invitation by the Hongkong Chinese Christian Churches' Union, a twelve-member delegation of the China Christian Council visited churches in Hongkong January 10-17, 1993. The delegation was led by Luo Guanzong, Secretary General of the TSPM.
Press reports all over the world have in recent weeks reported an alleged "new hard-line approach" to or even a "crackdown" on Christian churches in China when reporting about two sets of new regulations governing religious activities in China. Many of these reports have, in our opinion, been exaggerated or have contained incorrect information. We have therefore decided to document the full text of both new regulations that were issued by the State Council on January 31, 1994.

Regulation Governing The Religious Activities Of Foreign Nationals Within China
Decree No. 144 of the State Council
signed by Premier Li Peng, 31 January 1994

Article 1. This regulation is formulated in conformity with the Constitution in order to protect the freedom of religious belief of foreign nationals in China and to safeguard the public interest.

Article 2. The People's Republic of China respects the religious freedom of foreign nationals in China and protects friendly visits, cultural and scholarly exchanges and other such religious activities between foreign nationals and religious circles in China.

Article 3. Foreign nationals may participate in religious activities in religious venues in China, including monasteries, temples, mosques and churches; and, at the invitation of a religious body at or above the provincial, autonomous region or municipality level, may discuss the scriptures and preach.

Article 4. Foreign nationals may hold religious activities for other foreign nationals at venues recognized by the Religious Affairs Bureaus of the People's Government at or above the county level.

Article 5. Foreign nationals in China may request Chinese clergy to perform religious rites such as baptisms, marriages, funerals, and Taoist and Buddhist rituals.

Article 6. When foreign nationals enter China, they may carry printed materials, audio and visual materials and other religious items for their own use; if these are brought in quantities which exceed those for personal use, such items will be dealt with according to the relevant Chinese customs regulations.

Religious publications and religious audio and visual materials whose content is harmful to the public interest are forbidden.

Article 7. Foreign nationals recruiting students within China for overseas religious studies or who come to China to [OVER]
Regulation Governing Religious Activities Of Foreign Nationals

study or teach in Chinese religious educational institutions are subject to the relevant Chinese regulations.

Article 8. Foreign nationals who engage in religious activities in China must respect Chinese laws and regulations. They are not permitted to establish religious organizations, liaison offices, and venues for religious activities or run religious schools and institutes within China, they are not allowed to recruit believers among the Chinese citizenry, appoint clergy or undertake other evangelistic activities.

Article 9. The Bureaus of Religious Affairs at or above the county level or other offices concerned should act to dissuade and put a stop to religious activities of foreign nationals which violate this regulation. If the violation constitutes an immigration offence or a matter of public security, the public security organs will dispense penalties according to the law, if the violation constitutes a crime, the judiciary will investigate to determine where criminal responsibility lies.

Article 10. This regulation will be applied to the religious activities of foreign nationals within China.

Article 11. The religious activities in mainland China of Chinese citizens residing overseas, or residents of Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao will be subject to this regulation.

Article 12. Interpretation of this regulation will lie with the Religious Affairs Bureau of the State Council.

Article 13. This regulation takes effect from the date of issue.

ANS Translation

Regulation Governing Venues For Religious Activities
Decree No. 145 of the State Council of the PRC
signed by Premier Li Peng, 31 January 1994

Article 1. In order to protect normal religious activities, safeguard the legal rights of venues for religious activities and facilitate the management of venues for religious activities, the following regulations have been formulated in conformity with the Constitution.

Article 2. For the purposes of this regulation, "venues for religious activities" refers to monasteries, temples, mosques, churches and other fixed venues. Registration is required for the establishment of a venue for religious activities. The registration procedure will be decided by the Religious Affairs Bureau of the State Council.

Article 3. The management of venues for religious activities will be undertaken by the venue's own management team. Its legal rights and the normal religious activities which take
Regulation Governing Venues For Religious Activities/2

place there will be under the protection of law and no organization or person will be permitted to transgress or interfere.

Article 4. Venues for religious activities should set up a management system. Religious activities undertaken in these venues should comply with the laws and regulations. No person shall be permitted to make use of any such venue to undertake activities which harm national unity, ethnic unity, or the social order, harm citizens' health or obstruct the national educational system.

Venues for religious activities shall not be controlled by persons or organizations outside China.

Article 5. Persons normally resident in venues for religious activities or those temporarily resident must comply with State regulations on household registration.

Article 6. Venues for religious activities may accept from their adherents voluntary offerings of alms, donations, and contributions.

In accepting donations from persons and organizations outside China, venues for religious activities shall act in accordance with relevant regulations.

Article 7. Within their premises, venues for religious activities may, complying with relevant State regulations, offer for sale religious articles, artwork and publications.

Article 8. The property and income of a religious venue shall be subject to management and use by the venue's management team and shall not be held or gratuitously transferred to any other unit or person.

