50 Years of Three-Self: Voices And Visions

(ANS) This year, the Chinese Protestant church celebrates the 50th anniversary of the Three Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM). Proclaimed in September 1950 by Wu Yaozong and 40 other prominent church leaders, this movement laid the foundation for subsequent Chinese church policy. Since that time, the Chinese Protestant church has based its activities on the three principles of self-propagation, self-administration and self-support. In preparation for the upcoming anniversary, the national CCC/TSPM committee and more than 100 church representatives from all over China converged on Shanghai for a conference in December 1999. In its January edition, Tian Feng, the magazine of the China Christian Council, included statements on the Three-Self movement made by prominent Chinese church leaders at this conference.

Bishop K.H. Ting (Honorary Chairman, Three-Self Patriotic Movement): Under the title "Development And Enrichment Of the TSPM", Bishop Ting gives his personal view of the past 50 years of church life under the direction of Three Self. He highlights four aspects crucial to the Three Self movement and its development.

Ting notes that, up to the founding of the TSPM, missionary activities in China had been largely dependent on foreign funds and personnel. With the founding of the TSPM, the link between missionary outreach and imperialism was severed.

However, in the beginning the TSPM was fiercely opposed by some church workers both within China and abroad. Due to a need to justify itself, Three Self naturally evolved into a biblical and theological movement, as church leaders tried to ground the new church policy on theological thinking. For Bishop Ting this theological groundwork constitutes the second big achievement of the TSPM. With the advent of new missiological theories and emerging criticism in the West of former missionary practices, the Chinese church's desire for independence was indirectly supported by theological developments abroad, Ting remarks.
Thirdly, the TSPM emphasizes the importance of good church administration. The principles of Three Self underpin any healthy church development. By promoting the Three Self movement the church wants to create the conditions necessary for the smooth running of the church, Bishop Ting points out.

Finally, in Bishop Ting's opinion, the crucial and most important step for successful church administration is the development of a genuine Chinese theology. Theology constitutes the theoretical foundation on which church management is based. Therefore, the building of Chinese theology and the aims of the TSPM are inseparable. Bishop Ting admits that some believers in China still hold theological reflection to be unnecessary, while others have little interest in healthy church administration. In fact, both are necessary, Bishop Ting reminds his readers. Moreover, in order to appeal to believers, the church must develop a theology suited to contemporary Chinese life and society. This explains the need to adapt to socialism, a problem inherent not only in religion, but also in science, education and the arts in China. According to Bishop Ting, each individual pastor needs to develop his or her own theological understanding. Through such a process of pluralization, Chinese theology might also become more attractive to scholars abroad, Ting notes.

**Luo Guanzong (Chairman, Three-Self Patriotic Movement):** Based on the experiences of Chinese Christians in recent history, Luo calls for an independent Chinese church firmly rooted in socialist society. According to Luo, history can and must not be forgotten, as this would once again open the door to foreign influence and control. The establishing of the TSPM, which was an act of liberation at the time, continues to be of vital importance for the stability and security both of the Chinese church and Chinese society at large.

Luo goes on to explain that the principles of Three Self have proven to be consistent with God's will, biblical teaching and contemporary society. Therefore, the TSPM has not only political but also spiritual implications for the church, one of these being the enhanced attractiveness of the church for modern Chinese citizens. Luo firmly underlines the need to build up theology and adapt it to socialism if Christianity in China is to be released from its stigma of being a mere "foreign religion". While fundamental theological doctrines must remain untouched, theological teachings in general need to be adapted to life in a socialist society. As Luo points out, even since it came into existence, the Christian church all over the world has responded to societal changes by adapting itself and its teachings as necessary.

**Dr. Wenzao Han (President, China Christian Council):** In his address to conference participants, Dr. Han focuses on the practical aspects of the work ahead, highlighting publication work as one important way to contribute to the building of theology. As for maintaining the independence of the church, Dr. Han mentions the danger of some overseas churches trying to undermine the TSPM. In order to withstand the lure of money from overseas, the Chinese church needs to strengthen its own capacities, Dr. Han underlines.

**Kan Baoping (Vice-President, Yanjing Theological Seminary):** Kan addresses the question of the indigenization of the Christian message in China. As Kan explains, indigenization must entail a process of inculturation in terms of ideas. Otherwise, any indigenization limited to rituals or symbols would reduce the religion
involved to mere superstition. However, cultural indigenization is merely a first step for religion, which should appeal to believers first and foremost on a spiritual level. This again explains the need to build up a uniquely Chinese theology. Kan concludes the calls to build up Chinese theology, adapt religion to socialism and indigenize the Christian message all point in the same direction.

