Dear Friends,

Most of you know that ANS is put together at the Amity Overseas Coordination Office in Hong Kong, by our small staff and a few dedicated supporters. Because of our increasing involvement with a variety of projects related to Amity and the China Christian Council, sometimes we cannot do all we would like, when we would like. This spring and summer, the publication schedule of ANS has had to be interrupted, and so we now present you with this double issue. We are committed to providing our readers with a regular source of accurate and high quality reporting on the work and witness of the China Christian Council, and we hope to resume our regular publication schedule in the fall.

We wish to thank you for your continuing support. Shalom,

ANS Editorial Staff

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Christians Participate in Drafting of "Registration Procedures"

The "Registration Procedures for Venues for Religious Activities" were the result of a long-term consultation process between the government and China's religious leaders, including representatives of the China Christian Council (CCC). This was expressed by CCC Executive Vice-President Dr. Han Wenzao in an interview with ANS.

During this spring's session of the CPPCC, a day-long group meeting was held between religious leaders and government officials to discuss the draft regulations. A further consultation was held between Protestant leaders and officials at the executive meeting of the CCC and TSPM Standing Committees in March. On both occasions, CCC and TSPM representatives commented on the regulations and proposed specific changes. In addition, church leaders had been consulted on the drafting process at each stage over the last two years.

Protestant members of the CPPCC voiced their concern that the new regulations should not be used by some local officials as a pretext to eliminate Christian meeting points. They requested that the procedures be used only to facilitate registration. In addition, they warned against their abuse for "religious adjustment policy", and emphasized that for Christian meeting points, affiliation with the CCC or TSPM must not be a criterion for registration. "The CCC," Han commented, "can help meeting points apply for registration, but legally this is an affair between the state and the individual groups concerned, all of which have a right to exist regardless of their relationship with us."

At the executive meeting of the two Protestant bodies, it was pointed out that although the CCC does not represent all Protestant groups, it regards them all as legitimate members of the Christian community in China. The promotion of reconciliation with unaffiliated brothers and sisters, the provision of Bibles and other Christian literature, and the facilitation of Christian education and theological training was also discussed.

In consultations with state officials, Protestant leaders suggested a number of alterations in the wording of the draft which were accepted:

-- It is not required that meeting points have a fixed or minimum number of religious believers, as was suggested in the draft (See Article 2.2).
-- Qualifications for people who lead religious services are set by each particular religious group, not by state authorities (Article 2.4).
-- The regulations allow for the opinion of "related parties" to be heard before the RAB decides on an application for registration. This enables the CCC to interpret the situation of an applicant to the authorities and to function as its advocate (Article 6).
-- The annual report required for each registered venue for religious activity is a "management report" and not a "report of self-inspection" or "self-criticism" (Article 11).
-- In contrast to earlier drafts, venues for religious activity are not required to pay an administrative fee for the issuing of the certificate of registration (Article 12).

The CCC welcomed the amendments made upon its suggestions. Dr. Han commented that "consultation procedures between the government and the CCC on matters of religious policy are improving." [ANS]

ANS 94.2/3.2

Amity Press Prints Seven Millionth Bible

The Amity Printing Company Ltd. produced its seventh million Bible in April. This is the cumulative production figure since the company began operations in December, 1987. Included in this figure are complete Bibles in various editions and New Testaments with Psalms. Amity's 1994 Bible production target is 2.2 million. Before the founding of the Amity Printing Company, the CCC had already printed 2.7 million Bibles on state-run presses. By the end of June, a total of 10 million Bibles and Bible portions will have been printed in China since the end of 1981. This makes the Bible the second most widely published book in China after The Selected Works of Mao Zedong. The Amity Printing Company Ltd. is located in Nanjing. [ANS]

ANS 94.2/3.3

Women's Issues Discussed at CCC Committee Meeting

The first CCC meeting devoted solely to women's issues was called by the Christian Women's Committee in Shanghai, March 1-2. Participants made presentations on the situation of women in the Chinese church and abroad, basics of feminist theology, and the upcoming Fourth United Nations Conference on Women to be held in Beijing in October, 1995.

Participants at the Shanghai meeting felt that insofar as 70-80% of Chinese Christians are women, women need to be organized to make greater contributions to church and society. Delegates discussed a variety of issues including women's ordination, illiteracy among rural women and women's rights in feudal culture. There was consensus that it is necessary to work toward increased respect for women in the church, and to encourage more international exchanges involving women. [ANS]
Problems and Opportunities for the Church in Zhaotong

The Christian clinic in Zhaotong, a prefectural city in northeast Yunnan province, has received RMB 10,000 in financial support from the Amity Foundation. It is hoped that this grant and the nationwide and international attention it represents will help the church in Zhaotong improve its standing in society and fight off harassment and illegal meddling from local officials.

Rev. Huang Guiying, director of the clinic and an ordained minister in Zhaotong expressed this view during a visit by Amity staff members Ms. Li Enlin and Dr. Gotthard Oblau in March. They were visiting Amity health and rural development projects in Yunnan and Guizhou provinces.

The clinic was started by the local church of Zhaotong in 1986 and is housed in a small but extremely simple complex of one-story mud houses. It employs over thirty doctors and nurses. The backbone of the staff are five retired doctors who train younger staff on an in-service basis. The clinic mainly serves the peasant population in the surrounding countryside where government health care is often insufficient or too expensive for many of the villagers. Most of its employees are on subsistence-level salaries themselves. Zhaotong is the second poorest prefecture in Yunnan, according to China's Poverty Alleviation Office.