Article 9. The closing or merger of religious venues should be recorded with the registration organization and its property dealt with according to the relevant State regulations.

Article 10. The land, mountains, forests or buildings administered by a religious venue should be documented in compliance with relevant State regulations by the management team of the venue or the religious body to which it is subject.

The State may requisition land, mountain and forest land, buildings and so on managed and used by a religious venue in compliance with the "PRC Property Administration Law" and other relevant State regulations.

Article 11. Relevant units or persons who, within the premises of a venue administered by a religious venue, build or renovate buildings, set up commercial or social service enterprises or hold a display or exhibition or make films or television programs, etc., are required to secure the permission of the management team of the religious venue in question and that of the Religious Affairs Bureau of the People's Government at or above county level before applying to the departments concerned.

Article 12. Religious venues which have been listed as [OVER]
Regulation Governing Venues For Religious Activities

protected cultural relics or which are located in scenic areas must comply with the stipulations of relevant laws and regulations on administering and protecting cultural relics and the environment and must accept the guidance and supervision of departments concerned.

Article 13. The Religious Affairs Bureau of the People's Government at or above the county level shall undertake guidance and supervision in the administration of these regulations.

Article 14. If a religious venue violates the stipulations of this regulation, the Religious Affairs Bureau of the People's Government at or above county level may apply penalties according to the seriousness of the case, issue a warning, halt activities, or rescind registration. If the case is especially serious, it may be submitted to the corresponding level of the People's Government, which may ban the venue.

Article 15. If violation of the stipulations of this regulation constitute an act in violation of public security, the public security organs shall mete out penalties in accordance with the relevant regulations of the "PRC Public Security administration Penal Code"; if the violation constitutes a criminal act, the judiciary shall undertake an investigation to determine criminal responsibility.

Article 16. If the parties concerned decide not to comply with administrative methods (of dealing with the case), they may, in compliance with relevant laws and regulations, apply for administrative reconsideration or institute administrative litigation.

Article 17. If a violation of these regulations involves infringement of the legal rights of a religious venue, then the Religious Affairs Bureau of the People's Government at the county level or above will ask the People's Government at the corresponding level to put a halt to this infringement of rights; if the violation constitutes an economic loss, the losses should be made good in compliance with the law.

Article 18. The People's Government at the provincial, autonomous region and municipality level may, in compliance with this regulation, formulate practical measures on the basis of local realities.

Article 19. Interpretation of this regulation lies with the Religious Affairs Bureau of the State Council.

Article 20. This regulation takes effect on the date of issue.

ANS Translation
ANS Documentation 2: Statement On Solidarity With Christians In China

Seven foreigners and three Chinese Christians were arrested in Henan Province in mid-February. While the seven foreigners were expelled after four days, the Chinese Christians are still being held. Press coverage of this incident prompted a group of concerned Hongkong Christians to issue a statement that we also document here.

We are Christians from different churches and countries, based in Hong Kong, and involved in a variety of church-related projects and exchanges with China. At least one of us is in some part of China every month, and we meet with people from many different backgrounds: Christians and non-Christians, government officials and grassroots people, educators and intellectuals, church leaders and ordinary Christians. We rejoice in the way in which our work has grown and developed over the last decade, with projects in education, Bible printing, rural development, cultural exchange, translation, medical assistance, and church assistance. At the same time, we are grieved by the violation of religious freedom and human rights abuses which we continue to receive in reports from different parts of China.

As Christians, we try to address such questions in appropriate ways in our day to day working relationships with the Chinese people. We have seen that the church leadership in China, i.e. the China Christian Council and the Chinese Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee, is in a better position to address questions about the violation of religious freedom than anyone else, and we know many individual church leaders who have been working tirelessly to improve the situation for many years. They have worked on the basis of co-operation, not confrontation; their efforts have sometimes been successful, and sometimes not. We wish to express our solidarity with them. We hope that concerns about human rights questions in China which come from overseas would, at the very least, take into account the important work and witness of the Chinese Church.

In the last few days, we have been deeply concerned about the arrests in Henan Province of seven Christians from overseas, all of whom have now been released, and three Chinese citizens, who are still in detention. However, we have found a number of errors in the news reports about this situation, and these now call for clarification.

1. Two new sets of regulations on religion were issued by the State Council on 31 January, "Regulations Governing the Religious Activities of Foreign Nationals in China" and "Regulations Governing Venues for Religious Activities". Both of these are in some ways the codification of practices which have been in place for some time. Their promulgation represents a small step forward in the promotion of the rule of law in China. We do not interpret these regulations as being "new restrictions on religious freedom" imposed by the government. While we might hope that someday all restrictions on religion would be lifted, we note that there are similar practices limiting the scope of foreign missionary activity in
many Asian countries. Our work, which is done in partnership with Chinese churches, has not been affected at all by the new X, and we hope at it will not be.