As one conference participant pointed out, a model similar to the TSPM can even be found in accounts of early Christian church life. With the decision that non-Jewish Christian converts did not have to undergo circumcision and other Jewish rituals before being baptized, early Christianity redefined its relationship toward Jewish law. Christianity has developed into its present-day form only through continuous adaptation to reality and circumstances. Thus, while the conference in Shanghai demonstrated the overwhelming and wholehearted support of Chinese church representatives for the TSPM, it also highlighted the wealth of arguments with which this movement can be supported.

Building Chinese Theology: Necessary And Unavoidable

(ANS) While the topic of building up Chinese theology has been raised numerous times in recent issues of Tian Feng, the magazine of the CCC, a recent article by Bishop K.H. Ting in March's edition underlines the continuing efforts to bring the movement into all sectors of the Chinese church.

Bishop Ting begins by explaining why the building of theology does not distort but actually protects the basic tenets of the Christian faith. As he points out, throughout its whole history, in order to survive Christianity has had to reshape its theological understanding according to changes in surrounding society. He lists such issues as slavery, birth control and divorce as examples where church teaching has been significantly revised over the years.

Examples of the adaptation of theology to suit local circumstances can be found as early as biblical times, Bishop Ting continues. Referring to the book of Acts, chapters 10-15, Ting explains how Peter came to accept Jesus as the savior of all peoples, not only of the Jews. Accordingly, early Christians decided to abandon certain Jewish laws and rites, for example, circumcision.

Bishop Ting then turns to the situation in China. He rejects the division of the Chinese church into "modernist / liberal" and "fundamentalist" factions, a distinction commonly held by many observers in China and overseas. According to him, the Holy Spirit is active within the whole church without taking into account such considerations. Therefore, theological change and the development of theology based on social reality apply to all believers of every persuasion, not just one group. Citing the example of one American fundamentalist Christian group, Bishop Ting shows how "fundamentalists" can too feel the need for doctrinal rejuvenation. The fundamental tenets of Christianity do not change, but theological thinking and the application of these tenets need to keep pace with social changes in order to protect and preserve this untouchable nucleus of the Christian faith.
In the modern Chinese situation, building theology means adapting theology to socialism. Bishop Ting explains that this interpretation would be the choice of any responsible Chinese Christian, both for the sake of the nation and of Christianity. This adaptation to socialism cannot be a mere adaptation of form, he underlines. More precisely, this process must involve theology as the structure which underlies the Christian faith. The adaptation of Christian theology to modern times is not only a symbol of its vitality but would also make Christianity more attractive for intellectuals, Bishop Ting is convinced.

In the light of his comments above, Bishop Ting reminds readers that a committee dedicated to the building of theology was established by the national CCC/TSPM committee in 1999. This committee serves two main functions: It aims at helping pastoral workers understand the importance of building theology and assisting institutions heavily involved in the building of theology, particularly seminaries and publishers.

**WEB-WISE**

Receive ANS easier, quicker, and - free of charge! Just surf to www.pacific.net.hk/~amityhk on the Internet, or send us an e-mail at amityhk@pacific.net.hk, typing SUBSCRIBE in the "Subject" line. If you get ANS by e-mail, please remember to cancel your subscription to the printed edition. Thank you!

---

**2000.3/4.3**

**Modern-Day Deborahs: Women Believers In Wenzhou**

(ANS) In China, more than 70 percent of church members are women, and they form the backbone of church life in many places. Yet, while women are the heart of the Chinese church, the heartbeat is still predominantly regulated by men. However, as women themselves become aware of this issue, their self-esteem is slowly rising. Proof of this awakening was given at a church retreat in Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province, designed especially for women. Details of the retreat are given by Shen Enzhen in February's edition of Tian Feng, the magazine of the China Christian Council.

From November 18-20, 1999, around 1,000 women gathered in Wenzhou for a spiritual retreat offered by the local church's committee for women's work. The theme of the three-days of lectures and seminars was "The Rise Of Modern-Day Deborah." Shen notes how many of the participants had difficulties understanding standard Mandarin Chinese, so translation of the speeches into local dialect was provided throughout the event. A choir and prayers offered spiritual refreshment in between lectures. Although spiritual retreats catering especially to women have been a tradition in Wenzhou since the reopening of churches, this retreat was the first on such a large scale. The retreat offered participants a unique experience of Christian communal life: Meals and dish-washing duties were shared, and at night participants would spread their mats on the floor and sleep together.

ANS 2000.3/4 Page 4
Shen Enzhen, herself one of the speakers, is particularly impressed by the listening discipline of the women. As she points out, even during short breaks they hardly moved, eagerly drinking in every word that was spoken. About half of the women attending the Wenzhou retreat were lay church workers. During a special discussion group, they shared their views and insights on church work by and for women.