Although the clinic was issued a government license when it was founded, it has since encountered various forms of hostility from the broader society, as did the church itself. In September, 1992, the clinic and the neighboring church were targets of a violent attack from students in an adjacent primary school who smashed windows and damaged furniture and equipment by throwing bricks and clay. At least one person was injured. At the same time, big character posters put up in the vicinity denounced Zhaotong's Christians and Rev. Huang in a way reminiscent of the Cultural Revolution. The culprits were never charged, nor did the church receive any compensation.

The Zhaotong church has also had difficulties recovering land and buildings confiscated before and during the Cultural Revolution. The land for the church and the clinic are only a small fraction of the church's legal property. A large part of the remaining land is occupied by the recently constructed primary school. The church has never received rent from the school or other parties illegally utilizing its property. Attempts by the central and provincial governments to rectify the situation have been frustrated by local cadres who seem to disregard China's policy of religious freedom.

Zhaotong prefecture is an extremely remote and mountainous area, its connection to the outside world obstructed by poor infrastructure. Until recently, the only way to travel from Zhaotong to the provincial capital was a three-day jeep-ride on a road frequently blocked by landslides. The construction of [OVER]
Church Land Dispute in Shandong

The land rights of a church in the southwestern Shandong city of Jining have been seriously violated by a construction firm. High rise buildings going up on all four sides of the 5,368 square meter church compound have severely hindered access to the church for some time. Written complaints from the church to the construction firm have gone unanswered. When the company began last year to operate from the church compound itself, thereby occupying church land and disturbing worship services, the church complained to the municipal and provincial Religious Affairs Bureaux. Although the company temporarily ceased its activities, it started to operate from church grounds again last December. Acting illegally, without authorization, the company tore down the church's toilet, the pastor's residence and two other buildings. Construction workers subsequently beat up church members who gathered to protect their buildings, as well as two church mediators. According to Tian Feng, the monthly magazine of the China Christian Council, these incidents are not only a clear violation of China's building and construction regulations, but also contravene the recently issued "Regulation Governing Venues For Religious Activities." Legal proceedings are now underway. [ANS]

Church Choir Training Course Held in Xiamen

A church choir training course was held in Xiamen, Fujian province this past spring. The course was set up by the Fujian Christian Council in co-operation with the China Christian Council to cultivate talent in sacred music for the developing Chinese church. The course brought together 37 students from all over the country for two months of intensive study. Several months of preparation went into the course, for which two buildings on the scenic island of Gulangyu were renovated. It is hoped that these can be used for similar programs in the future. This is an area known for musical talent; Trinity Church on Gulangyu, whose staff did much of the preparatory work, has one of China's most outstanding church music programs, including a choir and a small orchestra.

The opening ceremony for the class was held on February 16, and was hosted by Chairman Wang De'en of the Fujian Christian Council. In his speech he gave thanks to God for His grace in allowing this work to begin, and gratefully noted the support of the CCC and its Christian Music Committee, the Fujian
Religious Affairs Bureau, and overseas Chinese who had contributed to this effort. Speeches were also given by Rev. Yang Ruilin and others. [ANS]

ANS 94.2/3.7

New Church Leaders Elected in Zhejiang

Rev. Sun Xipei was named as the new president of the Zhejiang Christian Council, and Rev. Deng Fucun became chairman of the Zhejiang Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee. This was decided by the standing committees of the two provincial bodies at their joint meeting in Hangzhou on March 18 and 19. Sun and Deng succeed Rev. Cai Wenhao (Peter Cai), who held both positions at the time of his death on 24 November 1993. At the same meeting, five committees were established for provincial church administration, publication of Christian literature, women's work, theological education and international relations. [ANS]

ANS 94.2/3.8

Christian Celebrate New Church Opening in Xiaogan

Hubei Christians recently celebrated the opening of a new church in Xiaogan county. The congregation raised RMB 21,000 for the construction of their church, most of which went to pay for construction materials. Land was donated by the production brigade and construction work was done by church members. Because of transport difficulties, believers carried bricks, sand, and wood three kilometers to the construction site during work on the project.

The effort to build the church was inspired by a visit from a small party of Christians from Wuhan. Arctic explorer Prof. Gao Shiliu and his brother Gao Siquan, now both retired, visited the church accompanied by Canadian friends, Mr. and Mrs. A.C. Hamilton. They brought a donation of Chinese Bibles produced on the Amity press and hymnals for the church. This visit, and a performance of hymns by the elderly Gao brothers, both tenors, helped inspire the congregation to offer funds, labor, and materials for a new church. The building project was completed within one year. [ANS]

ANS 94.2/3.9

New Ministers Ordained in Mei Xian, Guangdong

Three new ministers were ordained in Mei Xian, Guangdong late last year. Also ordained were three elders and four evangelists. The ordinations took place in the Christian Training Center, a new building donated by Indonesian overseas Chinese Zhang Zhenqiang. Mei Xian's seventh training class for volunteer church workers was also held in this building recently. [ANS]
International Exchanges

At the invitation of the CCC and the TSPM, a two-member crew from Germany's Second State TV (ZDF) visited churches in Wenzhou, Nanjing and Beijing from January 13 to 22 in preparation for two different programs on Protestantism in China.

The fourth "Friends of Amity" Easter Tour (which included 13 people from eight countries), organized by the Amity Overseas Coordination Office and the CCC, visited 18 churches and meeting points as well as Amity projects in Anhui province, March 31 - April 10. (See the report from this trip in this issue of ANS).