2. It is unclear from existing press reports as to what exactly the seven foreigners were doing in Henan province. Over the last fifteen years, there has been an increasing openness which has enabled foreign nationals to travel to most parts of inland China, and we view this as a positive development for both church and society. But not all foreign religious activity in China has been aimed at building up the church or the society. Our concern is that some foreign-initiated religious activity unwittingly puts Chinese Christians in jeopardy. Although we do not know what Mr. Balcombe and his friends were doing in Henan, we would urge people to view the video "Revival in China" which describes as less than transparent approach to working in China, and is available from the Revival Christian Church, 154 Prince Edward Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong.

3. Human rights are of crucial concern to all Christians and people of good will. We are therefore against the instrumentalization of the human rights question in China as an economic or political stratagem of any country, or the conduct of foreign policy by other means. Any action in support of religious freedom in China should involve consultation with churches in China which would be directly affected.

4. As 1997 approaches, people in Hong Kong want to protect the freedom and the way of life we enjoy here. Churches and individual Christians, both Chinese and expatriate, need to be involved in the political process as responsible citizens. Under the "One Country, Two Systems" approach, religious policy on the mainland will not be implemented in Hong Kong. By the same token, we believe that Hong Kong groups should not seek to impose their religious organizations or initiatives on China. We need to build bridges of understanding between China and Hong Kong, not set up barriers which promote opposition and confrontation.

We issue this statement as concerned Christians who wish to promote continuing dialogue, discussion and co-operation between Christians in China and in other parts of the world. We urge other Christians to join us in true solidarity with the Church in China.

16 February 1994
Hong Kong

Signed by Jae-woong Ahn (CCA/URM), Betty Blakney (Kowloon Union Church), Christian Boucique (ICM Sisters), Rev. Dhyanchand Carr (CCA), Gail V. Coulson (HK China Liaison Office, United Methodist Church), Don Elliot (CSI), Lennart Hamark (Church of Sweden Mission), Rev. Wendell Karsen (HK Christian Council), Rev. Craig Molitoris (Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod), Aida Jeanne Naccil-Manion (CCA), Gotthard Oblau (Amity), The Very Rev. Christopher Phillips (Dean, St. John's Cathedral), Susan Raelburn-Cherradi (Amity), Rev. Henry Rowold (Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod), Rev. Carl Smith, Don Snow (Amity), Nayang Villalba (Asian Migrant Centre), Rev. Claudia Wahrisch-Oblau (ANS), Cynthia CA Tellez (Mission for Filipino Migrant Workers), Janice Wickeri (Chinese Theological Review), Rev. Philip Wickeri (Amity)
Peter W.H. Tsai: A Tribute

1913 - 1993

The Rev. Peter Wenhao Tsai (Cai Wenhao), Vice-President of the China Christian Council, President of the Zhejiang Christian Council and Chairman of the Zhejiang Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee, died on 24 November 1993 following a lengthy illness with lymphatic cancer. He is survived by his wife, Eleanor Lufu Yang, their five daughters and grandchildren.

Rev. Tsai was born into a Christian family in Suzhou in 1913. He studied literature at Shanghai University and pursued further studies at the Yanjing School of Religion in Beijing and at Nanjing Theological Seminary. In 1946 he went to the United States to do graduate work in ecumenics at Princeton Theological Seminary under President John A. Mackay and Professor Joseph Hromadka. He also studied rural church ministry at Drew Theological Seminary.

Rev. Tsai returned to China in 1948. Shortly after Liberation in 1949, he became Acting President of the Jiangsu-Zhejiang Bible College, Executive Secretary of the Zhejiang Conference of the Church of Christ in China, and Deputy General Secretary of that church's national body. Rev. Tsai was involved in the Chinese Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) in the early 1950s and in 1958 he became Chair of the newly organized Zhejiang TSPM. Throughout this period Rev. Tsai's commitment to building up the Church on Chinese soil never wavered. But he also saw that Christians must be patriotic citizens as well. "We must participate in political life in a way which is in harmony with Biblical truth," Rev. Tsai observed in the early 1980s.

During the Cultural Revolution era, Rev. Tsai was severely criticized by Red Guards in Hangzhou. He was held in detention for a time and at one point was paraded through the streets past jeering crowds. In later years, he never dwelled on this experience, but instead preferred to speak of what he learned from lay Christians during this ordeal:

I saw during this period that my own faith was weaker than that of many lay Christians. It is they who have now become the motive force of our church. We would not have survived without the laity during the Cultural Revolution. We were weak, but they continued to do evangelistic work. We were pushed forward by our congregations. God was still at work during this time. We saw the Holy Spirit active in our midst. As a result, more lay workers now share our ministry.

As a result of his experience during the Cultural Revolution, Rev. Tsai was drawn closer to the simple faith of Chinese Christians at the grassroots. This enabled him to play an important bridge-building role in the reorganization of the church after the reimplementation of religious policy...