To our readers: Beginning with this issue, the numbering of the volumes and news items of the print edition of ANS will follow the numbering of our online edition on the World Wide Web at http://www.hk.super.net/~amityhk. While we publish a monthly edition on the Web, the print edition will continue to be published every second month, and will contain all the articles from the Web edition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANS 97.1</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From Trashheap To Church</td>
<td>97.1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jilin Church: Harmony Between Korean And Han Chinese Believers</td>
<td>97.1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church-Run Hospital A Witness To The Gospel</td>
<td>97.1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jiangxi Bible School Gets New Building</td>
<td>97.1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese Anglicans Apologize To Victims Of Aggression</td>
<td>97.1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ANS Documentation:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter From Primate James Takashi Yashiro To Bishop K.H. Ting</td>
<td>97.1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter From Bishop K.H. Ting To Primate James Takashi Yashiro</td>
<td>97.1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newsbriefs</td>
<td>97.1.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANS 97.2</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chinese New Year Busy Time For Churches</td>
<td>97.2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bishop K.H. Ting: CCC And TSPM &quot;Just Scaffolding, Not Eternal&quot;</td>
<td>97.2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church's Acts Of Faith Find Wide Publicity</td>
<td>97.2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korean Churches' Missionary Work In China &quot;Problematic&quot;</td>
<td>97.2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Noah's Ark&quot; On The Outskirts Of Xiamen</td>
<td>97.2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ANS Documentation:</strong> An Interview With Bishop K.H. Ting</td>
<td>97.2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ANS Feature:</strong> Reaching Others Through The Gift Of Music: A Profile Of Trinity Church</td>
<td>97.2.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**From Trashheap To Church**

(ANS) After seeing the hardships Christians in Laohutai endured to erect a church, more than a hundred people in the surrounding villages became Christians, reports the January issue of *Tian Feng*, the Chinese church magazine. Laohutai is a coal mining area not far from Fushun City, in Liaoning Province. The more than 600 believers in Laohutai did not have a place to meet, and had to attend worship services in Fushun City, about 13 kilometers away.

Last year, the congregation leader, Li Huilai, found a small, abandoned house, surrounded by slag heaps and garbage. The owner, who first asked 30,000 yuan for the building, dropped the price to 11,000 yuan when he heard that it was a Christian congregation wanting to buy it.

To clear the building site, situated on a mountain accessible neither by car nor by donkey cart, believers first had to get rid of the accumulated garbage. Carrying it down the mountain in baskets, dripping with sweat but still singing hymns during their breaks, believers removed more than one hundred tons of garbage, enough to fill 20 trucks.
Believers then started to put up a new church building next to the old house which was also renovated for use by the congregation. All the building materials, bricks, sacks of mortar, and wood, had to be hand-carried up the hill. It took 56 days to erect the church, with an average of 50 believers laboring away at the site every day.

After an incredible effort, Laohutai now has a bright new church building where once there was only a wasteland of garbage and slag. "When you rely on the Lord, there is nothing you cannot do", the Laohutai Christians sum up their experience. And not only have more than 100 people since joined the church - the congregation has even been commended by the local government for their contribution toward building a "spiritual civilization". [319 words]

97.1.2

Jilin Church: Harmony Between Korean And Han Chinese Believers

(ANS) Ethnic Korean and ethnic Han Chinese congregations often exist side by side in northeastern China, and frequently have little contact with each other. But the congregation of Chaoyang Church just outside of Jilin City, Jilin Province, shows that both ethnic groups can come together in Christian love, transcend cultural differences, and build a church together.

Chaoyang Church originally had an all Korean congregation. But in 1993, given the presence of a handful of Han believers, a Chinese-language worship was started in the church in addition to the already existing Korean-language service. There are now more than 100 Han Chinese believers in the congregation, crowding the small church building on Sundays. Among them are peasants and workers, teachers and students, and even some army soldiers.

While the two groups meet separately for worship using their own languages, the congregation in Chaoyang church is really united. Members deeply care for each other across ethnic borders, and many activities are done together.

When a neighboring Han Chinese congregation decided to send one of their members to a one-year lay training course in Yanbian, both Koreans and Chinese from Chaoyang Church pitched in to help the trainee’s family, who were without an income while the father was studying. Similarly, members of both ethnic groups helped when a Han Chinese peasant got too ill to do her spring planting. [236 words]
Church-Run Hospital A Witness To The Gospel

(ANS) One of the largest church-run hospitals in China is found in Huainan City, Anhui Province. Guangji Hospital, which has 40 beds and specialist doctors in five different departments, gives excellent and low-priced medical care to many, with more than 100 outpatients treated every day.

