Jiangsu CC Takes Steps To Ensure Younger Leadership

(ANS) More than 70% of the 5,200 lay workers who have been trained in Jiangsu Province in the last 15 years were under 50 years of age, and 90% of the county level pastors and CC chairpersons are young. But this is not enough for the Jiangsu Christian Council, which has taken a series of steps to ensure that more young people will make it into responsible positions soon.

Retirement regulations have been drafted by the provincial CC that make retirement of pastors mandatory at 70 years for men, and 65 years for women. Only if there is an urgent need, and the person in question physically healthy, can an extended working time of three to five years be negotiated. Under the regulations, evangelists will be forced to retire at 60. So far, the regulations have only been implemented in Nanjing, Suzhou and Zhangjiagang, but initial responses have been very favorable.

For lay training classes, clear age limits are now in place: Nobody above the age of 35 can participate in a provincial training class, and trainees in county training classes cannot be older than 45.

According to the Jiangsu Christian Council, there are still problems in some places where old pastors refuse to step down and hand responsibility to younger church workers. But the council hopes to have younger people in charge in every church in the province within the next five years. [240 words]
RAB Director Explains Basic Orientation Of Religious Work

(ANS) Religious work has to follow the "three guidelines" defined by President Jiang Zemin: "(1) completely and correctly implement the party's religious policy, (2) within the law, strengthen the management of religious affairs, (3) energetically lead religion to adapt to socialist society." This was expressed by the director of the RAB under the State Council, Ye Xiaowen, in an article which was first published as an editorial in the People's Daily and reprinted in the May issue of the church magazine, Tian Feng.

Ye emphasizes that all religious work has to follow these guidelines, which do not say anything beyond the principles which have been stressed in party documents No. 19 (1982) and No. 6 (1991), and in the regulations on religious venues and on religious activities by foreigners in 1994. (see ANS 94.1.9)

Religion under socialism has five characteristics, Ye says: it is protracted, complex, international, ethnic, and it has a mass character. The implementation of religious policy has to take these characteristics into account and ensure both religious freedom and the stability of Chinese society.

According to Ye, the management of religious affairs is necessary so that religious groups will not become antagonistic to the socialist system. Such management must be done on the basis of the law, and it includes the registration of all religious venues. Ye stresses that improvements have to be made in religious work to ensure that all government officials follow the law.

Religious believers in China, says Ye, are part of the Chinese people and need to be united with them. The integration of religion into the socialist society is really the aim of all religious policy. This will safeguard the honor of the law, the people's interest, and the unity of the motherland. [297 words]

WCC Delegation To China Encounters Rapidly Growing Christian Communities

(ANS) A 13-person World Council of Churches (WCC) delegation made a wide-ranging, 11-day visit to China in May. Invited by the China Christian Council (CCC), the delegation's mandate was twofold: To strengthen fellowship between the CCC and the international Christian community, and to observe the implementation of the 1994 decrees on religion. (see ANS 94.1.10)

The group was welcomed by Dr. Wenzao Han, Acting General Secretary of the CCC, who said that its visit would help to create a more positive image of Christianity in China, and show the universality of the church.
"We have encountered a vital, rapidly growing Christian church in all the provinces visited," commented Rev. Dwain Epps, WCC International Affairs Coordinator, after the visit. "Church-state relations were positive, overall, but with important and troubling exceptions."

The delegation, after meeting with CCC leaders in Shanghai and Nanjing, split into three groups, two of which visited local churches and RABs on different levels in Henan and Zhejiang Provinces, respectively. The third group visited the city of Shenyang in Liaoning Province to acquaint itself with the situation of Korean minority Christians in their relationship to Han Chinese churches, as well as Beijing. There, the delegation members met with officials of the national RAB as well as the Foreign Ministry and the Institute of World Religions at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

Upon their return to Nanjing, group members reported that they were struck by the astonishing pace of economic development within the country, as well as by the enormous growth of the churches in recent years. Overall, the delegation found government officials cooperative in efforts to implement national policies, but also learned about incidences of abuses of power, especially in Henan Province.

After listening to the three groups' reports, Bishop K.H.Ting, President of the China Christian Council quoted 1 Corinthians 16:9 to point out how in the development of the church, opportunities and hindrances go hand in hand - something that is very visible in China today.