Despite their overwhelming importance in day-to-day church life, the potential of women is often not fully recognized by local congregations, including many women themselves, writes Shen. However, participants noted that the Bible contains numerous references to strong women, showing that women can be equally capable servants of the Lord as their male counterparts.

For the Wenzhou retreat, the biblical figure of Deborah was chosen as a model for participants. Deborah was a prophetess and later assumed leadership over the Israelites, helping Barak in his fight against the Canaanites. As her story in the book of Judges illustrates, neither men nor women can stand alone, but are dependent on each other. Barak, the prominent Israeliite leader, was only willing to fight under the guidance of Deborah (Judges 4:8). Therefore, the Wenzhou conference promoted a more balanced view than that which currently exists within the Chinese church: Women certainly need the support of their brothers in Christ, but before this cooperation can exist, women need to stand up. Participants highlighted some of the special qualities valuable for church work that women have to offer: their whole-hearted devotion, their purity and their warm and attentive attitude.

Any church is incomplete without the participation of women, but this is particularly true in China, where women make up the bulk of believers. How to encourage female believers to participate more actively in church work is therefore an urgent task for the Chinese church. Referring to the model of Deborah, speakers expressed their hope that Chinese women will stand up and bring some of Deborah's spirit into their own pastoral and evangelical work. Participants concluded with the hope that, in the future, many more Deborahs will make their appearance in the Chinese church.

2000.3/4.4

**Struggling With Structure: Impediments To The Building Of Theology**

(ANS) In March's issue of *Tian Feng*, the magazine of the China Christian Council, a young professor from Guangdong Theological Seminary sheds new light on the debate concerning the building of Chinese theology. According to Huang Baoluo, one reason for the mediocrity of theology in China is structural constraints which act as disincentives for scholars interested in doing research.

As Huang explains, one impediment is the current church system where different positions within the church carry their own inherent disadvantages. For example, ordinary church workers find they neither have the time nor are encouraged to engage in theological reflection. Talented people, on the other hand, tend to scramble for administrative positions rather than "useless" research posts, mainly because of the practical benefits associated with administrative titles.
The lack of an enlightened atmosphere conducive to scholastic excellence is another factor detrimental to theological research. One reason for this is the general disregard for scholarly theological reflection in China. Many Chinese Christians conceive theological scholarship to be diametrically opposed to the holding of a strong faith, and condemn Christian theologians as being "not touched by the Spirit". Huang Baoluo, however, does not see theological research and faith as opposed to one another. He hopes that in the future, Chinese Christians will use theological scholarship to support and strengthen their faith.

Drawing attention to the small size of the theological scholarly community in China, Huang points out that the number of well-educated scholars holding a Masters degree or above in theology is extremely small for a country the size of China. There are only around 70 scholars of this caliber within Mainland China compared to around 100 in Hong Kong alone. Huang goes on to note that even many of those suitably qualified in theology within China are not involved in theological research. While some of them are simply too busy, others are unwilling to hold a research title without being assigned a corresponding area of "authority". They feel scholarly work is unrewarding because of the difficulties of obtaining "results" and the poor scholastic environment in general.

Finally, Chinese theology lags behind other sciences in China. While other Chinese educational institutes have made great strides in recent years, seminaries still provide rather poor quality education. The church's slow progress in catching up with Western theology is, amongst other reasons, rooted in difficulties with publishing and the generally low educational level of believers.

In spite of the above-mentioned obstacles, Huang's overall outlook is optimistic. If church workers of all levels acknowledge the importance of theological scholarship and are willing to engage in it, the perspectives for building Chinese theology are very good, he concludes.

2000.3/4.5

Unique Location, Unique Challenges: The Church In Inner Mongolia

(ANS) The vast and sparsely-populated northwestern province of Inner Mongolia is inhabited by ethnic Mongolians, other minority peoples and a large group of Han Chinese. The multi-ethnic background of the population makes religious work in Inner Mongolia a particularly sensitive issue. Gao Youhong reports in March's edition of Tian Feng, the magazine of the China Christian Council, how he gained insight into Mongolian church life when he worked as a teacher for voluntary church workers in the region.

In Inner Mongolia, voluntary church workers form the backbone of church life, Gao explains, and over 300 believers have undergone lay training in the past 12 years. Today, there are 150 pastors and church workers serving 962 churches and meeting points in Inner Mongolia. The quality of lay training has improved significantly over time, and training periods have been extended from three to six or even twelve months.
Societal changes bring new challenges, a fact which is as true for Inner Mongolia as for any other part of China. In the future, the church hopes to provide not only spiritual assistance but also social services such as kindergartens and old people's homes. Discussions regarding the implementation of such projects are already on the agenda of the provincial CCC/TSPM committee.