Huainan, an important coal mining city not far from the provincial capital, has a Christian population of more than 11,000. Believers meet in over 100 churches and home meetings. The local Christian council founded the hospital in 1994 as a means of being "salt and light" to the surrounding society. Staffed with highly qualified doctors and nurses, many of whom are Christians, the hospital has become known both for the quality of the care it provides and for the warmth and commitment of its staff. Patients come to the hospital not only from the city, but also from the surrounding countryside. About half of the resident patients are miners in need of surgery after work-related accidents.

The hospital was set up with funds from local Christians, and has always operated on a very small budget. Funding for equipment like an operating table and an X-ray machine has come through the Amity Foundation, but daily operating costs are borne by the Huainan church. Many doctors, who are actually retired from other hospitals, offer their services for free, enabling the hospital to keep its fees low or even treat patients without charging them. This way, the hospital is accessible even to the very poor.

All staff at the hospital, Christians and non-Christians alike, meet for a one-hour Bible study once a week. According to the hospital director, Chang Chenshu, this strengthens the faith of those already believing, while sowing the seeds of the Gospel into the hearts of those who are not yet Christians.

Guangji Hospital has been cited by the city authorities for the excellence of its work, and doctors from Guangji have been asked to help treat patients with complicated illnesses in government-run hospitals. [343 words]

Jiangxi Bible School Gets New Building

(ANS) A new building was dedicated for the Jiangxi Bible School in Nanchang City recently. The school, set up in 1992 by the Provincial Christian Council, has trained more than 100 church workers already.

Nevertheless, there are still only 130 pastoral workers for the more than 200,000 Christians in the province. To relieve that shortage, the Christian Council decided to enlarge the Bible School.
Previously, a building at the Zhida Church in Nanchang was used for classes and dormitories, but there was far too little space, and conditions were extremely poor.

In June 1996, the Christian Council found a three-storey private apartment block, with a usable area of more than 600 square meters. With the support of the relevant government departments, together with the enthusiastic help and contributions of the believers in the local church, the school bought the building and within two months renovated and refurbished it. [154 words]

Japanese Anglicans Apologize to Victims of Aggression

(ANS) On the 50th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, the Japanese Anglican Church (aka. Holy Catholic Church in Japan) issued a statement accepting responsibility and expressing repentance for its support and toleration of Japanese imperialism and acts of aggression both before and during the war. This resolution was passed at the church's 49th General Synod on May 23, 1996. The January issue of Tian Feng, the magazine of the Chinese church, carried the full text of this resolution, in addition to a letter from the Primate of the Japanese Anglican Church and a response by former CCC President Bishop K.H.Ting. (see ANS 97.1.6 and 97.1.7 in this issue).

The resolution states that in 1945, after Japanese aggression and its imperialist policy in the Asia Pacific region had come to an end, the Japanese Anglican Church stood at a turning point. At a special assembly of the 21st General Synod that year, the Primate expressed repentance for the actions and behavior of the church during the war period. He said that the church had chosen to go along with government policies and forget its duty to stand apart and spread the teachings of the faith. The assembly called on the church as a whole to make a sincere apology to all the neighboring countries who had suffered under Japanese rule and aggression.

These statements notwithstanding, the Synod found in 1996 that the Japanese Anglican church was still accepting a system of divine imperial rule and a military system of government, both of which run contrary to the message of the Gospel. The resolution reminds all believers that the Japanese Anglican Church itself once experienced suppression by the authorities. Yet, despite having gone through these painful experiences themselves, Japanese Anglicans have not been able to stand together with others who endure oppression and suffering, the statement says. Although it had now accepted that it is a part of the international community, the church had still not been able to admit that in the war Japan was an aggressor. Instead, the church had become introverted, putting emphasis on expanding its own membership and protecting its own set-up and situation. This did not accord with the Gospel view of trying to be the "salt of the world".

The resolution continues that during the fifty years since the end of World War II, the Japanese Anglican Church has not fully admitted its mistakes. At the 22nd
General Synod in 1947, the church formally adopted a "Book of Common Prayer" which included prayers to the Emperor of Japan and stated a belief that his rule was ordained by God. Moreover, the resolution states, up to 1959, a book of Questions And Answers On Religious Doctrine told believers that doing one's duty to one's neighbour depended on each person's pledge of loyalty to the Emperor and his officials. Thus, even many years after the end of the war the church was still claiming that the Emperor's system of rule was mandated from heaven, and thus the question of responsibility for the war was never raised, the resolution says.

With its 1996 resolution, the Japanese Anglican Church now admits that even long after the war it still needs to deal with its discriminatory attitude. The church vows to pray about this, to change its attitude and realize its mission to be God's people and bring about social justice, to be a channel for peace and listen attentively to the disputes, pains and cries of the world.

As a symbol of repentence, the whole Japanese Anglican Church committed itself to the following actions:

1) Notifying all diocese within the church about this statement of repentance for its responsibility in the war.

2) Extending its apologies to the churches in all the countries which suffered from Japanese aggression.