The delegation expressed the hope that there could be increasing exchanges between churches in all continents and the China Christian Council in the years to come. [364 words]

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News In Brief

(ANS) The number of Christians in Shanghai has grown by more than 200% in the last ten years. According to the Shanghai Christian Council, there are now 127,000 baptized Protestants in the municipality. They are served by 41 pastors, 120 evangelists and more than 120 elders. There are now 111 church buildings, 37 of which have been built since 1986. Seven church buildings are currently under construction, and the construction of a further five is planned for 1997. [80 words]

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3.3 million Bibles will be printed at the Amity Printing Press in 1996. Currently, about 10,000 Bibles are being shipped from Nanjing every day to the more than 40 distribution centers of the China Christian Council, or to churches directly.
Since 1991, more than 1 million Bibles have been going to Christians meeting in homes. And between 30,000 and 50,000 Bibles are being distributed annually free to Christians too poor to afford one.

Due to increased production costs, the price for a basic Bible has been raised from 9.5 yuan to 12.5 yuan. [95 words]

The World Council of Churches delegation traveling to Shenyang requested a meeting with Rev. Gao Liangyi, who had been detained two years ago in a dispute which originated in the church (see ANS 94.4/5.16, 95.1.8). He is still not back to church work, and the delegation was unable to meet with him. Church sources assured the group that Rev. Gao is in good health, and that his case will be resolved soon. [72 words]

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Theological education stays high on the agenda of the China Christian Council. Though there have been 2,300 graduates from seminaries and Bible schools since 1985, the need for pastoral workers in the grassroots churches is not being met. Three provincial Bible schools will therefore be added to the current 13 seminaries and Bible schools. Construction in Jiangsu, Jilin and Hebei is expected to start soon. [65 words]

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A set of 12 tapes with an "Introduction to the Christian Faith" for new believers has been a huge bestseller at church book stores all over the country. Since it was first published in 1992 (see ANS 93.4.4), more than 400,000 sets have been sold. Simple, battery-driven tape recorders are commonly used as teaching aids even in poor rural communities. [61 words]

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Xishuang Banna Prefecture, the southernmost area of Yunnan Province, now has more than 10,000 Christian believers, coming from half a dozen different national minorities. [24 words]

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Ordinations: Nine pastors, seven of them women, were recently ordained in Fujian Province. Thirteen new pastors were ordained in Guangdong Province, one of them a woman. In Zhejiang Province, 4 new pastors were ordained, and in Chongqing, Sichuan Province, three young men were recently ordained assistant pastors. [47 words]
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Growing Christian Community Short Of Pastoral Workers, Buildings, Bibles

(ANS) Christianity has been growing rapidly in Henan Province in recent years, according to the Henan Christian Council. The number of baptized Christians is now estimated at about 1.5 million, with an additional 2 million seekers who have not yet been baptized.

In comparison to this growth, the number of church workers is still very low, though much effort is spent in training new personnel. There are 106 pastors in the province, 60 of whom were ordained in recent years, and about 30 of whom are under 40 years of age. The oldest active pastor in Henan is 96 years old. Additionally, the province has 243 elders (170 of them ordained in recent years) and about 4,000 evangelists, many of them old men. Evangelists have usually had several months of training on a county or prefectural level. More than 200 graduates of Henan Bible School and about 100 graduates from Nanjing and Wuhan Seminaries serve local churches but have not yet been ordained. They are usually young, and many of them are women.

The ratio of ordained church workers to Christians varies regionally. In Xinyang Prefecture, five ordained pastors, four elders and 199 evangelists serve 150,000 Christians. But Gushi County within the prefecture has only one pastor for 50,000 Christians. Zhumadian Prefecture with an estimated number of about 200,000 Christians has only two pastors and nine elders, plus 301 evangelists.

More than 85% of the Christians live in the countryside, and about two thirds of them are women. According to a survey by the Henan Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB), about half of the Christians are illiterate, 28% have a primary school education, 14% a lower middle school and 5% a higher middle school education. Less than 1% of the Christians are university graduates. About half of the Christian population is younger than 45 years, and only 10% are older than 60.

Henan has 637 registered Protestant churches and 3,400 registered meeting points. Meeting points are usually found in townships and larger villages, often with dozens of home meetings in surrounding villages attached to them. Such home meetings do not need to register with the RAB.