However, the major challenges for church life in Inner Mongolia result from the multi-ethnic and multi-religious background of the province. Given this background, the room to manoeuvre which the church enjoys today already marks quite an achievement, the author points out. As he explains, the strong links between ethnic and religious affiliations for the Mongolian peoples require particular sensitivity on behalf of the church. A mishandling of the religious question can easily have far-reaching implications for the relationships among different ethnic groups. Fortunately, officials involved in religious work in Inner Mongolia are mostly understanding and sympathetic. Virtually all are very supportive of religion "as long as it serves society", reports Gao.

There are still other tricky problems afflicting Christian churches in Inner Mongolia today. Many congregations cannot support a full-time church worker, as Inner Mongolia's 160,000 Christians are scattered all over the huge province. Moreover, Inner Mongolia still remains very poor. In some places church property has not yet been returned to congregations, while in other places the policy of registration of religious venues is not being implemented correctly. Finally, in a few Christian communities, internal tensions between members of the church itself hinder effective church work.

2000.3/4.6

Thoughts On How To Lead One's Sheep To Richer Pastures

(ANS) It is not just the shortage of pastoral workers but also the quality of these workers which is one of the most pressing issues facing the Chinese church today. Both church leaders and workers at the grassroots level share a certain apprehension concerning this problem, as a new series in Tian Feng, the magazine of the China Christian Council, reveals. An article in October's edition addressing the question of "How To Do Effective Pastoral Work" elicited an unexpected deluge of mail from church workers all over China. In response to this overwhelming reaction, Tian Feng has subsequently published some of the comments submitted.

One important area of debate is the role of preaching. Basically, all commentators agree on the merits of having a well-prepared sermon. However, they have differing views on the role of preaching as an element of pastoral work. While some underline the importance of sermons as a unique tool for promoting the spiritual growth of believers, others voice their discomfort with this idea. The latter feel that preaching is often overestimated in China, leading to the assumption that new converts can be assisted in their spiritual growth simply by exposing them to decent sermons. One writer likens a convert to a newborn child, who then also has to be guided on the road to maturity. Similarly, pastoral concern should not stop but should actually begin after evangelization. Some remark critically that many pastoral workers in China obviously see their main task as evangelizing, but then completely ignore the pastoral care needed after a convert's baptism.
With the rapid growth of local grassroots churches all over China, many pastors do not even know all their "sheep", one church worker laments. However, this is one important precondition of effective pastoral work, the other being good church administration. If these demands are met, there are various ways of taking good pastoral care of a congregation: Home visits are an often-neglected but very basic tool of pastoral care, as are special visits to the sick and those in need of special comfort. Evangelists have to display a warm and loving attitude not only towards God but also their fellow believers, several contributors point out. And, given the fact that many Christians are new to the church, the teaching of correct beliefs is of particular importance.

In order to tackle the problem of impossible work schedules, church workers should rely more on parishioners to carry out the simple everyday tasks of church life, several writers suggest. In every church, duties matching the abilities of many different people can be found. Apart from sharing workloads, this would also allow average believers to regard themselves as more integrated members of their church. However, good pastoral care also depends on cooperation between church workers themselves. It is in this area in particular that many things still need to be improved.

Finally, several commentators underline the need for spiritual retreats for church workers. Without fixed times for prayer and contemplation, they will lack the spiritual strength needed for providing spiritual guidance to their "sheep".

2000.3/4.7

**Graying Gracefully: A Church-Run Retirement Home in Foshan**

(ANS) Due to increased standards of living and hygiene, life-expectancy in China has risen over the past few decades, and the country is now facing a dramatic increase in the proportion of elderly people within society. Foshan in southern Guangdong Province is among the eleven Chinese cities most prominently affected by this social phenomenon. In its February issue, *Tian Feng*, the magazine of the China Christian Council, describes an initiative taken by Foshan Christians to address this issue.

One third of Christian believers in Foshan are elderly, with 180 of them being 70 years of age or older. Many of them lack adequate care, being widowed or neglected by their working children. In response to this situation, believers in Foshan came up with the idea of building a Christian old folks' home. A small committee dedicated to this task was established and a location for the prospective home was established, but then there was the question of finances for the project. Within two years, Foshan Christians managed to raise RMB 400,000 (=US$ 48,312 approx.) in donations from local Christians and friends overseas, about half the amount needed. Construction work started in late 1993 and was completed one year later. The old people's home covers an area of 1,200 square meters over three floors, offering space for 40 old people. After a trial period in 1995, the home was formally opened in 1996 and named the Xunguang Retirement Home. The Chinese words "xunguang" imply "radiant sunbeams", and Foshan Christians indeed hope to be a source of light for the elderly residents in their care.
Christians in Foshan initially lacked any experience of running a home for the elderly, and it took some time before they had drafted regulations for the proper administration of the project. Now, detailed rules exist for the staffing and administration of the Xunguang Retirement Home, and management of the home has been transferred from the original committee overseeing the project to the local Three-Self Patriotic Movement body.