3) Developing and continuing a review of historical facts and deepening understanding of activities related to the Gospel in each parish.

Japanese atrocities committed in China during the Second World War have not been forgotten, and anti-Japanese sentiment still runs high among Chinese. An apology like the statement of the Japanese Anglican Church therefore carries much weight with Christians in China, and marks a big step forward towards reconciliation.

[709 words]

ANS Documentation: Letter From Primate James Takashi Yashiro To Bishop K.H.Ting

September 30, 1996
St. Michael and All Angels

My Dear Bishop,

Greetings to you in the Peace and Joy of Jesus Christ.

It is with a sense of humility and a strong hope for reconciliation that I am pleased to forward to you and your Church the enclosed copy of a Resolution passed at the 46th General Synod of the Nippon Sei Ko Kai. You will find a copy in Japanese and also in English, and I would hope that you would see that this has a wide distribution in your Church among all those concerned and involved in the Pacific War.

ANS 1997.1/2 Page 5
While it may seem to have taken a long time for this statement of apology to appear, it has finally come to the surface after much prayer, reflection, discussion, and heart-felt concern. We offer it as a sign of our love to all those who suffered and were oppressed.

May we continue to grow in our partnership and mutual mission under God's mercy and grace.

In warmth and brotherly love to you,
Sincerely

James Takashi Yashiro
Primate

ANS Documentation: Letter From Bishop K.H.Ting To Primate James Takashi Yashiro

Dear Primate:

Thank you most warmly for your kind letter of September 30, together with Resolution No.34 of the 49th Regular Synod of Nippon Sei Ko Kai, dated May 23, 1996.

I feel greatly moved in reading the resolution for its in-depth self-criticism. The three decisions made by the General Synod attest to the sincerity of the repentance of the constituency of Nippon Sei Ko Kai. The resolution is a document from which we Christians in China have much to learn.

Your letter and the resolution led me to recall the inspiration a number of my fellow-Chinese Christians received during those war years when we learned of the encouraging stories of the witness of the Nippon Sei Ko Kai in maintaining the integrity of the Church under the pressure of the military. In not succumbing to the pressure, some of the clergy were imprisoned. These deeds, I am sure, God remembers.

I trust that you have no objection to our publishing the resolution and our correspondence in a Chinese church journal.

Let us Japanese and Chinese Christians pray hard and work hard for peace against war with all its evils.

Most sincerely,

K.H.Ting, President

News In Brief

The Editorial Committee of "Tian Feng", the magazine of the Chinese church, met in Shanghai on 28th November 1996 to review the past five years' work and discuss the future direction of the magazine. It was agreed that the magazine should reflect current developments within church and society. Churches in every part of the country are concerned about how to build the church well, therefore "Tian Feng" should pay attention to this kind of report and discussion. Society is heavily stressing the
building of Spiritual Civilization, therefore the magazine should reflect this and lead believers to enthusiastically take part in this movement. In order to raise the self-propagation level within the church, "Tian Feng" should develop the discussion of theological questions. The magazine should greatly reflect the moral side of Christianity, leading believers in having more concern for society and at the same time increasing the discussion of problems in society.

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Ordinations: One pastor and seven assistant pastors in Beijing *** One pastor and 34 elders in Inner Mongolia *** Four pastors, including one woman, in Qingdao, Shandong Province.

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The First Enlarged Meeting of the Jiangxi Provincial Christian Women's Working Group was held in Guixi City church from 5th - 7th November last year. Participants included city and county church representatives, female pastors, church workers and believers' representatives. These make up the backbone of the church, and some of them have already started to develop women's work in their own areas. The meeting revolved around the main themes of "Promoting male/female equality", "Raising women's consciousness and participation", and "Trying our best to run the Jiangxi Christian Church well".

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The Gospel Church in Nanping (Fujian Province) celebrated the 130th Anniversary of the Gospel arriving in the city on 8th November last year. 1,500 people attended the celebration.

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The Second Chinese Christian Arts Exhibition took place between 18th - 20th September last year at Nanjing Jinling Theological Seminary, organized by the Amity Centre for Cultural, Technological and Economic Exchange. Sixty representatives from 22 different provinces, cities and autonomous regions took part in a symposium, where they shared their research findings in Christian Art and also their own personal artistic creations. Discussion revolved around developing Christian art with Chinese characteristics. It was the first such exhibition held in China itself, since the last one was held in Hcng Kong. Works on display included traditional Chinese paintings, chinaware, papercuts, wax printing, wood carvings and calligraphy.

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In order to save money and resources, twelve churches in Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province, decided not to hold banquets in the church to celebrate Christmas this year, and distributed this proposal to all the churches and meeting points in the region one month before Christmas, calling on them to do the same.

