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Shandong Leads The Way In Return Of Church Property

"Unless you go to court, you won't get your church property back." According to the January issue of the church magazine, Tian Feng, this is a common attitude among many frustrated church workers who have worked for years to get back church property confiscated during the Cultural Revolution. But there are also more positive developments, and the article goes on to describe the experiences of churches in Shandong Province, where most disputes about church properties have now been solved.

Dongguang Church in Weifang City is a case in point. Since the church was a small, run down building located in an area designated for redevelopment, it was slated to be torn down by the city government. After consultation between the church, the Religious Affairs Bureau, and the city government it was decided that the city should erect a new building after demolishing the old one. The attractive new church now sits proudly between modern apartment blocks.

In a similar case, an old church was torn down in Angju City when the street it was situated on was redeveloped into a shopping area. The church was given compensation as well as a new, centrally located piece of land where a new church more than three times the size of the old one has been built.

Quoting Elder Zhang Tianren from Qingdao, the article asserts that property disputes can often be solved without going to court. Elder Zhang suggested that each city Christian Council set up a church property management office to handle all building and property affairs. This office could also liaise with concerned government offices. Many property disputes could then be settled through the people's congresses or the consultative conferences in a given place.

At the same time, Elder Zhang admitted that court cases are sometimes unavoidable. Citing the case of one church property in Qingdao for which the work unit that occupied it did not pay the proper rent, Zhang said that the church finally resolved to go to court. The church liaised with the Religious Affairs Bureau beforehand, and the RAB ensured that the church’s case was argued by a very good lawyer. The church not only got its property returned, it even received back payment for the rent it was owed.

In Jinan, the provincial capital, more than 110 property disputes between churches and other work units were solved in recent years. According to Rev. Han Deqing who oversaw the property work for the church, this was only possible because the city government set up a special church property working group to help solve these cases.

An example from Tai'an City shows how difficult the solution to such disputes can be. A church property there had been occupied by a middle school. When the church demanded its building back, the school argued that teaching was more important than preaching. Nevertheless, after patient arbitration [OVER]
by the local RAB, the dispute was finally solved in 1993 and the building returned to the church.

Property disputes between churches and work units are common in many parts of China, and many church properties occupied during the Cultural Revolution have not yet been returned. With modernization and redevelopment, a new conflict issue has arisen in the last few years: How can churches be compensated when their old building has to be torn down? Churches are now increasingly insistent that these problems be solved, and lay training courses in some provinces even include some legal education to enable church leaders to better argue their case. Articles in Tian Feng provide a means to educate believers about the rights of churches to have their property protected. [ANS]

ANS 95.1.2

Hardships Faced By Christians In Northwestern Guangxi

Churches in northwestern Guangxi are facing a variety kinds of hardships. This becomes evident in a report written by Xiao Yang, a student from Zhongnan Theological Seminary who recently visited Christians in the Hechi Region.

Xiao reports that Christians in Celing Village used to meet in private homes, until the Christian Council of the Autonomous Region bought an old cinema for them last year to use as a church. As the building is conveniently located right next to the Celing Railway Station, the Christians there plan to use part of the building for a restaurant and a guest house. Xiao remains critical, though, noting that the purchase contract stipulates that the church regularly show movie videos in the main hall of the building. Xiao worries that this will make it difficult to recognize the church as a church.

In Qingyuan Village, Yizhou City, the old church has recently been torn down by the city building department. The believers now have to meet in an extremely small private room. Plans for a new church building have not been approved yet, and Xiao calls for greater efforts both by the Christian Council and by the city authorities to solve this problem as quickly as possible. Despite the cramped surroundings, Christians meet for Bible study every morning from 7:30 to 9:00, and for worship three evenings a week.

Beishan Church in Yizhou City was destroyed by the floods which ravaged Guangxi last summer. As most Christians also lost their homes, they cannot yet even think of rebuilding their church. For the present, the congregation meets in a mountain cave which is bare except for some naked light bulbs and a table.

In addition to their building problems, the churches in Hechi Prefecture are extremely short of trained pastoral workers.
[ANS]
Woman Pastor Criticizes "Old Patriarchal Attitudes" Within Church

Rev. Gao Ying, an ordained woman from Beijing, sharply criticized the "patterns of oppression" within male-dominated Chinese churches, which denied women equality in the leadership and administration of the church. Gao made her remarks to an international group of teachers working for the Amity Foundation at a conference in Xiamen, Fujian Province, in January this year. (See ANS Documentation in this issue.)