Given the Christian nature of the home, particular emphasis is laid on spiritual nourishment for the home's residents. Activities include daily devotions, regular study of Tian Feng and other church materials, choir practice and, of course, Sunday worship services. Spiritual leadership is provided both by some of the retirees themselves and Christians from outside the home. All of the current 29 elderly residents are Christians; with four of them having converted only after moving into the home. The staff, who are themselves Christian, are also required to take part in the spiritual activities of the home.

Spiritual health is not the only need of the residents which is met at the Xunguang Retirement Home. The residents receive regular instruction on health problems particular to old age and how to avoid them. A reading room and a garden for short walks or some morning exercise complete the attractions the Xunguang Home offers to its inhabitants.

As the Tian Feng article reveals, Foshan Christians have further ambitions for Xunguang Home and its surroundings. Among the services envisaged are regular retreats for Xunguang residents and also a day-care centre for non-residential old folk, including meals and cleaning services. Furthermore, the home management hopes to enhance the professional capabilities of its staff by inviting health care experts from nearby Hong Kong to give lectures.

For Foshan Christians, the construction of the Xunguang Retirement Home is clearly something more than just a social service. For the initiators of this project, this home marks a first step towards local Christian involvement in society at large.

The Changing Face Of The Church In Wuhan

(ANS) Wuhan, capital of central China's Hubei Province, is a major industrial and port city located on the Yangtze River. The church in the city has developed rapidly over the past five years and Chen Zhong, a local church worker, takes stock of these changes in January's edition of Tian Feng, the magazine of the China Christian Council.

Chen's first observation is that the public perception of Christians has changed over the years, not only in Wuhan but in the whole of China. At the beginning of the 20th century, the popular notion about Christianity was that one couldn't be both Christian and Chinese. Christianity was seen as a purely "foreign" religion. Today, however, Christianity is firmly rooted within Chinese society. Unlike during former missionary times, contemporary Christians are model citizens, a fact that was particularly
revealed during the devastating floods along the Yangtze in 1998. Moreover, during the past five years, in the whole city of Wuhan, no Christian was involved in any criminal activities.

Ever since the reopening of churches in the 1980s, the number of believers in Wuhan has been increasing but, over the years, the growth rate itself has multiplied. While 4,000 Christians were baptized in the 14-year period between 1982 and 1994, the same number again were baptized in the five years between 1995 and 1999.

One of the greatest challenges the church in Wuhan faces is the low educational level of believers. Therefore, great emphasis is laid on training courses for lay church workers. Chen reports that more than 900 believers have already completed training and hope to promote healthy church growth through their work. In Wuhan, government officials are especially active in their support for these lay training programs. According to Chen, local government bodies regularly invite adherents of other religions as well as government officials to attend Protestant lay training programs as auditors.

Chen also reports of a change in church demographics in Wuhan. Slowly but surely, younger people are taking over leading positions within the church. In order to speed up this process, the Wuhan CCC/TSPM committee has set up guidelines for the retirement of pastors. Church representatives hope they will serve as an incentive for old and physically weak pastors to step down. Furthermore, Chen mentions evaluation procedures which have been introduced to raise the professional performance of church personnel.

Congregations in Wuhan are engaged in numerous building activities. Chen reports about many new meeting points which have recently come into existence, while older meeting points are in the process of receiving a "new face" through renovation. Moreover, many congregations can now afford to maintain a fixed meeting point instead of meeting in believers' homes. Chen interprets this as a sign of increasing affluence among believers. In this way, it can be seen that Christians profit from modernization and rising living standards not only as individuals but also as members of the local Christian community.
**Excerpts From The Letter Pages of Tien Feng**

(ANS) The letters to the editors of the Chinese church magazine, Tien Feng, give readers a glimpse of daily church life with all its joys and problems. To give our readers an idea of the breadth of issues discussed, we are documenting here questions and answers from the January and February 2000 issues of the church magazine.