ANS 1997.1/2  Page 7
Chinese New Year Busy Time For Churches

(ANS) The Christians in Baqu Village in northern Jiangsu Province get up early on the first day of the Chinese New Year. Before the break of dawn, they assemble at their simple meeting point. All of them will be there, huddling in the cold, unheated building: Grandparents and children, middle-aged men and brightly dressed teenagers. They spend the whole day at church, in a spiritual revival meeting, recommitting their lives to Jesus Christ.

Chinese New Year, or Spring Festival, as it is commonly known on the Chinese mainland, was on February 7 this year. The most important festival within the Chinese tradition, it encompasses days of often raucous celebrations, family reunions and visits with friends, lots of food and drink, firecrackers, shows and parades.

Christian churches all over the country celebrate the festival too, but in much different ways. Revival meetings are common: In the Wenzhou region of southern Zhejiang Province, each of the 1,200 churches and meeting points will hold a two-day meeting, usually with six services a day, choir music, and shared meals. In the mountains of western Yunnan province, ethnic Lisu Christians will usually congregate in a centrally located village, bringing along quilts for sleeping, food and cooking utensils. Setting up camp in and around a church, they will stay together for three or four days, singing, listening to sermons, and participating in games and pageants.

Spring Festival is a time of family reunion, but for some Christians, family ties have to come second. They make use of the consecutive free days (at least five of them for most workers) to gather for lay training classes. A few dozen, or in many cases even a few hundred lay church workers will congregate at a county town church for a week's intensive Bible training. They often sleep on the floor, eat meals cooked from the rice and vegetables they brought with them, and spend at least eight hours a day in classes, making the most of their training period. A young pastor teaching such a class remembers: "We were up at 5:30 a.m. for morning devotions. Breakfast was at 7 o'clock, and classes began by 8 o'clock. I taught until lunch break, and then again until dinner at 5:30 p.m. Afterwards, there were evening devotions, and after that I often spent several hours answering questions and counselling participants. After a week of teaching, I was completely exhausted."

Spring Festival is also a time for baptism classes in some rural areas, especially where there are no ordained church workers. Last year, a young pastor from Nanjing taught a three-day baptism class in a county in Anhui Province where no baptism had taken place in almost ten years. Then, on two consecutive days, he baptized a total of almost 2,000 new believers.

Every year, the Chinese government holds a Spring Festival Tea Party for religious leaders. This year, it was attended by Dr. Wenzao Han, Mr. Luo Guanzong, Rev. Cao Shengjie and Bishop Wang Shenyin on behalf of the CCC and TSPM. Several Beijing church leaders were also present. [518 words]
Bishop K.H.Ting: CCC And TSPM "Just Scaffolding, Not Eternal"

(ANS) The China Christian Council and the Three-Self Patriotic Movement are no more than scaffolding for the construction of the Chinese church, says Bishop K.H.Ting, now honorary president of both organizations. In a wide-ranging interview, published simultaneously in ANS and the Chinese church magazine, Tian Feng, Ting expressed his vision that "one day a Chinese church, one which was very well-governed, very well-supported and one in which the propagation of the Gospel was going very well, would tower in its incomparable beauty on the eastern horizon." To build this church, the CCC and the TSPM were just scaffolding - necessary, but not eternal.

Ting denied that he had been pressured into retirement, or that there was a split between the CCC and the TSPM. He expressed his hope that not only church leaders over 80 years of age, but even those over 70 would retire soon to give younger Christians a chance to take over running the church.

Commenting on the fact that both Dr. Wenzao Han, the new CCC president, and Mr. Luo Guanzong, the new TSPM chairperson, are lay persons, Ting pointed out that one of the most important church leaders in the 1950s, Y.T.Wu, had also not been ordained.

Ting showed himself satisfied with the results of the recently concluded Sixth National Chinese Christian Conference, which had reduced the age level of the delegates and raised the participation of women and lay people, even though more needed to be done in these areas. But as the Chinese Christians are devoted to "Bible reading, witness bearing, love for the church and love for the country", Ting said he was optimistic about the future of the church.

When asked about the "fair number of Christians in China who do not take part in Three-Self", Ting pointed out that today, few Christians in China opposed the principles of self-administration, self-support, and self-propagation. Furthermore, the TSPM had no membership structure, so there was no question of belonging or not. Most Christians in China benefited from the work of the CCC and the TSPM, for example reading Bibles printed and provided by these organizations. But "holding differing views on certain problems, or opposing the actions of certain persons" were "natural", Ting added. He warned that nobody should be lightly dismissed as "anti-Three-Self". "I feel that all those who respect the teachings of the Bible and acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord are brothers and sisters in the Lord, who should have mutual respect, conscientiously unite and consult with each other in everything", said Ting.