Speaking of her own experience as a minister at the largest church in Beijing, Gao said that after her ordination in 1992, she had to wait more than 11 months before she was allowed to officiate at the Eucharist, and even longer to perform baptisms. Gao is the only female pastor of her church, whose members, as in most Chinese churches, are predominantly women.

Conceding that women's liberation has had a strong impact on churches in China, Gao said that the "feudal idea of men's superiority over women is [still] deeply rooted in people's minds, and in society's institutions -- including the church." While the leadership of the Chinese church was "supportive of an individual woman's struggle for equality," many male leaders did not support equality for all women in the church. Describing the establishment of the National Women's Commission of the CCC as a "breakthrough", Gao at the same time deplored the fact that the suggestion to found a separate grassroots women's organization in the church was turned down. "The decision makers are conveniently oblivious to women's contributions to the church. Women are still expected to follow the lead of men who set the priorities, usually without any consideration for the fact that women make up more than 60% of the total church membership."

Gao said practicing feminist theology was important and significant for Chinese church women, but that it was not easy. "Given the androcentric character of today's church leadership and the strong presence of fundamentalism among the church's membership, I am aware of the risk involved in introducing a western feminist theology publicly. Such an attempt on my part may jeopardize my future as a minister in the Chinese church."

Gao said that while feminist theology came originally from the West, bringing it into the Chinese church had "to be based on our own particular situation." One of the biggest problems of Chinese church women was "that many women in the church accept the idea that we are inferior." Women had to reverse this perception before real change was possible.

In closing, Gao said that as women comprised more than 60% of the church membership, the church would not be able to reach its goal of being "well-run" unless women's issues were addressed.

While similar criticisms can be heard in private from many Chinese women pastors, they have rarely been made public before.

Rev. Gao Ying is the secretary of the CCC Women's Commission and the CCC liaison officer for the Beijing UN Women's Conference and the NGO Women's Forum. [ANS]
Christian Village Sets Example

A "Christian village" in a remote area of Yunnan Province has recently been cited in the national Chinese press as a model for society. Baihua Village, in the Nujiang Lisu Autonomous Region, has about 300 inhabitants all of whom are Christian believers. There are many Christians among the Lisu, a national minority of about half a million people, residing mainly in the Nujiang Region.

Situated in an inaccessible mountain area, the Nujiang Lisu Autonomous Region is extremely poor. Education is primitive, and even primary school graduates are scarce. In the last few years, the region, which lies close to the infamous "Golden Triangle," has seen an upsurge in opium production, accompanied by violence, drug abuse, drug smuggling activities and prostitution.

Baihua Village, though, has stayed "clean." Even though the land is not very fertile, the Lisu Christians there have stuck to producing food instead of opium poppies that would bring in a far higher income.

A team of Beijing reporters who recently came to investigate the area were so moved by the spirit of a Sunday service they witnessed, and by the exemplary simple life of the Lisu Christians, that they wrote a long article praising the Baihua inhabitants. [ANS]

Bishop Moses Xue Pingxi Dies In Fuzhou

Fujian Bishop Xue Pingxi passed away in Fuzhou on February 1 at the age of 91. He was honorary chair of the Fujian Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee, and honorary president of the Fujian Christian Council and Fujian Theological Seminary. His death leaves only three surviving bishops in mainland China -- Bishop Wang Shenyi from Jinan in Shandong, Jinan Province, Bishop Sun Yanli of Shanghai and Bishop K.H. Ting, President of the China Christian Council.

Bishop Xue was born in Fuzhou in 1904. After graduating from Fuzhou's Trinity Anglo-Chinese College and St. John's University in Shanghai, he began a career in church and education work in Fujian which spanned five decades. After the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, Bishop Xue returned to China and resumed his work in the Fujian (Anglican) Diocese of the Chung Hwa Sheng Kung Hui. Consecrated as bishop in 1955, he subsequently became the bishop of the Fuzhou Diocese.

In the 1980s, Bishop Xue helped to rebuild the church in Fujian after the devastating years of the Cultural Revolution. He is remembered as a warm and pastoral church leader with a wide range of interests and talents. Throughout his life, he maintained an abiding interest in "running the church well" and developing educational opportunities for young people. [ANS]
Church Magazine Calls For Democratic Governance Of Church

In its February issue, the national church magazine, Tian Feng, calls for all churches to be run in a democratic way. Introducing three articles by students from Nanjing Union Theological Seminary on the issue, the editors state that the discussion about how the church should be run was very important to its readers. The editors express the hope that by publishing the three articles "co-workers in the church who have so far neglected this problem would change their attitude; that the church would free itself from the chaos caused by human factors and better glorify God and serve the people."