Only 700,000 Bibles have been distributed in the province since 1980. [374 words]
Implementation Of Religious Policy In Henan "Uneven"

(ANS) A four-member delegation from the World Council of Churches visiting Henan Province in May found that the implementation of religious policy in the province is "uneven". (See also related article, ANS 96.3.3) [on WCC deleg. visit]

[The group, part of a larger delegation that visited different areas in China, was accompanied by ANS editor Claudia Währisch-Oblau. During its seven-day visit, the delegation traveled to various parts of the province and met with believers, church workers, and government officials on all levels, including the provincial RAB.]

According to the provincial RAB, registration of religious venues in the province was begun in 1992, and concluded in 1994, though new venues have been registered since. Nevertheless, according to church sources a large number of meeting points remain unregistered, in violation of national regulations, for a variety of reasons:

- Zhumadian Prefecture was declared an "area without religion" in the early 1980s. Even though Christianity has been growing strongly in the area, some counties in the prefecture have been putting limits on the number of Christian meeting points. In Runan County, the first meeting point was approved in the late 1980s by a visiting official from the national RAB, against the protest of local cadres. In the following years, the provincial RAB managed to make the county government approve another 11 meeting points. But in the last 10 years, no new meeting point has been approved or registered in Runan. There are more than 80 home meetings in the area, which, according to the local RAB, are not qualified to register.

- One county in Shangqiu Prefecture has a policy of allowing only one meeting point for each township. Even though there are now almost 5,000 believers in one township alone, there has been no government approval for additional meeting points. Several meeting points set up by local Christians in recent years are technically illegal, because the county magistrate has so far disregarded orders from the prefectural RAB to have them registered.

- In many cases, new meeting points that were opened after the conclusion of the registration process have not been allowed to register. They are often closed down, and believers fined. This is called "consolidation".

- Sometimes meeting points can only get registered after local RAB officials have been bribed. Such bribes can be outright "under the table money" or come in the guise of local fees. While provincial RAB regulations clearly state that registration should be free, carrying only a nominal "administration fee", many congregations have been forced to pay 500 yuan or more for their registration. In other cases, RAB officials have the registration certificate framed elaborately and charge the cost to local
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congregations. As many rural congregations in Henan are very poor, such actions are a clear abuse of government power. The provincial Christian Council has also learned of at least one case where a congregation's application for registration was turned down even though it was qualified according to the guidelines, though the congregation, though allowed to continue meeting after paying "protection money" to the local Public Security Bureau.

- Some congregations whose applications for registration have been turned down, have complained to the provincial or even the national RAB. In response to such actions, local government officials in some places have closed down the meeting points in question, to "punish" believers for their supposed "disloyal" behavior.

In addition to problems with registration, there have been many conflicts about church property that has not yet been returned. The delegation learned about two cases, in Runan County and Shangcai County, both in Zhumadian Prefecture.

In Runan, the church building in the county town, used by a school, has not been returned despite years of negotiation. According to local government officials, it is now planned to compensate the church financially, to enable it to build a new church.

In Shangcai, a group of Christians demanding the return of a church-owned house occupied by a cotton trading company were beaten up by workers. After petitions by local Christians as well as the China Christian Council, the provincial government has now ordered the speedy solution of this case; but according to the Zhumadian Prefecture RAB, negotiations have been protracted and some disagreements remain.

Finally, there have been many cases of RAB officials meddling in church affairs. The RAB of Xinyang Prefecture, for example, presented the Henan Christian Council with a list of persons it wanted ordained as pastors. The Christian Council refused to ordain several people on the list, as they were not qualified according to church regulations. In many cases, candidates nominated for ordination by the church have to be vetted by the local RAB, and in some cases local RABs have not approved the ordination of a candidate, usually saying that he or she was "politically unreliable". All professional church workers in the Province have to carry a "religious worker's I.D.", complete with photograph and personal details, which is issued by the provincial CC but has to be approved by the RAB. [831 words]

City Redevelopment Forces Move Of Henan Bible School

(ANS) Henan Bible School, located in a small, simple building in the outskirts of Zhengzhou City, will soon have to make way for planned city redevelopment. According to Rev. Ms. Wang Shengcai, vice president of the Henan Christian Council in charge

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of the school, the current Bible School building will have to be torn down. The Henan CC is planning to erect a new building on a piece of land already assigned for this purpose by the government.