Ting, who is still principal of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, remarked that he was not satisfied with theological education in China. Beyond "satisfying believers", those involved in preaching, teaching and Christian literature work should aim at "elevating the level of believers".
When asked about his hopes for Christianity in China, Ting said that he hoped for unity among the Christians, with "genuine and complete mutual respect in matters of faith and worship." Ting added that he also hoped that the Bible's ethical message would be developed hand-in-hand with the moral emphasis found in Chinese culture.

Ting thanked Christians in China and abroad who had been praying for him, and asked that they continued to pray for the church in China and her new leadership.

97.2.3

Church's Acts Of Faith Find Wide Publicity

(ANS) The broadcast on Fengjie County TV was a first: A special news program introduced the local Christians and their activities. This was a very special occasion, because Chinese mass media normally do not broadcast news about any religious communities.

But then, the Christians in Fengjie County are rather special. Fengjie, a county in Sichuan Province, will be affected by the Three Gorges Dam. The only Christian church in the county town will be among the buildings that will disappear into the rising floods of the Yangtze River.

Christians in Fengjie have been hoping to rebuild their church on higher ground. But the community is poor, and so are the Christians. Even so, they were able to raise some money. But then, some believers found out about a number of village children who had dropped out of school because their parents, in one case a widowed mother of four, could not afford the fees. So the congregation decided to help, covering not only the fees, but also the book money for six children.

Fengjie being a rather poor county, many people in the county town cannot afford to send their children to a state-run kindergarten. Again, the local church thought of help: In October last year, the "Three Gorges Gospel Kindergarten" was opened in two side rooms of the old church building. Monthly fees are only 100 yuan, far less than in a state-run kindergarten.

But the Fengjie Christians' generosity didn't stop there. They had managed to get another 1,000 yuan together last fall, but rather than saving them for a new church building, decided to use the money to help some impoverished peasant families buy seeds for the spring sowing.

Believers in the county do not only help by donating money. When a bridge over a small river between two villages was damaged by floods, the congregation members came out in force to repair it, enabling dozens of children to go back to the school they had been cut off from.
Word of the Christians' acts of charity got around, and recently, officers from the United Front Work Department and a reporter for Fengjie County Television came to find out more. The subsequent TV news program broadcast throughout the county was a historic first - never before had local media acknowledged the presence of Christians in the area.

In the program, the reporter asked Brother Li Dajun, the congregation leader, why the church keeps giving away its money rather than saving it for a new church building. Brother Li's answer was clear: "If we would just save money for our own church building, we would give up what Christianity is about - love. Love is what distinguishes the church from other organizations in society. And where the church-building is concerned, we have faith, we just trust that God will help. 'To give is more blessed than to receive.' This is what we have learned from Christ. We don't need to worry about what will happen tomorrow." [504 words]

South Korean Churches' Missionary Work in China "Problematic"

(ANS) Most of the missionary work South Korean churches are doing in the three northeastern Chinese provinces of Liaoning, Jilin and Heilongjiang is done illegally, says Rev. Kim Jonggoo, a South Korean working for the Amity Foundation Overseas Coordination Office in Hongkong.

According to Kim, China is one of the "major target countries" for missionary work by Koreans, which aims at setting up "branch churches" of South Korean denominations, disregarding the fact that churches in northeastern China are often made up of both Han Chinese and ethnic Koreans, and non-denominational in nature.

Kim says that Korean missionaries use different approaches. Many groups will simply set up new churches, either with new converts or with ethnic Korean believers lured away from existing congregations. Such churches will bear the denominational name of the "mother church", and be provided with pastoral materials, Bibles, Bible study materials and hymnals from South Korea. They are usually run by missionaries from South Korea. In other cases, Korean missionaries have erected new church buildings for existing ethnic Korean congregations. Such practices have, in many cases, led to tensions between ethnic Chinese and ethnic Korean Christians.

Other missionary groups have chosen a legal approach, working through social welfare projects or even community development projects, says Kim. Projects under way include the Yanbian University Hospital in Yanji City, as well as the Yanji Social Welfare Center.

Some Korean groups see their activities in northern China as a springboard for mission work in North Korea, reports Kim. Using ethnic Koreans from China as go-betweens, Korean churches have sent grain, clothes, medicines and Bibles to North Korea. With the growing food crisis in North Korea, many overseas Koreans have set
up factories producing noodles and bread in the China-Korea border area, and
products are sent across the border. One such factory was recently closed by the
Chinese government, after Bibles were discovered in its boxes of noodles going to
North Korea.

Kim expresses the hope that churches in South Korea and China could enjoy a
good relationship, and that South Korean churches would pay attention not only to
ethnic Korean Christians, but to the whole socio-cultural situation in northeastern
China. [370 words]

"Noah's Ark" On The Outskirts Of Xiamen

(ANS) The newest church in Xiamen has attracted a great deal of architectural
interest, both inside and outside the Christian community. It is built to represent Noah's
Ark, in this southern city in Fujian province, which is renowned for both its culture and
its fishing industry. The church is located in a new suburban area, and was dedicated
in April of last year.