A five-member delegation of the Christian Conference of Asia, including its General Secretary Bishop John V. Samuel, visited churches and theological seminaries in Shanghai and Nanjing, and met with CCC and TSPM representatives in early April.

Led by Rev. Denton Lotz, 25 representatives of the Baptist World Alliance visited China from April 7 to 17. Their program, held in Nanjing with participation from Nanjing Union Theological Seminary and local churches, included a four-day consultation on church affairs in the 21st century.

From April 6 to 20, 21 Korean-American members of the Presbyterian Church (USA), led by its East Asia Secretary Rev. Insaik Kim, visited churches and seminaries in Shanghai, Nanjing, Beijing, Shenyang and Yanji.

Led by East Asia Secretary Ms. Yvonne Dahlin, nine representatives of the Church of Sweden Mission visited churches and seminaries in Hangzhou, Shanghai and Nanjing between April 9 and 18.

Between April 9 and 22, the Miracle Christian Choir consisting of singers from the Gaoshan National Minority in central Taiwan, performed in churches, seminaries and Bible schools in Guangzhou, Changsha, Nanchang, Wuhan, Guiyang and Guilin.

Bishop Bill Burrill from the Episcopal Diocese of Rochester, USA, visited churches and seminaries in and around Nanjing and Shanghai, April 11 -20.

Led by Rev. Peter Lai and Dr. Danny Yu, a group of 14 overseas Chinese pastors from the USA attended a conference on "Modern Tasks in the Chinese Churches" in Hangzhou, April 15 - 18. The meeting was followed by a 10-day visitation of churches in Shanghai, Nanjing and Beijing.

At the invitation of the CCC, a five-member delegation from the American Bible Society toured Nanjing, Zhengzhou, Kaifeng, Luoyang, Beijing, Nanchang, Shanghai and Kunming between April 7 and May 2 to produce a documentary video on the church in China and the printing and distribution of Bibles.

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Rev. Gebao Juan from Zhongnan Seminary in Wuhan represented the CCC at a conference of United Methodist Women in the USA.

At the invitation of the WCC, Rev. Gao Ying from Chongwenmen Church in Beijing attended a women's conference held in Geneva from April 26 to May 10.

WCC General Secretary Dr. Konrad Raiser visited China at the invitation of the CCC in early May. Accompanied by Asia Secretary Dr. Kyung-seo Park, and staff members Ms. Jean Becher and Mr. Edmund Doogue, Dr. Raiser visited church leaders and met with government officials in Beijing, Shanghai and Nanjing. The WCC delegation also visited Taiwan and Hong Kong.

Bishop Peter Kwong led a delegation from the Anglican Diocese of Hong Kong and Macao in mid-May, visiting churches and meeting with church leaders in Shanghai and Nanjing.

**Correction**

The translation of Article 10 in the "Regulation Governing the Religious Activities of Foreign Nationals within China" (ANS Documentation 94.1.8) should be corrected as follows:

"This regulation will be applied to the religious activities of foreign organizations within China."

CHINA
Provinces, cities and counties mentioned in this issue
Interview with WCC General Secretary Dr. Konrad Raiser

Dr. Gotthard Odlau of ANS interviewed WCC General Secretary Dr. Konrad Raiser in Hong Kong on 18 May upon his return from the delegation’s visit to China. Excerpts:

ANS: You and your team have visited churches in mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. What was the purpose of this trip?

Raiser: The purpose was to visit churches. The WCC is a fellowship of churches; maintaining this living relationship between member churches of the WCC is also one of the tasks of the general secretary, particularly of a general secretary who has started his responsibility only quite recently.

ANS: It was your first visit to churches in mainland China not only in your capacity as WCC general secretary but also personally. What were some of your impressions?

Raiser: It is very humbling and makes you feel very modest when you come from a well-settled church situation in a Western country and encounter the church in China. While it operates on the most elementary level in terms of human resources and other means, it exists with an intensity and a devotion that reaches very deep inside. This church is still in a very fragile situation in many respects, organizationally, and certainly in terms of its leadership resources. There is also a lot of very impressive enthusiasm about what can be done and what should be done. I have left the country with the certainty that the discoveries that the church in China will make in its attempt to live a post-denominational form of Christian witness will have much wider ecumenical significance. And for that reason I am glad that my visit to Asia started in China.

ANS: There have recently been voices in the international media about a new government "crackdown" on religion in connection with the new regulations on religious activities in China. What have been your findings in this respect?

Raiser: Obviously we saw no direct evidence of any governmental repression against religion. I read the two decrees very carefully beforehand, as well as available interpretation of the two decrees. At first sight, I did not find them outrageous in what they said. We had occasion to ask both government officials and church leaders about their understanding of these decrees, and it was pointed out that the intention was certainly not to limit religious activity but to make governmental policy more reliable and more accountable to the religious communities. Remembering some analogous situations in other countries formerly under communist rule, I have great understanding for the desire on the part of the religious communities to have at least a few clear indications of the principles that governmental authorities will follow in the [OVER]
application of religious policy, principles that can also be used in controlling the activity of lower level authorities and cadres. In that sense I can accept the view of Christian leaders who say that these decrees at least potentially constitute a step forward. It was also added in our conversations that of course it will have to be seen how these decrees and the most recent regulations will be implemented. But this is nothing new. So, I think there is little evidence that in connection with these decrees one can speak of a government crackdown.

ANS: The CCC became a member of the WCC at the Canberra Assembly in 1991. What in your view could be a specific contribution of the Chinese churches to the world ecumenical family?