*********

**How can I free my mother from her addiction to Mahjong?**

**To the editors:**

My mother and I have been believers for many years now but we still seek to testify daily to our faith through the way we live our lives. Unfortunately, my mother has fallen into the habit of playing a local form of Mahjong (a Chinese board game used for gambling) with other villagers. The more she plays, the more obsessive she becomes about it. Some time ago, after having seriously fallen ill, she quit gambling and resumed her faith life. However, this did not last for long and she started playing Mahjong and gambling again. In the beginning, I urged her with goodwill to quit, but she wouldn't listen, saying that she herself was the best judge of her actions. Her addiction increased and once she even quarreled with my father to the point where they talked of divorce. Now, my feelings toward my mother are becoming more and more negative. God teaches me to respect my parents, but I find it very hard right now, not because I hate her but because I am unable to help her quit gambling. My mother now plays not only during the daytime but also through the night, coming home around dawn. She hardly sleeps any more, has lost weight and her hair has turned much whiter. When she does not come back in the evening, I too cannot fall asleep. What shall I do? I feel paralyzed whenever I face her. What else can I do apart from praying?

--- Zhang Juhong, Anhui Province

**Response:**

Seeing how your mother has flung herself into the jaws of Mahjong and gambling makes me feel very sorry for her. She says she believes, but apparently she is a believer only in word, not in deed, for she is unwilling to leave her current "Master". She not only spends time and money on this "Master", but also sacrifices her health and life. You love your mother and have taken on the task of praying for her. Although this has not shown any effect up to now, do not feel downhearted. Praying is not a helpless task but a battle of faith, a declaration of faith. God wants you to ask with confidence (Mark 11:23-24; Jacob 5:15-20). You report that your feelings toward your mother are becoming more and more negative. This is not right. As a daughter, respect for your parents is your heavenly duty. It is possible that your mother has also been fighting within herself but has been unable to win. She needs your love and care. You must wait for her return with confidence and joy, you must not reject her, let alone quarrel. Apart from this, ask the preachers and elders from your church for their help and patient advice. In order to encourage her to participate in church
activities you might try to stay home more helping out with household tasks. Ask genuinely after her health and, slowly, your care for her physical well-being will develop into care for her soul as well.

*Mahjong* and other forms of gambling are extremely common in the Chinese countryside and, particularly during the quiet season in the farming year, many people easily fall victim to these forms of entertainment. Unable to rid themselves of this habit, gamblers bring a lot of harm to themselves and their families. The Bible says: "You yourselves used to be in darkness, but since you have become the Lord's people, you live in light. So you must live like people who belong to the light (...) Have nothing to do with the worthless things that people do, things that belong to the darkness." (Eph 5: 8-21) The church should testify to its faith it within its local environment and fight against unwholesome local customs. And the church should pay even more attention to its pastoral work and try to encourage people to participate in healthy social activities so as to nourish the spirit and call back believers who have gone astray.

This letter also reminds us of the importance of the communal faith life within the family. Christian families should have a common spiritual life. After dinner, family members should gather to pray, sing and read the Bible together. This is not only a sign of familial affection towards one another but it also brings the strength needed to lead a life for the Lord.

*********

**Migrant Workers Need Pastoral Care**

**To the editors:**

*I am a migrant worker currently based in Dalian, Liaoning Province. As an outsider working in the city, I often feel lonely and helpless. Through this letter, I would like to call on churches in the more developed coastal cities: Please provide better pastoral care for the migrant workers in your midst! As far as I understand, many migrant workers have left the Lord because of negligence on the part of local churches. God be with us!*

--- Zhu Fanghui, Liaoning Province

**Response:**

Your request is a very good idea. Many of the workers flowing into the rich coastal cities are Christians. In fact, according to our understanding, there are some congregations in the interior of China where only a few women and elderly believers are left behind now once other members have gone elsewhere to look for work. Migrants working in an alien environment are in particular need of good pastoral care. Although they have left their home churches, they have not left the Body of Christ, and local churches should take special care of them to prevent them from turning from the Lord. Migrant workers are a very unique social group and sometimes display unfortunate behavior or even endanger public security. Therefore,
Christian migrant workers should strive to give a particularly good witness to their faith and refrain from similar activities. In places where there are many migrant workers, churches might set up special groups catering to their needs, letting them enjoy the warmth of church life.

**********

Visit: The province of Xinjiang tends to be overlooked by Christian observers, as Christians there constitute only a tiny majority within a mainly Muslim society. In October last year, a China Christian Council (CCC) delegation headed by CCC-President Dr. Wenzao Han visited the Xinjiang provincial capital of Urumuqi. For five days, the delegation listened to local church representatives and shared views and insights with them.