The three articles all cover different aspects of democratic governance of church life. Under the title "On Democratic Problem Solving In The Early Church," Song Yongsheng writes that the democratic ways of the early church were visible in its elections as well as in its problem-solving methods. He holds that many problems in the present church in China were caused by a lack of democracy, and that true self-hood of the church could only be reached when the church was run in a democratic way. Specifically, he suggests a governance system by which every 50 Christians would elect one representative for the running of church affairs.

Fang Ping in her article looks at "The Democratic Management Of The Chinese Church In Light Of The Jerusalem Council." Stating that problems within the Chinese churches resemble those of the early church, she sees the Jerusalem Council as a model of democratic problem solving. Finally, Li Duchao discusses "The Governance Of The Church And Democratic Supervision." He believes that democratic supervision is needed to avoid intra-church conflicts often caused by "dictators."

According to informed sources, the publication of these three articles shows a strong interest on the part of the CCC to educate grassroots believers in the ways of democratic church management. In a recent speech (see ANS 94.6.10), CCC President Bishop K.H. Ting had called for a "spirit of democratic consultation" in the grassroots churches. [ANS]

Fujiang Pastors Visit Taiwan Churches

A delegation of nine pastors from Fujiang, led by Fujiang Christian Council President Rev. Zheng Yugu, visited churches in Taiwan in January this year. This was the first visit of such a group from the Chinese mainland to Taiwan. Invited by the "Laypeople's Evangelism Society", the group visited churches, seminaries and church institutions in Taipei, Taichung, Kaohsiung and other cities.

Speaking after the trip, Rev. Zheng expressed his satisfaction with this visit. "We received such a warm welcome everywhere we went. This visit has really strengthened the ties between churches on both sides of the Taiwan Straits, and helped us to understand each other better." [ANS]
Rev. Gao Liangyi, the young pastor from Shenyang who had been arrested in April 1994 after an intra-church disagreement in the city turned hostile (see ANS 94.4/5.16), was released on probation on 27 January 1995 after making a public apology for his previous behavior. All parties involved in the conflict are continuing to work for reconciliation.

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The church in Guang'an (Sichuan Province), home county of China's paramount leader Deng Xiaoping, has grown to more than 2,000 members in the last 12 years. Believers meet in three churches and one meeting point and are served by two pastors and two evangelists. Eight years ago, the church also set up a kindergarten. Six young people from Guang'an county have been sent to Sichuan Theological Seminary, and the first graduate was recently ordained a pastor.

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Urad Qianqi Banner (an autonomous county) in Inner Mongolia has now four churches of more than 100 sq.m. each, as well as seven smaller buildings. Pastoral work in these churches is done by lay workers who have completed lay training courses.

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Due to city redevelopment, the church at 185 Zhongshan Middle Road in Guilin City, Guangxi Autonomous Region has been torn down. A new church has now been constructed at 456 Zhongshan Middle Road.

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One pastor and several teachers have been ordained in the Taizhou region of Zhejiang Province. Two ethnic Koreans were ordained ministers in the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture in Jilin Province. Jilin City, Jilin Province, and Dalian City, Liaoning Province, each had a minister ordained.

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The Christian Councils in Heilongjiang Province and in Beijing have each established a Women's Committee.

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The Christian Council of Jiangxi Province has set up a center to assist students enrolled in the Nanjing Union Theological Seminary Correspondence Class.

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The church in Yuanjiang City, Hunan Province, was established in 1906. In 1980, there were about 30 Christians, while in 1994, their number had grown to more than 3,000. [OVER]
News In Brief/2

There are seven churches and seven home worship gathering points in the city, served by a pastor, five teachers, an evangelist and 40 lay workers. Over the last few years, more than 2,000 believers have participated in special Bible, lay worker training and other classes organized by the church in the city.

Christians in Yuanjiang are held in high esteem. One village recently elected eight "model households", and it turned out that all eight were Christian families.

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The "Hymn Master" is a portable computerized device about the size of a small tape recorder which can play all 400 hymns found in the new Chiense hymnal. By simply keying in the hymn numbers, users can hear either the melody line or a full music version of a particular hymn at a variety of tempos. The Hymn Master will be particularly welcome in rural churches where few, if any, members of the congregation can read music. The Hymn Master was developed by a Chinese Christian and is available for sale from the Amity Center For Cultural, Technological And Economic Exchange (ACCTEE). At 680 Yuan, it is much cheaper than a piano or a hand organ.