Rev. Wang stressed that the provincial RAB had been very helpful in finding a new site for the Bible School, completing the necessary paper work and assisting in funding for a new building.

The Bible School, founded in 1989, has trained more than 250 students in one-year programs centering on Biblical knowledge. About 30 of them have been ordained pastors or elders so far. In 1994, the school switched to a two-year course, with the first class of 70 students to graduate in June 1996. Emphasis is still on the Bible, but practical church work is also stressed.

The school has four live-in teachers, three of them young graduates of Nanjing Union Theologica Seminary and Zhongnan Seminary in Wuhan. Additionally, twelve pastors from the Zhengzhou region also teach classes.

Students at the Bible school are often experienced church workers, and their ages range from about 30 to 50 years. Women students slightly outnumber men.

Rev. Wang told ANS that the Henan Christian Council hoped to enlarge the school as there were many more applicants than the school could accommodate. But right now, funds and teaching personnel were too limited to even consider opening a second class. [283 words]

ANS 96.3.8

Rapid Church Growth: The Example Of Jiaozuo Prefecture

(ANS) Jiaozuo Prefecture, in northern Henan Province, has 3.5 million inhabitants, 2.5% of whom are baptized Protestants. The number of baptized believers has grown from 50,000 to the current 80,000 in just three years. Rev. Jia Jiubao, chairperson of the Jiaozuo Christian Council told ANS: "We baptize about 10,000 believers every year."

This rapid growth is very visible in Jiaozuo City itself: On the grounds where, in 1993, stood a far too small old church, its congregation overflowing into a courtyard that could hardly contain everyone, a huge new church has been erected. It boasts about 1,000 seats in a ground floor hall, and an additional 1,700 seats in the second floor sanctuary with its enormous balcony. The Sunday service is broadcast to the ground floor hall by loudspeaker. "Right now, there are still a few empty seats downstairs on Sundays," said Rev. Ms. Wang Bianlin of Jiaozuo City, "but we need room for a growing congregation." In addition to the church in the city itself, the prefecture has another 12 very large churches, and 156 meeting points.

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In 1993, Jiaozuo Prefecture had only one ordained minister, an old and not very healthy man. Now there are four: Two of the newly ordained ministers, one of them a woman, are middle-aged, and one is a young Nanjing Seminary graduate. There are an additional 19 seminary graduates not yet ordained, 13 elders and 250 evangelists.

The training of lay workers plays an important role in Jiaozuo. Since 1989, more than 1,000 church workers have participated in such classes, most of them run on county level. Graduates from county level training classes can participate in the prefectural classes, and be ordained as evangelists if they have taken three courses of 20 days each.

Lay training on the prefectural level has entered a new stage with the recent acquisition of a spacious compound not far from the city. There is a large courtyard surrounded by low buildings which provide dormitory space, a kitchen and a dining hall, and a classroom for 60 trainees. The buildings are currently undergoing renovation, but even while work proceeds, 20-day lay training courses are held. Students live ten to a room, sleeping on straw mats on the floor, and studying from morning till late at night.

The Jiaozuo Christian Council hopes to start running one-year programs at the center beginning next year. To make such programs financially self-supporting, the council intends to rent 30 mu of agricultural land next to the center, and turn them into an apple orchard. Trainees will be expected to work in the orchard while studying at the center.

Bo'ai County in Jiaozuo Prefecture again illustrates the growth of Christianity in the area. While there were almost no Christians in the county before 1979, there are now more than 7,000. A huge new church is under construction in the county town, and

**Church Magazine On The Web**

Thanks to a Chinese theological student currently resident in the USA, articles from the Chinese church magazine, **Tian Feng**, are now available on the World Wide Web. The website is called **Jing Sheng** and can best be viewed using Netscape and a Chinese word processing program like Big Five, Twin Bridge, or Yitian. There are also links to other sites with information about Chinese Christianity.

**Jing Sheng** can be found at http://www.mindspring.com/~jdwu/js.htm. For further information, contact Mr. Wu Jiade at jdwu@mindspring.com.

The Amity News Service hopes to be on the Web later this year. Watch for our monthly news updates!
well over 1,000 believers already use the raw brick sanctuary for Sunday worship. Additionally, there are 17 meeting points in the county.