Raiser: I think there are two contributions which the Chinese churches have already made and will probably continue to make. One concerns their attempt to take seriously the Three-Self principle, which is a very old missionary principle initiated by Henry Venn, the then general secretary of the London Missionary Society in the middle of the last century. It is nothing specifically related to the situation in Communist China. The church in China really tries to live on its own human and material resources; its leaders decide very consciously and responsibly about what kind of assistance they seek and accept, and where they rather want to rely on their own energies. I think this is a very important example and witness, and it may be something of significance for churches in other parts of the world as well.

The other contribution is of course the attempt to live a church existence beyond the inherited denominational divisions. Admittedly, the choice for a post-denominational church existence was not entirely a free decision. But there have been other situations where churches have been gently pushed into forms of post-denominational unity much less carefully implemented than in China. The China Christian Council respects the continuing differences of liturgy and of doctrinal tradition and does not want to force everybody into the same mould. There is patience to wait until perhaps something genuinely new may grow and create a common tradition. The new "Church Order for Trial Use in Chinese Churches" is a significant step in this direction. I find the Chinese experiment a very interesting response to the challenge to make visible the unity that we have been given in Christ. This response has received less international attention than it deserves.

ANS: Relationships between churches on the mainland and their counterparts in Hong Kong and Taiwan have been inhibited for a long time, as a result of historical circumstances. Do you see any way in which the WCC can at this point foster contacts and mutual understanding?

Raiser: I would certainly want to say that the WCC is very ready and eager to be of assistance in this regard, as far as a world body can really do that. We have tried to assist in re-enforcing and strengthening relationships between Taiwan and (mainland) [OVER]
China, in particular between the China Christian Council and the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan. We have not been utterly successful so far, but we hope that this visit will have contributed to the search for new approaches to this task. In the case of Hong Kong, there are of course many more regular contacts, though perhaps not of an altogether official character. Because of the very close interpersonal contacts, there is a lot of understanding, but at the same time also a lot of fear and suspicion on the Hong Kong side about the situation in China and what 1997 and the return to Chinese sovereignty might mean for Hong Kong. If I am not mistaken, the WCC has not given too much attention to this particular configuration so far. I would like to take the lesson with me from this visit, that this is something that we will have to pay more careful attention to in the years up to 1997 and most probably beyond. [ANS]

ANS Feature:

The Struggles of the Growing Church in Northern Anhui: A Report from a Recent Visit

In co-operation with the China Christian Council, the Amity Overseas Coordination Office plans a yearly in-depth visit to rural churches in one particular Chinese province. This year's visit was to northern Anhui, and ANS staff member Ms. Susan Raeburn-Cherradi filed this report.

At the invitation of the China Christian Council (CCC) and the Anhui Provincial Christian Council a thirteen-person "Friends of Amity" group composed of people from eight countries including Canada, Denmark, Germany, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, the Philippines, and the United States spent eleven days from March 31 - April 11 visiting churches in northern Anhui. It was the fourth rural Chinese church to the global ecumenical community, to discuss perspectives on religious policy with Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB) officials, to further Asian contact with the Chinese church at the grassroots and to provide overseas church workers working in partnership with the CCC an opportunity to meet and worship with rural Christians.

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In the late 1970s, the agricultural responsibility system, a system in which each farmer is allocated a piece of land for his or her own use, was begun in Anhui province. These early initiatives prior to the more recent economic policy changes, helped spur economic reform nationwide. Economic growth in these rural sectors came quickly but most regions in Anhui did not benefit from courageously preempting the change to a nation-wide contract system. Thus, Anhui has not experienced the rapid growth of China's coastal areas. Few rural areas have developed significant secondary industry and most Christians in Anhui continue to live in poor rural villages.

It is conservatively estimated that there are 1 or 2 million Protestant Christians in Anhui, a province with a total population of 58.34 million. Before Liberation in 1949 there were there were 300 Protestant churches; today 219 churches have been re-opened or newly opened (since the early 1980's) and a further 1,920 church meeting points have been registered. A meeting point would be considered a church in most other countries and often a very large church at that. All meeting points have secured a piece of land and have put up a building which will seat several hundred to over a thousand worshippers.

The church in Anhui has grown tremendously over the last several years but suffers from a serious lack of leadership. The entire province has less than 40 ordained pastors and 24 ordained elders. According to Rev. Zhu Shaotang, the vice-chair and general secretary of the Anhui Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM), "there had been no ordination of ministers in the Anhui church from the 1950s until the Fifth National Christian Conference in Beijing in 1992, at which four young ministers from Anhui were ordained." Very few ordinations have occurred in the province since that time though 10 – 15 young seminary graduates are due to be ordained soon. Therefore the vast majority of pastors were ordained more than 40 years ago and are now in their 70s and 80s. The scarcity of younger clergy for a church membership that in many areas has increased 30 – 40 fold since 1980 seems to be compounded by a reluctance of older church leaders to ordain recent graduates because of "their lack of practical experience," as Rev. Zhu put it.

Chuzhou county is such a case. There were 500 Christians in Chuzhou in 1950. Now there are 20,000 Christians worshipping in one city church and 19 meeting points. A young couple who graduated from Nanjing Union Theological Seminary in 1990 are now working in the church and the meeting points. Mr. Wen Xingui is to be ordained this year, but Ms. Zhang Jiechen, though a greatly respected preacher, has not yet been considered. Ms. Zhang is responsible for the city church, preaching, leading music and providing needed visitation, while her husband attends primarily to the meeting points, many of which are located in very remote villages inaccessible except by long and difficult travel [OVER]
by bus. Each meeting point is led by voluntary lay workers. Mr. Wen stresses that, "we must concentrate on the intellectual and spiritual maturity of the Christians, so our most pressing need is to build up the leadership and the clergy."