**********

Building Theology: On January 16 and 17 this year, the CCC/TSPM committee for the building of theology convened in Xinde, Jiangsu Province for follow-up consultations to a previous meeting held in Jinan, Shandong Province. The committee, presided over by Bishop K.H. Ting, consists of important church figures from both the China Christian Council and the Three-Self Patriotic Movement. Participants pointed out that the current building of theology does not in any way pose a threat to original Christian doctrine. According to participants, the adaptation of theology to modern society is, in fact, a means to safeguard the basics of Christian faith during rapidly changing times. In order to devise a contemporary theological language for Chinese believers, Chinese theology needs to dwell on the following sources: the Bible as the foundation of all Christian thinking, the experience of 50 years of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, and the best of Chinese culture. All the church leaders present agreed that, as theology is diverse, discussions will naturally spring up during the process of forming a contemporary theology.

**********

Government relations: On January 31, Li Ruiluan, head of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), invited leaders from all officially recognized religions to his traditional Spring Festival reception. In his address, Li illustrated the importance of religious freedom and the adaptation of religion to socialism as two long term policies of the Chinese government regarding religion. Without religious freedom, religious communities will not contribute actively and positively to society, Li acknowledged. He then highlighted four points believers must recognize when adapting religion to socialism: Religious communities must obey the law, work for the benefit of the people and uphold both ethnic and national unity.
Joint Declaration By The China Christian Council And The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

(ANS) From March 19 to March 22, a delegation from the China Christian Council met with representatives of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in Louisville, Kentucky for a consultation. For the CCC delegation this was the first stop on a US trip which included visits to the offices of several other church denominations and of the National Council of Churches of Christ, USA. The delegation consisted of Dr. Han Wenzao, President of the China Christian Council and General Secretary of the Amity Foundation; Rev. Su Deci, General Secretary of the China Christian Council and Principal of East China Theological Seminary; Rev. Bao Jiayuan, Associate General Secretary of the China Christian Council; Rev. Gao Feng, President of the Shandong Christian Council and Principal of Shandong Theological Seminary; Rev. Kan Baoping, Vice Principal of Yanjing Theological Seminary; Rev. Wu Mingfeng, Pastor of Xita Church in Shenyang, and Ms. Li Enlin, Associate General Secretary of the Amity Foundation. At the end of the consultation, the CCC delegation and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) representatives made the following joint statement.

********

The China Christian Council and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.): Toward a Common Understanding of Partnership

"See, I am making all things new." (Rev. 21:5)

We, representatives of the China Christian Council and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), met in Louisville from 19-22 March, 2000 to celebrate relationships that we have with one another within the worldwide body of Christ. We prayed and worshiped together, we discussed the work of our churches together, we reviewed our cooperation over the past twenty years and we planned for the future. We can say with the apostle Paul that "a wide door for effective work has been opened for us".

We give thanks to God for the fellowship we share in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. During the course of this consultation, we have been able to renew the ties that unite us, and explore the partnership which we share in building up the body of Christ. We are amazed by the rapid growth and development of the Chinese Church, which testifies to the tremendous work of evangelism being done by Chinese Christians. We realize that we have a long term commitment to one another. The psalmist writes: "How very good and pleasant it is when sisters and brothers live together in unity" (Psalm 133:1). We live out this unity in our commitment to God's mission.

Present at our consultation were a diverse group of Presbyterians, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) offices and related organizations: Chinese-Americans, Korean-Americans, African-Americans, and Anglo-Americans; the Medical Benevolence Foundation, the Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship, The Outreach Foundation and China Connection. The China Christian Council delegation included representatives from the national staff, the Amity Foundation, Provincial Christian Councils, Chinese theological students in America and institutions of theological education in China.

Representatives of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) have reaffirmed their statements regarding relationships with Christian Communities in China made in 1983 ("Relations Between the Christian Communities in China and the United States") and 1988
("The China Program Policy Statement"). We hope to build upon and develop the understanding expressed in those statements.

Representatives of the China Christian Council give thanks for their partnership with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) as part of the church ecumenical.

On the basis of our discussions we say these things together:

(1) Our relationships are based on openness and mutual respect. We embrace the growing cooperation between the China Christian Council and the Amity Foundation and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in a wide range of areas including:

- Bible printing and distribution in China, which has now reached over 23 million copies;
- The Amity Teachers Program;
- The building up of the Church in our contexts;
- Health work and disaster relief through the Amity Foundation;
- Theological Education and exchanges;
- Leadership development in our churches;
- Study tours to promote mutual understanding;
- Peacemaking and reconciliation between the Chinese and American peoples;
- Cooperation in ecumenical sharing.

In the years ahead, we will work for more face-to-face contact and improved coordination of projects, making use of new means of electronic communication. We will also endeavor to give the work and witness of China Christian Council and the Amity Foundation more visibility in the USA.