Originally, there were quite a few problems with the government in this county, said Elder Hou, who is in charge of the county town church. "As there had not been Christians in the area before, government officials did not know how to deal with us, and were rather apprehensive about the rapid church growth here." But training courses for local officials run by the prefectural RAB improved the situation greatly, and now the relationship between Christians and the local government is said to be good. [597 words]

ANS 96.3.9

To Cooperate Or Not: Two Cases Involving The True Jesus Church

(ANS) It has been stressed many times by China watchers that what you say may be true about one area in China, but the contrary may be true in some other place. The fate of the True Jesus Church in Xinyang and Zhumadian Prefectures is a perfect example of such variations in circumstances.

[The True Jesus Church is an indigenous Chinese denomination of a strongly pentecostal character. It is one of the few Chinese Christian groups that have kept their denominational traditions alive even in the postdenominational period.]

In Xinyang Prefecture, local True Jesus Church (TJC) believers preach that only those who worship on the Sabbath and are baptized in a river "of living water" can attain salvation. Such exclusivism is perceived as a threat by Christians who do not share the TJC traditions, and relationships between "mainline" Christians and TJC Christians have been tense for several years. This tension was exacerbated when, after a conflict within the Xinyang Christian Council, a group of Christians went over to the TJC.

The Henan Provincial Christian Council, aware of the situation, tried to mediate. Its leaders suggested that the TJC become formal members of the local Christian Council and TSPM. The TJC was told that it could keep its own traditions (though it might move its baptisms to a baptisterium within a church building) as long as it stopped preaching its exclusivist message, and allowed a local Christian Council representative to participate in the ordination of their church workers.

This compromise suggestion was turned down by the TJC believers, who insisted on staying apart from other Christians. The TJC congregations then applied to the RAB for registration as True Jesus Church, apart from other church groups. But because of the strong tensions between the two groups, local Christian Council
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representatives told the RAB they disagreed with the registration of TJC congregations - a clear breach of national Christian Council policy which maintains that all Christian groups should be able to register, regardless whether they participate in the CC/TSPM or not.

The applications for registration by TJC congregations were subsequently turned down, and the congregations ordered to stop functioning. Individual believers were told to join the congregations connected to the local Christian Council. The TJC believers refused to do so. The government reacted by first warning, and then fining TJC believers who still insisted on maintaining their own meetings. Recently, some TJC leaders in the Xinyang area were arrested by the police, as their congregations are now considered illegal, and their continued refusal to disband is seen as a threat to social stability.

In Xiping County, Zhumadian Prefecture, the situation is as different as can be. Here, congregations of the TJC and the "mainline" church coexist peacefully.

In the county town, about 400 TJC Christians meet for worship on the Sabbath, and about 500 on the Sunday - both in the same building. There is a unified church council with representatives of both denominations - this is what they call themselves in Xiping, but otherwise there is very little contact. Each congregation has its own leadership, its own traditions and characteristics. While the TJC congregation will assemble at a nearby river to baptize their new believers, new Christians in the mainline congregation are baptized in the church building, by sprinkling.

According to the local pastor, Rev. Ms. Li Xiuying (who leads the mainline congregation), there are not even joint activities during Christmas or Easter. "We accept and respect each other", she told ANS, "but that doesn't mean that we have give up our different traditions."

As it is venues and not congregations that have to register, registration in Xiping has not been problematic. There is simply one registered Christian venue in the county town - even though it is used by two more or less independent congregations.

The Xiping model resembles the successful model of integration of TJC believers found in northern Jiangsu (see ANS 95.3.3), while in other areas, notably Fujian Province, TJC congregations have kept themselves apart from local Christian councils. [675 words]
ANS Feature: "Letter from Shenyang"

One group from the World Council of Churches Delegation visited the city of Shenyang, Liaoning Province, in mid-May. Philip Wickeri accompanied this delegation and filed the following report.

(ANS) The three provinces of northeast China comprise the area which was formerly known as Manchuria. It is a region beyond the great wall, and although integrally part of the People’s Republic, it is also somehow separate. Visitors often report that there is a different "feel" to the northeast, that it is in some ways wilder and more untamed than the China within the wall. This image may be romantic, but we discovered that people in Shenyang do see themselves as far from the concerns in the power centers which preoccupy the land to the south. As far as the churches are concerned, this has to do with their ethnic composition and their relationships with groups overseas.