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Sixty students have been enrolled in a new two-year theological training course run by the Henan Christian Council.

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A 33-year old woman pastor, Xu Meiping, has been made minister-in-charge of Qingxin Church in Shanghai. She replaces octogenarian Rev. Zhu Dawei who is in failing health.

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Xiapu County in Fujian Province has more than 20,000 Christians who worship in 76 churches and 52 meeting points. As there are only three pastors and two evangelists, most of the church work rests on the shoulders of the more than 200 lay workers in the county. One of these, Wu Hengkang, a retired doctor, serves as an itinerant evangelist visiting each church and meeting point once a year, for an average of three days.

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The China Christian Council contributed US$ 5,000 to the Council of Churches in Japan for its relief work after the Kobe earthquake in January.

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More than 1,000 people, many of them university students, attended an evangelistic fair at Nanjing Union Theological Seminary on Christmas Eve 1994. According to seminary participants, many guests were genuinely interested in the Christian faith and used the opportunity to ask many questions. [ANS]
International Exchanges

Visiting the China Christian Council:

A group of members of the Norwegian Free Lutheran Church;
a group from the Center of Continuing Education at Princeton
Seminary;
a delegation from the Hongkong Women's Christian Council.

Chinese Christians Going Abroad:

Rev. Li Hengquan and Rev. Mrs. Li Meilan for a course at the
Ecumenical Institute in Bossey;
Mr. Shen Derong and Mr. Li Yading, participating in the
Sixth Conference On World Religions And Peace in Italy;
Dr. Wenzao Han and Rev. Bao Jiayuan, participating in the
European Ecumenical China Conference;
Rev. Bao Jiayuan, to Geneva to participate in the planning
of the 1997 Hongkong Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation;
and to Hongkong, to give a speech at a Friends of Amity meeting.

Li Wei and Yang Lijing, participating in a Young
Theologian's Workshop organized by the Christian Conference of
Asia.

CHINA
Provinces and municipalities mentioned in this issue
Rev. Gao Ying is a pastor at Chongwenmen Church in Beijing. She also serves as the Secretary of the CCC's National Women's Commission and as the CCC's liaison person in Beijing for the 1995 UN Women's Conference and NGO Forum. Following are edited excerpts from a speech she gave to the Amity Teachers Midyear Conference in Xiamen, Fujian Province, in January 1995.

[...]

As a pastor, serving in the largest church in Beijing, with more than fifteen hundred people in attendance each Sunday, my daily responsibilities can be overwhelming. Church members, especially women parishioners, expect so much from me that to be honest I have to work very hard. On the one hand, I am thankful to be one of the pastors, especially one of the women pastors who are so needed in the Church. I derive much joy and satisfaction from the work, and am making friends with people of all ages. On the other hand, my work can be too challenging and too demanding for me to be as effective as I want to be for the parishioners.

When we try to understand the women in the church in China we need to learn about the general situation of women's social status in Chinese society both at present and in the past.

During my studies in the United States, I frequently heard women speakers allude to China's former Chairman Mao Zedong's claim that "women can hold up half of the sky". Behind his poetic statement lies the poignancy of an obvious truth that without acknowledging the participation of women in all areas of life we are inclined to view life and its issues with the sight of only one eye. Mao's insight into sexual inclusivity may have been based on political expediency, but it was long overdue and gave rise to a new feminine force in China.

1949 marked the success of the revolution under communist leadership. A basic change in the social system happened in all of China. These changes strongly attacked many semi-feudal and semi-colonial ideas. The government closed down brothels, did away with marriage practices that violated the dignity of womanhood, including the most inhumane practice -- child brides. Women began to partake of the privileges of schooling and employment.

In new China women began to be liberated from their long history of subservience to the male authority figure, to the father, to the husband and to the son. According to the old Confucian teaching, a woman had no self-definition except in reference to the men of her life. A woman was bound to the three "obediences"; being subjected to her father before marriage, to her husband after marriage and to her son if she became widowed. Now women are liberated from such feudalistic practices. Women's social position has been greatly elevated. For example, [OVER]
in the 1950's there were 610,000 women workers who made up 7.5% of the work force. Today there are 45 million women workers who make up 44% of the work force. Another remarkable change in women's lives is that a Chinese woman no longer takes her husband's family name after the marriage but maintains her own, symbolizing her equality with her partner.