Fengyang county, 100 km northeast of Chuzhou, has 48 meeting points made up of 30,000-50,000 Christians with no pastors and no ordained elders. Here too, there is a pressing need for leadership.

Anhui Theological Seminary, in the provincial capital Hefei, changed its two-year training classes begun in 1987 to a one-year program in order to train leaders more quickly. Approximately five of this year's 35 students, of whom 16 are women, will transfer to Nanjing Seminary for further studies. Next year Anhui Seminary will again have a two-year program. Graduates range in age from 20 - 50 years old, but only two have been ordained. The rudimentary provincial seminary, built in the mid-1980s has one main room which serves as their classroom, chapel and dining room, with a small kitchen to one side. The student residence and washrooms are some distance away.

Within the province several city churches hold lay training courses where leadership is provided by clergy and faculty from the Anhui and Nanjing seminaries.

In the Fuyang city church there are three month-long classes for eighty or more lay leaders every year, held during the farmer's slack seasons. In the spring of 1994 the first short-term course to train choir leaders was also held. The city church covers the cost of food and living expenses (100 yuan a day) from congregational donations. Retired workers buy food, clean and cook for the students who are members of their respective meeting point committees.

In Huaiabei there are four city churches and 67 meeting points in the county with 34,000 Christians, served by one ordained pastor, an elderly woman in her 70s, and four ordained elders. According to Mr. Zhao Xianli, an elder and chair of the local TSPM, there are county-wide training classes once a month for the leaders of the meeting points and a smaller monthly district training class. Each year gifted preachers travel to the meeting points and offer instruction. At present there are two women and one man from this county studying at the Anhui Seminary.

Elder Zhao also stated that in addition to the 67 meeting points in Huaiabei county there are 70 other places of worship in the process of getting recognition in the county and an additional 100 family-based home gatherings. The provincial RAB agreed that in such instances registration can be granted at the discretion of local cadres. We were told by the director of the provincial RAB, Mr. Li Jixue that "regulations governing the registration of [OVER]
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church meeting points have been drafted on the national level, referred to the CCC for comment and are soon to be published." He believed this would greatly reduce the local bias concerning registration. (See "Registration Procedures for Venues for Religious Activities" in this issue of ANS.)

The church in Huaibei had consistently been turned down in their application to the government for approval to begin construction of a new church to replace the small dilapidated building where they presently worship. Tian Feng, the Chinese Christian monthly, had published news of this problem, so our delegation asked specifically about this case. The deputy mayor of Huaibei, Mr. Tang Caixin, assured the group that the problem had arisen between various governmental departments over zoning regulations and that the church could start construction soon.

In quite a number of local churches we were told that the RAB had been instrumental in finding land for church sites. In Huaibei, it was responsible for the allocation of a land grant for the church and adjoining TSPM office equal in size to that for 34 persons under the responsibility system in this area. Yet in contradiction to such generosity there is a lack of church buildings, or space within existing buildings, evident in almost every church and meeting point visited by the delegation where members spoke of overflowing congregations. In the provincial capital, Hefei, where 1500 new Christians were baptised last Christmas, the number of Christians has increased from 200 in 1931 to over 10,000 in 1994. Such rapid growth has meant that the one city church is dangerously crowded. Despite the opening of a second church building early this year and the use of close-circuit TV during both the morning and afternoon services, the 4,000 regular church members still line every stair, balcony rail and alcove inside and outside the building, creating a real concern about safety hazards among the congregation. Because of space restrictions, many Christians are forced to meet in homes.

There were a few surprisingly spacious churches in the Chuzhou area, though these still experienced a substantial Sunday overflow. The Wuyi church in Chuzhou county was recently built with the assistance of 20,000 yuan from Chinese churches responding to an appeal by the CCC and the TSPM published in Tian Feng after churches in the area were destroyed by the summer floods of 1991. The government helped with the acquisition of land and the purchase of materials and the Christians designed and built a church with a moveable eastern wall to accommodate future expansion. There are four persons serving on the church management committee and the regular preacher is a primary school teacher who has attended two week-long training classes. There is communion four times a year. In contrast, in the historic Suzhou church erected in 1924, there have been no sacraments for more than two years. This lack of sacramental life for many worshippers may representative the situation in the majority of meeting points. [OVER]
According to Rev. Xue Lianxi, a 1989 graduate from Nanjing Seminary who was ordained at the Fifth National Christian Conference in Beijing and serves in Hefei, more than 50% of the members of the Anhui churches became Christians due to faith healing experiences, while the others were converted "peacefully," or through study and prayer. In many ways the number of healings may reflect the inaccessibility and backwardness of rural medical care. "People often come to faith out of deep sadness or illness. It is not important how people come or if they see Jesus initially as a "healer", but the challenge for the pastor is to help them grow into a faith that goes beyond living for oneself, a faith that goes beyond loving the Lord, to a love for all people."

An example of Rev. Xue's challenge is Elder Zhao, who is a factory manager and whose contribution to Christian life in Huabei is significant. Shortly after his wife became a Christian in 1979, he felt God's presence after he stopped breathing for several minutes due to an unexplained health problem. This led him to believe as well. A travelling evangelist lent him a Bible from which he copied out the Gospel of Mark. He went on to write out the entire Gospel of Matthew as it was dictated over Hong Kong radio station. In 1981 the elderly pastor of his church received five Bibles, one of which was given to Elder Zhao's family. Soon after that, he offered his services to the aging pastor.