Built at a cost of more than 8 million yuan, it has daily activities, ranging from
children's Sunday School to a Young People's Choir to a mid-week prayer meeting for
the elderly. Land for the church (more than 2,500 sq. meters) was provided by the
municipal government. The church was designed in China, but Overseas Chinese
Christians from Southeast Asia lent their financial support for this new church
development. According to the church's senior pastor, Rev. Chen Yiping, "We are
thankful to God for providing us with this new church. It will enable us to minister more
effectively in this rapidly growing area." [173 words]

ANS Documentation: An Interview with Bishop Ting

Bishop K.H. Ting has served as President of the China Christian Council (CCC) and Chairperson
of the Chinese Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) for three terms, altogether fifteen years.
Tian Feng, the magazine of the Chinese church, interviewed him earlier this year on his retirement and
posed some of the questions which concern all Chinese Christians. (The Chinese text of this interview is
being published in the February issue of Tian Feng.)

TF: Bishop Ting, has pressure been put on you from any quarter to retire at this time?

TING: None at all. The principle put forward by the two national Christian bodies (CCC and
TSPM) of "not staying on over 60" is a very good one. It is my hope that all colleagues over 80
should be able to retire and allow younger colleagues to shoulder greater responsibility.
And I hope that after a few more years have

passed, we can achieve a situation of "not staying on over 70" and then "not staying on over
60" so that older colleagues can all step down and leave their posts to allow younger
colleagues to take over.

TF: You have been head of both the CCC and
the TSPM for the past fifteen years, but now
different colleagues will head each body. Does
this indicate a split, or, will it lead to a split?
TING: No, in fact this illustrates the unity of our two national bodies. If there really were a threat of division, I certainly would not be retiring now.

TF: Mr Guanzong Luo (Chairperson of the TSPM) and Dr Wenzao Han (President of the China Christian Council) are both men of outstanding ability, but neither is an ordained minister. Do you think their election to these posts is appropriate?

TING: Very much so. In their respective constitutions, neither the CCC nor the TSPM stipulates that either the President of the former or the Chairperson of the latter must be an ordained minister. Mr Y.T. Wu (TSPM Chairperson in the 1950s and 1960s) was not an ordained minister. Many church organizations overseas have lay people in leadership positions. The important thing is that both men have been long-time supporters of Three-Self and of building up the church well, and that they stress unity and serve as good models for their Christian colleagues. Dr Han’s sermon at the closing worship of the Sixth National Christian Conference, for example, was generally felt to be deeply inspiring -- three delegates went out of their way to commend it to me.

TF: Are you optimistic about the future of the Church in China?

TING: A great many of us Christians have gone through the Cultural Revolution, and so it is difficult for us to be pessimistic these days. Now the policy on religious freedom of the Party and government has taken root in people’s hearts, and although there are still shortcomings, we can be happy that channels for the exchange of views and consultation do exist. The church is at this moment in the process of putting young people into positions of leadership, and the average age of delegates to the Sixth National Christian Conference was more than seven years lower than the previous one. It is understandable that the age of the highest leadership level cannot be brought down too quickly. The ratio of participation by women and lay people has also been raised, though we still cannot rest content in these areas. The response to these elections has been highly favorable among Christians here and abroad, including among overseas Chinese churches, especially because Dr Wenzao Han is no stranger to churches overseas. Chinese Christians are marked by their Bible reading, witness bearing, love for the church and love for the country; this too makes me optimistic.

TF: Several years ago you pointed out that Three-Self should be seen as scaffolding. Do you still see it that way?

TING: Yes I do. At the time I said that the CCC and the TSPM were both scaffolding for the construction of this great edifice of the Chinese church. My vision was that one day a Chinese church, one which was very well-governed, very well-supported and one in which the propagation of the gospel was going very well, would tower in all its beauty and splendor on the eastern horizon. The Chinese church would by then have her own complete church order. When this resplendent edifice is completed, the scaffolding will be gone. I still believe this today, that is, the CCC and the TSPM are important and necessary, but they are not eternal. There is no basis in the Bible, and no theological justification, for making them perpetual entities, nor would it be acceptable to Chinese Christians. I think we have done enough if we have built our scaffolding well.

TF: There are a fair number of Christians in China still who do belong to Three-Self. What is your view of this?