Chinese women have gained notable equality with men. Their lawful rights are guarded by the State Constitution, women's federations, and agencies at all administrative levels. Women have been encouraged to demonstrate our ability alongside our male counterparts in every field since 1949. To gain any meaningful equality however, women must free ourselves from dependence on male authority.

Women's liberation has had a strong impact on the church and will continue to have a strong influence on the church. Before 1949, when the People's Republic of China was formed, there were only a few women ministers; but since 1949, many women ministers have appeared, especially since the reappearance of churches after the Cultural Revolution. Since 1979, the church in China has ordained over 400 new pastors, of whom more than 100 are women. For example, of the 172 pastors ordained in 1993, 70 are women. [...] In a number of seminaries, women students make up 50% of the total number. In Yanjing seminary, in Beijing, female students are even in the majority. Most women seminarians expect to be ordained some day.

Although China's liberation has brought about dramatic changes in women's lives, China's 2000 years of male dominated tradition could not be overcome in a single generation, for sexism is older than political systems. The feudal idea of men's superiority over women is deeply rooted in people's minds, and in society's institutions -- including the church.

Women are an important force in the life and work of the church today. Over half of the believers are women. In my church women even comprise more than 60% of the membership. To verify my point, in the last four years, 537 women were baptized, but only 87 men. Most women are involved in congregational activities, such as cleaning the church, ushering, visitations, choir, and preparing for communion. Isn't it ironic that these women are not allowed to distribute the bread and wine at the communion service on Sundays? [...] Although the women in my church bake the bread, prepare the wine, set up the Eucharistic table and clean the cups and plates afterwards, they are only allowed to participate in the sacrament behind the scenes. Women are expected to accept their inferiority instead of recognizing their own equality and identity in the church.

Upon my return to Beijing from the United States in 1991 I was not prepared to see only white haired males standing in front of the communion table to receive the consecrated bread and wine from the pastor before distributing them to the congregation. The reality was shocking. After a while I commented on the absence of female participants at the Eucharist, and expressed my wish for women's participation in the pastoral committee [OVER]
of the church. The response to my comment was not positive. The committee members told me that women’s participation could not be considered until they had a woman pastor. After my ordination three years ago, I raised the question again. It was again dismissed, with the excuse that female participation would offend some worshippers who have a Little Flock background. The Little Flock is one of the indigenous Christian groups in China and has its own characteristics. The leaders of the Little Flock do not support equal participation by women in the church. [...] The time and energy used to resolve these denominational squabbles among the churchmen obscures our efforts to establish a leading role for women in the church.

To return to my personal experience, I was ordained to serve all the sacraments of the church in January 1992. I waited more than 11 months to celebrate the Eucharist. I waited even longer to officiate at a baptism. [...] All of my pastoral experiences have made me realize that the struggle of Christian women for an equal role in the church is even more complex than my most conservative estimate. [...] 

In the last 40 years in the Chinese church, great efforts have been made [...] to give a Biblical definition of the Three-Self principle to support selfhood from a theological perspective. This is significant and necessary, but I am sorry to say such effort has not been made on the issue of Biblical understanding of women’s equality in the church. Scriptures, such as the Pauline letters preaching against women’s position in the church, have been openly discussed only to support church women’s subservience to church men. Women’s ordination is not based on a Biblical understanding but was rather a result of the social and political “equality” of women. It seems to me that in the society at large women are more empowered now and they are active in many fields. But on the theological and psychological levels we find the absence of a rationale for women’s equal role in the church. The church persists in relying on the Bible to support an unequal role for women.

Last month at the church board meeting I carefully mentioned the disproportionate participation of women and men in distributing the sacrament of the Eucharist. I expressed my understanding of it and willingness to be continually patient in order to avoid conflict. My rather modest comment was met by critical reaction from both old and young male participants at the meeting. The former senior, male pastor simply stated that it is unnecessary to add a few female participants at the Sunday communion. And a young male graduate, the former senior pastor’s grandson, firmly said that the church’s duties have been divided by gender in the congregation according to ecclesiastical tradition and therefore it is inappropriate for women to serve alongside men. His reaction reminded me that last summer in Spain, during the WCC Conference on Faith and Order, a Roman Catholic Cardinal made the same reply at a press conference when he was asked about the ordination of women priests in the Catholic church. The young staff member in my church cannot compare with the Cardinal in terms of age and experience. But one thing is obvious: These churchmen share the same [OVER] convenient, self-serving attitude toward women within the
church, they share the same male privilege system, and conservative Biblical and ecclesiastical traditions.