As the delegation listened to many faith testimonies it became clear that an important reason for the rapid growth of Christianity in Anhui has been the witness of the church as the Body of Christ. Christian love, honesty, desire to serve neighbors, respect for law and even harmony between in-laws are out of step with the money-oriented mood of society, and therefore attract attention. Christians are also praised for their contribution towards ending illiteracy since many elderly women believers learn to read in order to study the Bible. Women make up 75 - 90% of most congregations in the countryside, an estimate made easier because of voluntary segregated seating. Members are generally middle-aged and older, though the delegation observed and met with many young people at the churches and meeting points.

On the last day of the tour the delegation met with Mr. Li Jixue, the director of the provincial RAB, and his staff. We discussed the purpose of our delegation's visit and new developments in religious policy issues. Our delegation also candidly shared observations of both governmental cooperation with Anhui churches and interference in their affairs. Although we saw ample evidence of official co-operation with the church, we also raised a number of concerns:

1) In a number of churches we visited, more government officials were present than were Christians, so that at times it appeared that the government made decisions about our delegation's schedule. For a delegation promoting [OVER]
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international Christian sharing, this left us with questions concerning government interference in the internal affairs of the church.

2) With congregations growing so quickly, the government has either been unable or unwilling to keep pace with the demand for meeting points. With no stipulated criteria or timeframe, there seems to be no legal recourse. This also holds true for the many reports both in China and overseas about the closure or consolidation of meeting points.

3) At times, RAB officials spoke about the issues of "heresies" and "normal religious activities," and some were overbearing and at times condescending in their attitude towards Christians in the countryside. This led us to question these rural officials' understanding of religious policy and of the churches they were dealing with.

4) Finally, it was emphasized by the delegation that Christian groups choosing to associate or not with the TSPM is an internal church matter. Christians, regardless of their affiliation, must be respected and their freedoms must be protected.

One group member concluded his trip by expressing a conviction common to our group as a whole: "The Christian church in Anhui is an active, vital and rapidly growing community. Though faced with serious shortages of leadership and facilities, the profound faith and deep devotion of its members continues to attract a greater number of adherents. This is the real hope for the future." [ANS]
Registration Procedures for Venues for Religious Activities

Article 1. These Procedures are formulated in accordance with Article 2 of the "Regulation Governing Venues for Religious Activities".

Article 2. The following conditions must be met to establish a venue for religious activity:
   (1) There must be a fixed place and name;
   (2) There must be citizens who are religious believers who regularly take part in religious activities;
   (3) There must be a management organization composed of citizens who are religious believers;
   (4) There must be professional clergy or persons who meet the requirements of the particular religious group to conduct religious services;
   (5) There must be management regulations;
   (6) There must be a legal source of income.

Article 3. At the time of application for registration, the venue for religious activity must provide the following documentation:
   (1) An application form;
   (2) Documentation and credentials related to the venue;
   (3) The opinion of the village (or township) People's Government or of the city neighborhood committee.

Article 4. The head of the venue's management organization must submit the application for registration, together with the materials required under Article 3, to the Religious Affairs Department of the People's Government at the county level or above.

Article 5. Upon receipt of an application for registration and related materials, the Religious Affairs Department of the People's Government at the county level or above must make a decision on whether to consider the application within 15 days, on the basis of whether the materials are complete.

Article 6. The Religious Affairs Department of the People's Government at the county level or above will, within sixty days of the decision to consider the application, grant registration and issue a registration certificate to those venues which, based upon investigation and the opinions of related parties, comply with the regulations found in Articles 2 and 3 of these Procedures, and with related provisions in the "Regulation Governing Venues for Religious Activities". Venues which do not fully comply with the regulations will, upon review, be granted temporary [OVER]
registration or deferred registration or be denied registration. They will be notified in writing and given an explanation for the decision.

Article 7. Religious venues registered before the promulgation of these Procedures, must exchange their certificate; those which have not been registered should apply for registration according to these Procedures.

Article 8. If a religious venue closes, merges, moves or otherwise changes the terms which applied at the time of application, its management organization must apply for modification of the certificate to the original issuing body.

Article 9. According to the regulations of the "General Civil Law", legally registered venues for religious activities which qualify as juridical persons and which at the same time apply to register as juridical persons, will be issued a certificate of registration as juridical persons. According to the law, a religious venue as a juridical person independently enjoys civil rights and takes on civil responsibilities.

Article 10. A venue's certificate of registration and certificate of registration as a juridical person, cannot be changed, transferred or lent. If the certificate is lost, the venue should report its loss promptly to the original issuing body and apply for a replacement.

Article 11. Upon being granted registration, a venue for religious activity must submit an annual management report to the Religious Affairs Department of the government during the first quarter of each year.

Article 12. The certificate of registration for venues of religious activities and related forms will be uniform and will be issued by the Religious Affairs Bureau of the State Council.

Article 13. Matters not regulated by these Procedures follow the "Regulation Governing Venues for Religious Activities".

Article 14. Interpretation of these Procedures is the provenance of the Religious Affairs Bureau of the State Council.

Article 15. These Procedures take effect from the date of promulgation.