TING: Three-Self is a movement of the church as well as a principle for building up the church well. It has no membership structure, and so there is no question of belonging or not. When Y.T. Wu and others began Three-Self in the 1950s, there were many in the church both in China and abroad who opposed it due to a failure to understand what it was about. But today, there are very few who still oppose it because everyone knows Three-Self means self-administration, self-support and self-propagation, and this contributes to a common language between Christians and the general populace and facilitates our witness to Christ. Three-Self has accomplished a great deal of good. To take the Bible as an example, the TSPM and the CCC have already printed millions and millions of Bibles. Those Christians who "do not belong to" Three-Self, are also reading Bibles provided by the CCC and TSPM. The two bodies also do many other things which are beneficial to believers, so why should we want to oppose them? As for holding different views on certain things, or opposing the actions of certain persons, that is only natural. Such matters are open to discussion and improvement and we should not be excessively anxious about them. Certainly we should not lightly dismiss others as "anti-Three-Self", I feel that all those who respect the teachings of the Bible and acknowledge ANS 1997.1/2  Page 13
Jesus Christ as Lord are brothers and sisters in the Lord who should have mutual respect, conscientiously unite and consult with each other in everything.

TF: What do you plan to do when you retire?

TING: I am still Principal of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, though I hope to retire from that position as well when it becomes possible. I would like to read all the books I have not had time to read, put in order the writings and papers I have done at home and abroad during years past, and take the time to pursue my mathematical pastimes.

TF: Many people have been concerned about you since your wife Siu-may passed away last year.

TING: Thank you for your concern. I live with one of my sons (an associate professor of English at Nanjing University) and his wife (a doctor) and my grandson (a senior middle school student), and they take good care of me.

TF: What are your hopes for Christianity in China?

TING: One is that unity be upheld, that genuine and complete mutual respect in matters of faith and worship be achieved, that at the same time all groups uphold unity by not making too much of their distinctive characteristics. Second, that the Bible's ethical message be developed hand in hand with the moral emphasis to be found in our Chinese culture, and that the influence of antinomianism within the church be eliminated.

TF: Are you satisfied with theological education at present?

TING: I cannot say that I am satisfied with it. Whether we speak of teachers and students in the learning process, of pastors preaching, or of those engaged in Christian literature work, I would like to see that, beyond "satisfying believers", those involved should not forget that they must elevate the level of the believers, so that, as St. Paul tells the believers in Philippi, he prays that "your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God" (Phil. 1: 9-11).

TF: Is there anything else you would like to share with our readers?

TING: In the past fifteen years, I have become more and more aware of the fact that many Christians have been keeping me in their prayers and that there are a growing number of colleagues and fellow Christians overseas who also pray for me. These prayers stem not only from their love and concern for me personally, even more they represent a coalescence of everyone's care and concern for the Chinese church and our Three-Self spirit. I personally have no special talent, but God has heard these prayers. They have upheld me, almost like a swimmer who cannot drown in a salt sea. And so I can say that those prayers have been transformed into material strength. I want to thank all those who have prayed for me, whether known to me or not. I hope they will continue in the same way to support our new leaders with their prayers. I have also received a great many letters and Christmas cards, but I have answered hardly any of them. This is very impositive of me and I hope the senders will forgive me. I wish everyone health of body and spirit and progress in this New Year, 1997. [1660 words]
Pastor Chen Yiping loves nothing more than telling stories and relating anecdotes about his church on Gulangyu Island and his experiences as a Christian. As with so many Chinese church workers, Pastor Chen's sturdy, healthy appearance and his energetic manner seem to belie the fact that he is actually approaching 70 years of age. Recently Ian Groves of the ANS editorial team had the chance to learn more about Pastor Chen's Trinity Church and its ministry of music to believers in the city.

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"The Island of Music" is how the Chinese often refer to Gulangyu, a small island off the coast of Xiamen (formerly known as Amoy) in Fujian Province. This place has brought forth several talented musicians over the years, and the sounds of violin and piano can sometimes be heard when wandering its narrow streets and alleys. The island has a population of 25,000 and around 2,200 of these are Christians.

In 1979, Trinity church was the third church in China to be re-opened after being closed and used as government offices for 13 years during the Cultural Revolution. Pastor Chen was called in one Saturday and told that the church property was being returned and that services could begin again the very next day! Chen was overjoyed that the church was opening again, but he was also somewhat concerned. After 13 years, how could the church be made ready for worship in such a short space of time? Also, there was no time to announce the re-opening before the service the next day. Chen prayed about these concerns with another believer. The following day, the church doors were opened at 8am and a local official came by to see if anybody would turn up. In the event, all the 1,000 seats provided were occupied, and around 800 people who couldn't get in stood outside in the courtyard. Ever since 1934, when the church was built, there had never been so many people in attendance for Sunday worship.

Pastor Chen studied theology at Yanjing Seminary in Beijing in the 1950's but was not ordained or able to work as a pastor on graduation due to the political upheavals of the time. However, he did work as a lay church worker in poor mountain areas after graduation until he was finally ordained in 1989.