In greater Shenyang, there are at least 70,000 Christians, ten percent of whom are ethnic Koreans. This means that the percentage of Korean Chinese who are Christians is much greater than that of the Han Chinese population as a whole, but that the Koreans still constitute a small minority of the total Christian population. This is true in Liaoning, and also in Heilongjiang Province in the far north. It is also true in Jilin Province, where the numbers of Korean Christians are greatest. And yet this is a fact which is often forgotten or overlooked, especially by South Korean and Korean-American Christians who have become actively engaged in outreach to the Chinese Korean minority over the past five years.

Koreans in China are the only minority nationality which has a higher income and educational level than the Chinese population as a whole. This is due both to the work ethic and strong sense of ethnic identity which the Koreans maintain, and to their links with overseas Koreans. One can see clear evidence for this in Shenyang's churches. Dongguan Church in Shenyang is very old, and overflows with Han Chinese worshippers during its many services and prayer meetings throughout the week. The buildings are somewhat run down and badly in need of repair or even rebuilding. In contrast, Xita Church, which serves the ethnic Korean minority, is a magnificent multi-story structure, complete with marble staircases and an elevator. The sanctuary occupies one floor of the building, and upon entry, the visitor might imagine he or she is in Seoul. Everything has been imported -- from the pews to the closed circuit television to the choir robes -- and it suggests a general air of affluence which sets the church apart from the wider community.

Our group found that the economic gap between Han Chinese majority and Korean minority churches is growing, not only in Shenyang but throughout the northeast. There are reports that some South Korean Christians are constructing million yuan churches in Yanji, Changchun and other cities. Even the small Korean churches and meeting points we visited in the Shenyang area are much better appointed than their Han Chinese counterparts. Some overseas Korean Christians
boast that they have sent "underground missionaries" to northeast China in large numbers, and that they are even establishing their own denominations. If these reports are true, they have serious social and political implications for northeast China.

It is in part for this reason that the relationship between Chinese and overseas Korean churches has become an important area of concern for the China Christian Council, and for the churches in the northeast. Rev. Wu Ai'en is the leading voice in the Korean Church in Shenyang. She and Rev. Lü Zhibin were the first two women ordained in China after the Cultural Revolution era, and this did much to promote the idea of women's ordination in other parts of China. Rev. Wu enjoys wide respect among Christians at home and abroad, serving as Vice-President of the China Christian Council, and chair of its Minority Affairs Commission. She spoke to our group about her concerns for self-support and support for the Han Chinese Churches. Now, when groups offer contributions to Korean churches in Shenyang, she urges them to visit other churches which may have greater need.

But the burden of responsibility lies with overseas churches. At a time when the Chinese government is concerned about maintaining social stability and guarding against foreign "infiltration," the mission activities of some overseas Korean churches are reckless and self-serving. By focusing on this one ethnic group, they may function to split the Korean minority from the Chinese people. Overseas Christians, no matter what their nationality, should not be engaged in illegal activity in China, and they should not use their money and influence to corrupt and create dependency in local churches. This is an important lesson which we all should have learned from the missionary movement. Or as one Christian asked me, "Are they really giving glory to God, or only to themselves?"

There are signs of hope. The China Christian Council and the National Council of Churches in Korea have signed an agreement which stresses co-operation and mutual respect. The Northeast Theological Seminary in Shenyang is an example of the growing co-operation between Han and Korean Christians in theological education. NCC/K support for the construction of the seminary was based on this agreement. There are separate classes so that the two groups can study in their own languages,
ANS Feature: "Letter from Shenyang"

but they now share a common building. The faculty is both Han and Korean, and their new building is the largest of any seminary in China. The construction of this seminary shows that ecumenical support can help promote mission and unity in China, but only if contributions are given in a spirit of Christian goodwill, without any strings attached.

Besides South Koreans and Korean Americans, there are very few international Christian visitors to the northeast. Our visit as part of the World Council of Churches was the first of its kind, and represented a good beginning for future ecumenical visitations. It helped us to see that the northeast isn't really that far away, and it enabled Christians in the northeast to understand that they are too are part of the wider oikumene. [1003 words]