1 May, 1994

ANS translation
Tian Feng Interviews Bishop K.H. Ting
on the "Registration Issue"

Recently Christians have been very concerned about the issue of churches and meeting points registering with the government. This is indeed a matter which greatly affects Chinese Christians. Our reporter invited Bishop K.H. Ting, President of the China Christian Council and Chairperson of the National Committee of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Churches of China, to share his views on the subject. Bishop Ting indicated that he was willing to speak about his understanding, gained after careful study of the "Regulation Governing Venues for Religious Activities" issued by the State Council and the "Registration Procedures for Venues for Religious Activities" issued by the Bureau of Religious Affairs of the State Council.

(1) The Church is a spiritual body, how do you view government registration?

K.H.Ting: Registration in no way implies that the church must undertake any changes in matters of faith. My feeling is that registration done according to the Regulations, is acceptable to the Christian conscience and that refusal to register does not glorify God and is not helpful to the church.

I believe that the government's objective is to ensure social tranquillity, to give protection to normal religious activities, and as far as possible, to ensure that undesirable domestic and foreign elements have no room for manoeuvre. All social organizations are required to register with the government. The church, it is true, is the body of Christ, a spiritual organization, but it is also a social one, and need not be made an exception of. Many countries in the world have similar practices of church registration.

With regard to us Chinese Christians, if there are those who are unwilling to have anything to do with the government for reasons of faith, then they constitute a very small minority. The vast majority of Christians will not refuse registration in order to secure their legal right of existence, as long as the regulation is a reasonable one.

(2) What benefits are there for Christian churches and meeting points in registering according to the stipulations in these two documents?

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K.H. Ting: Registration enables churches and meeting points to achieve public legal status, giving us a greater degree of protection in religious freedom. Once a church or meeting point has been through the registration process, no one can say it is "illegal". I believe that these two documents are much more explicit than Article Thirty-Six of the Constitution; they are the most explicit statements on religion to be issued by the state since Article Thirty-Six of the Constitution.

The documents stipulate that Christian churches and meeting points should be administered by a management organization chosen by the churches and meeting points themselves. What an important safeguard this is. It enables us to maintain self-administration with assurance.

The documents stipulate that the property and income of churches and meeting points be administered and utilized by the management organization, no other unit or person may hold or gratuitously transfer them. On the basis of this regulation, we can handle and streamline irregular financial practices which have occurred in some places.

The documents stipulate that infringement of the legal rights of religious venues shall be dealt with by the People's Government and that economic losses will be made good.

These are just three examples.

I cannot say that with these two documents, all related problems will be promptly and readily solved. It is always necessary to make great efforts to secure legal rights and to safeguard them. Adverse incidents which the documents are meant to guard against may still occur in some places, but these two legal documents, formally promulgated by the State Council and the Religious Affairs Bureau of the State Council, give us greater support than any other documents in our efforts for better implementation of religious policy and they are worthy of serious study and application by our brothers and sisters in Christ and by cadres dedicated to the implementation of the religious policy.

Could application for registration have an effect opposite to what is intended, and lead to a denial of recognition? If this is the case, wouldn't it be better not to apply?

K.H. Ting: These two documents tell us that registration is simply registration; it does not entail reorganization, merger, or suppression. According to Article 6 of the "Registration Procedures for Venues for Religious Activities", a church or meeting point need only
meet quite easily achievable requirements: a fixed place and name, a membership which meets regularly for worship or fellowship, a legal income, fill in an application to set up a church or meeting point, attach relevant documents and papers and get the opinion (here the word "opinion", not "permission" is used) of the village (Township) People's Government or the city neighborhood committee. None of these poses a problem. If all these are in order, the Religious Affairs Department of the County People's Government should, within sixty days from the date of accepting the application, grant registration and issue a registration certificate. No other requirements for registration are mentioned in either document.

It is worth noting that, even if the above requirements cannot be fully met, this does not simply lead to the banning or suppression of a venue. In addition to "registration", there is "temporary registration" and "deferred registration" (the congregation may continue to meet during the deferral period). Only then is there "registration refused". (Read carefully Article 6 of the "Registration Procedures for Venues for Religious Activities")

There will still be venues which are disbanded, but according to the "Regulation Governing Venues for Religious Activities" these will be a very small minority. Article 14 states that if a registered church or meeting point breaks one of the regulations set out in the rules, warnings and varying degrees of penalties will be given according to the severity of the offence; only in cases where the "facts are particularly serious" will the venue be "banned". It should be noted that these varying degrees of penalties do not allow for the subjective inclinations of some cadres. The right to decide that a venue be disbanded belongs to the People's Government at county level or above. As for general penalties, these also must be set by at least county level Religious Affairs Department.

Article 16 of the "Regulation Governing Venues for Religious Activities" stipulates that any church or meeting point which cannot accept a government ruling, can apply for reconsideration or initiate a lawsuit.

(4) Some meeting points whose application for registration was rejected in the past are now afraid of being rejected once more and so do not dare to apply; should they apply?

K.H.Ting: According to these two documents, any church or meeting point which can meet the simple requirements listed above, may apply and should receive notice of acceptance within sixty days. Those which do not entirely [OVER]
meet the requirements, may receive "temporary registration" or "deferred registration", their meetings will not cease. Only those which fail completely to meet the requirements will find their "registration denied".

From what I understand, the two documents promulgated by the State Council and the Religious Affairs Bureau of the State Council are not meant to cause difficulties for meeting points, but to place all normal religious activities upon a legal footing, which can afford them protection. This is why I support these two documents.

(5) Does registration require that a name list of Christians be supplied?

K.H.Ting: Religious belief is a citizen's private affair, no one is permitted to interfere. The two documents do not stipulate that name lists of members of churches or meeting points be supplied.