During the Cultural Revolution years (1966-76) Pastor Chen himself faced great hardship. He became a handyman at that time and did manual labour. He was frequently forced to parade around wearing a "dunce's" hat and beat a gong to show that he was an object of criticism. However, he now sees that time as a time of honour in suffering for God. During those years there were many secret meetings in houses. Believers copied the Bible by hand and gave copies to each other. Red guards often searched houses and confiscated Bibles, so lots of copies were kept at many different locations for safety. Pastor Chen had a Bible, which he carried in a pillowcase and kept at his cousin's home at Xiamen University. His cousin was a member of the Communist Party and his home wasn't usually searched, so the Bible was relatively safe there. This Bible was much in demand and was passed around for 13 years. Although it is now very battered, Pastor Chen still carries it around with him and it is very precious.

Today, Trinity church has a congregation of around 1,700, with two pastors and two evangelists. It incorporates four former denominational traditions. On Sundays, there are services modelled after those of the Church of Christ in China in the morning and those of the Little Flock in the afternoon. A Seventh Day Adventist meeting takes place on Saturdays, and the church also holds services based on former True Jesus Church meetings. Although believers may differ over how they view the sacraments, the role of ministers, times of worship and traditions, they are united as members of one church and in being self-supporting, self-financing and self-propagating. The believers share one place of worship, one organisational structure and one name, the Trinity church.

In keeping with the island's tradition, the church sees its main ministry as being in the field of music. It has an adult choir, a young adult choir, a youth choir for 12-16 year olds, and a children's choir for the under-12s. It also has a 50-strong orchestra and even a special toddlers' orchestra. Besides music groups, the church has three different Bible study classes, a "Spiritual Encouragement" group, a youth group and youth fellowship, a Sunday school and a fellowship for
the elderly. But music is the church's main interest and strength. The various choirs regularly travel outside the city to sing and worship, giving a particular boost to poor country churches in the surrounding areas. The church encourages its youth choir not only to sing but also to feel a responsibility for their brothers and sisters in the countryside, and they often send money and clothes to churches afflicted by natural disasters in rural areas.

Services are held in the local Southern Fujian dialect, which is the same dialect used in many of the churches in Taiwan. However, the sermon is usually translated into standard Mandarin because of the many outsiders who come to visit from all over China. At Christmas, the demand for seats at the special Christmas services is so great that the church has to hold the service twice, on the two nights of the 24th and 25th December, and sometimes also on the Sunday of Christmas week. The Christmas services are especially popular with students from local colleges. Every year some 5,000 students attend these services and so enjoy what they hear that they don't want to leave at the end of the evening!

Trinity church conducts all its activities within church property in respect of religious laws and regulations, and does not attempt to evangelize outside on the streets. Nevertheless, many people passing by the church are drawn to it when they hear the hymns, the beautiful music and the words being preached inside. One such woman was once a member of an unregistered or "underground" church. She was suspicious of Trinity church, as she had heard that officially registered churches are not "allowed" to preach on certain important doctrines, such as the resurrection. However, she was curious as to what the church actually did teach. On passing the church one day, she happened to hear Pastor Chen preaching on the very topic of the resurrection! The woman entered the church to hear what Chen was saying and continued to attend, eventually becoming a member there. Now she is a youth leader in the church, responsible for several hundred young believers.

Reverend Li, now one of the pastors at Xiamen's Xinjie church (the oldest church in China), also came to know God through Trinity Church. Originally he came from a very superstitious Buddhist family. The father carved Buddhist images and young Li helped. One day, Li was walking on the street and heard three believers from Trinity church talking about Jesus among themselves. He asked them who they were talking about and they told him to come to their house to find out. There they gave him a copy of the New Testament and told him he could find out about Jesus in that book. Li went back home and read the New Testament. He believed, repented and dedicated his life to God. When his father heard this, he became angry, shouted at his son and beat him. He told his son that if he believed in Jesus and not Buddha then he was no longer part of the family and must leave the house. Therefore Pastor Li was driven out of his home because of his beliefs. He came to Trinity church and wanted to study theology. However, there was a problem, as he was not very highly educated and had only completed Junior Middle School. Therefore, he studied hard for three years to make up his lost education to the required Senior Middle School level. He took the Seminary entrance exam three times before finally succeeding. Now he is a well-loved and respected pastor in his own church.

A Buddhist monk from the city's Nanputuo temple once came to Trinity church to worship. The monk was originally from Sichuan Province and was well-versed in the Buddhist Sutras, having studied in Tibet before moving to Xiamen. He was introduced to the church by a friend and went there many times. He talked with Pastor Chen and Chen asked the young monk not to wear his Buddhist robes to church as this was disturbing some of the church members. The monk joined the youth group and later became a believer. He wrote two articles for the Chinese church magazine Tian Feng about his witness and his faith experience, and when the editors saw the articles they were amazed and couldn't believe that it was a Buddhist monk who had written them.

Chen believes that this is the way the Chinese church grows and develops today, not by forcing or persuading people to believe, but as a presence for God within the local community.

[1563 words]

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