In Marxist China, women are expected to wait to be truly free only after all other entities of society are liberated. There is a common ideological opinion -- among the male dominated leadership -- that no feminine agenda can be separate from the total agenda, which calls for the transformation of the whole society. This viewpoint defends the oppression of women because it tells us that as long as there are poorer people among us then women do not need to be liberated yet. [...]

For the most part the members of the leadership in the Chinese church are an older generation of men. Generally speaking, this male leadership is supportive of an individual woman's struggle for equality, but not of equality for all women in the church. This pattern of oppression is created by individual men in positions to make decisions in their own interest, supported by both male-only active traditions and female-only passive traditions.

I am especially grateful for the breakthrough of the establishment of the National Women's Commission of the CCC. The insufficient female representation in the church decision-making level sometimes hinders hearing a woman's voice. For example, the suggestion by the only woman member in the executive committee to form a women's organization was ignored. In another example, there is not even one woman in a newly established Religious Peace Commission, representing all five national religious organizations. Afterwards, we received the 'explanation' that because the preparatory work was done in such a hurried way, they had no time to think more carefully about the gender balance. I can be sympathetic with the male leaders long-conditioned, in fact traditional, omission of women, but I can no longer support this pattern of convenient forgetfulness in church decisions. [...]

As a woman pastor, working in a local church, I have many opportunities to meet female parishioners from all walks of life, especially women intellectuals. They come to me and tearfully share their anguish and pain in ways they would not share with a male pastor. Through my pastoral counselling I find that the influence of the traditional culture is so overwhelming that it drains our energy and prevents women from searching for a positive identity, self-esteem and self-liberation. [...] I realize that it has been difficult for me to find a positive role for being a pastor within the women-denying traditions of the present leaders of the Christian church.

In the Chinese church, especially at the grass-roots level, the pastoral administration is dominated by male pastors. Consequently, the role of the pastor's wife is the most common female model for church members. The pastor's wife can be as respected as a female pastor even though the pastor's wife must conduct her role in the church behind the scenes. I was impressed by how influential the former senior pastor's wife was [OVER] during the early 50's in my church. She had good personal skills, being sociable, sensitive and patient -- qualities her
husband lacked. She used all her gifts to help the church board support her husband and tried to alleviate friction between the different committees within the church and between her husband and the parishioners. Meanwhile her husband did all the preaching and sacramental duties. They worked as a wonderful team to take care of the church. This model of female-male cooperation -- that is, a model in which the woman has no official identity -- is well accepted by the congregation.

This wife has, however, distorted her own religious experiences. When each pastor’s wife accepts her responsibility for her own religious identity, then male pastors will have to respond more fully to their parish instead of delegating their responsibilities to a submissive wife. The woman pastor has already faced this challenge. She must be as capable as her male counterpart in all pastoral fields, while simultaneously being gentle and constantly wearing a smile for her parishioners. And she has no one to act as the pastor’s wife. Even if the woman pastor marries, she will not gain a submissive sub-pastor.

I am grateful for being a woman and for all my feminine gifts from God. I have explored these gifts in order to serve the people better. But I am caught in a conflict that makes me responsible for performing my pastoral duties as if I were both male and female at the same time: my male counterparts perform only half of these duties. […]

My own experiences point out clearly that there are patriarchal elements in Chinese culture as well as in the church, and that the two reinforce each other. As a Chinese woman and a Chinese woman pastor, I have to face this double challenge to reassess both our cultural heritage and Christian faith. I realize that there is no easy path to follow. […] In the Chinese church we have not theorized about the rights of women, and the words “feminist theology” are not even part of our theological vocabulary.

Given the androcentric character of today’s church leadership and the strong presence of fundamentalism among the church’s leadership, I am aware of the risk involved in introducing a western feminist theology publicly. Such an attempt on my part may jeopardize my future as a minister in the Chinese church. […]

Here the question arises: How to introduce feminist theology to Chinese Christian women? Though western theological works such as feminist Biblical hermeneutics provide many insights for Chinese Christian women, bringing feminist theology into the Chinese church has to be based on our own particular situation. […]

My experience informs me that today one of the biggest problems is that many women in the church accept the idea that we are inferior. Consequently, the most important question may not involve the power structures or the patriarchal system of church government. The greatest challenge may be the women of the church ourselves. […]