(6) We have noted in recent years that, without careful consultation with Christians, meeting points in some places have been merged, dispersed or suppressed under the pretext of "rational distribution", and Christians have been highly dissatisfied with this. Would registration permit such goings on?

K.H.Ting: I don't think so. Because of the distances involved, and various other reasons, including differences in matters of faith and interpersonal relationships, many meeting points have emerged. In general there is a natural rationality to their distribution. Christians who have been affected by so-called "rational distribution" often feel that it is a type of interference and the result of the so-called "rational distribution" is often greater irrationality, creating a lot of distress and inconvenience.

The terms "merger", "incorporation", "rectification" and "rational distribution" do not appear in the "Regulation Governing Venues for Religious Activities" and "Registration Procedures for Venues for Religious Activities". The absence of these terms indicate that the State Council and the Religious Affairs Bureau of the State Council base their acts on seeking truth from facts. This is what we mean by saying "registration is simply registration". Departments concerned in all areas should carry out registration work well according to the requirements set by the two documents; they should not enlarge the extent of registration work, so as not to abuse Christians' legal right to freedom of religious belief.

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K.H. Ting Interview / 5

(7) Is it only churches and meeting points which participate in three-self organizations or the Christian councils, or those recommended by them, who are eligible to apply for and be granted registration?

K.H. Ting: The documents show that participation in a three-self organization or Christian council is not a prerequisite for being permitted to apply and be granted registration. The "Regulation Governing Venues for Religious Activities" and the "Registration Procedures for Venues for Religious Activities" tell us that registration is a matter of Christian churches and meeting points registering with the government, not one of registering with a three-self organization or with a Christian council. Registration is a matter between the church or meeting point and the government. These two documents do not require the church or meeting point seeking registration to gain recommendation or recognition from a three-self organization or Christian council.

For many different reasons, some meeting points have no relations with three-self organizations or Christian councils. This is not an obstacle to these meeting points seeking to register with the government. Neither does registration imply participation in three-self organizations or Christian councils.

(8) Then, three-self organizations and Christian councils are completely uninvolved in the work of registration, is that right?

K.H. Ting: In the work of registration, three-self organizations or Christian councils should explain the significance and benefits of registration to Christians, dispel suspicions, hear Christians' opinions on the work and reflect these to the appropriate government departments in order to seek improvement in the work. In the process of regular consultations with the government, we should continue to raise our views. Application (for registration) is a matter for the churches and meeting points; examination and approval (of applications) is a matter for the government; none of this is the responsibility of three-self or the Christian councils.

(9) The "Registration Procedures for Venues for Religious Activities" stipulates that to apply for registration, there must be a "fixed venue". How do you understand this term "fixed venue"?

K.H. Ting: Any church or meeting point has an address. If there is an address for worship or meeting, there is a fixed venue. It cannot be said that only a church building is a fixed venue. Meeting points all over China have fixed venues, and they can all apply for registration. [OVER]
Do these two documents require anything of the mass of Christian believers or of churches and meeting points?

K.H. Ting: The documents require that each church and meeting point, in their religious activities, observe the laws and regulations; they may not allow anyone to carry out activities which damage national unity, ethnic solidarity, or social order; or harm the physical well-being of citizens or obstruct the national education system. None of these are new requirements, but we should emphasize them and make them more widely known, enabling each church and meeting point to comply with them. In these matters, church members should play a supervisory role.

Before these two documents were promulgated, some places had announced their own administrative regulations concerning religious venues, which ones are now to be the standard?

K.H. Ting: As is known, the locality should always follow the authority of the central government. If the local regulations contain anything which runs counter to these two documents, then naturally the two documents of the State Council and the Religious Affairs Bureau of the State Council will be the standard.

What will be the approach from now on of the two national Christian bodies (the CCC and the TSPM) toward Christians who are separate from them?

K.H. Ting: As we have stated time and again, all Christians who serve Jesus Christ as Lord are our brothers and sisters in Christ, we all belong to the one body of Christ, we should stress reconciliation, mutual forgiveness, mutual relatedness, mutual linkages, mutual respect, mutual help, and mutual protection; we should do nothing which would harm the other. Love for country and love for church is something we share in common; as for participation in three-self organizations and Christian councils, this cannot be forced. There are rumors from overseas aimed at breaking us apart, but we will not readily believe them.

When Christians gather in their own homes with a few friends and family members for prayer meetings, must these also be registered?

K.H. Ting: The Religious Affairs Bureau of the State Council has expressed to us that this is the spiritual activity of Christians from the churches and meeting points conducted on a small scale, and therefore falls outside the requirement for registration.
(14) Is there anything else you would like to say on this subject?

K.H. Ting: I think it is worth mentioning that although these two documents were promulgated by the government, during the two or three year drafting process, the government many times sought the views of the national organizations and leaders of each religion; religious leaders also expressed various opinions on revising them, many of which were incorporated, while those which could not be incorporated were satisfactorily explained. Thus, these two documents are the product of many years of democratic consultation. We rejoice in the fact that the two national Christian bodies, guided by the concept of safeguarding the legal rights of Christianity and indeed of all religions in China, were able to render a small service through participation in repeated consultations. I hope that Christians will remember the work of registration and its smooth implementation in their prayers.

ANS translation

Abbreviations used in this issue: CCC, China Christian Council; CPPCC, Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference; RAB, Religious Affairs Bureau; TSPM, National Committee of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Churches in China; WCC, World Council of Churches.