(2) We affirm the Three-Self-Principle as appropriated and deepened by the Chinese Church. The development of relationships between our churches is based upon self-government, self-support and self-propagation in the Chinese Christian community. We respect the priorities of the Amity Foundation and the China Christian Council which include:

- Support for Amity projects in education, health work, disaster relief, social service and rural development;
- The printing and distribution of the Bible;
- Building up rural churches and leadership development;
- Theological education and the development of a Chinese theology;
- Study opportunities overseas for new church leaders.

(3) We commit ourselves and our churches to full consultation and dialogue on all issues and concerns affecting our peoples and churches in the spirit of mutual respect. We need more opportunities for learning from one another, and greater sensitivity to the issues which divide our peoples and our churches. We need to give much more attention to education in our churches so as to overcome the misunderstandings about one another which continue among our peoples.

(4) We endeavor to deepen understanding and friendship between our peoples and churches within the context of a globalized economy and cultural plurality. Globalization promises greater unity for the peoples of the world, but at the same time, it threatens the sustainability of the earth, cultural diversity and marginalizes and excludes the poor and weak in our societies. We live in an increasingly pluralistic world with different cultural,
historical, political and economic understandings. This plurality pushes us to accept and to 
value the cultural diversity of Christianity in our different contexts.

(5) We celebrate emerging people-to-people exchanges, and look forward to the 
forging of deeper and more extensive exchanges especially among young people in China 
and the U.S.A. We must create more opportunities for meetings among our young people, 
and prepare a new generation of leaders who understand each other's language, culture and 
society.

The details and implementation for the program areas mentioned above will have to 
be worked out through a careful process of consultation between the staff of our two 
churches.

As our consultation ends, we realize that we must prepare to risk something new in 
our encounter with one another. We have not already reached the goal of full partnership, 
but we press on to make it our own, because Jesus Christ has made us his own in the 
mission of the worldwide body of Christ.

22 March 2000


Miao Theology Students Fight Unhealthy Traditions

(ANS) With a population of over seven million, the Miao constitute one of the largest ethnic 
minorities in China, located mostly in the provinces of Yunnan and Guizhou. The numerous sub-
branches of these peoples all have one thing in common: centuries of social and political 
marginalization by the dominant Han culture have resulted in the Miao being pushed further and 

further into poor mountainous regions. The social and economic situation of the Miao thus makes 
them particularly open to the Gospel message. As a result of their location and their acceptance of the 
Christian faith, it is well-known that any altitude in Yunnan above 1100m generally marks the 
begining of Miao Christian culture.

In February's edition of Tian Feng, the magazine of the China Christian Council, 19 Miao theology 
students belonging to the sub-branch of the Flowery Miao published a declaration of determination to 
combat what they see as certain unhealthy trends within Miao society.

**********

We, the Flowery Miao people, live scattered over the mountainous areas of Yunnan 
and Guizhou provinces. Thanks to God's grace, the liberating message of the 
Gospel was spread amongst us in the early part of the 20th century, and the ratio of 
believers among us is comparatively high. One result of accepting the Gospel is that 
the Miao have already abandoned many sinful and uncivilized habits. However, we 
must accept that, in the past, many social diseases were rife among our people. 
Excessive dowry demands for brides were the norm. Sex before marriage was 
common. Many young and middle-aged men used to indulge in heavy drinking. 
Superstitious practices were customary. And, through all these practices, huge 
amounts of money were wasted. This has led to severe economic problems for many 
Miao families and has meant the whole Miao culture has remained backward, 
making us increasingly unhappy. In the light of the love of Jesus Christ, our theology 
class has come together to make the following proposals:
1) Parents should not be allowed to demand excessive dowries for their daughters. The future husband should indeed pay something in recognition of the parents' role in raising his future wife for him, but this should still be well within the husband's means.

2) Unmarried men and women should not engage in licentious sexual behavior. Parents should watch over their children in a responsible way but may not interfere in their children's free choice of spouse. Extra-marital affairs and "quick and easy" divorces should be forbidden.

3) Drinking and smoking should be prohibited for the young and middle-aged men of our people, as they weaken the body, lead to confused thinking and moral decay.

4) People from our ethnic group must remain watchful against any form of superstitious practices of a deceptive nature.

5) We suggest that children from among our people study more in order to raise the general level of education. Adults and married people should be industrious and thrifty in managing their households, should help develop our economy and improve our lives, with the ultimate goal of catching up with more advanced peoples in the 21st century.

In making these proposals for reform, we acknowledge that we have to start with ourselves, as is God's will. And we hope that learned scholars will support and help us in our endeavour.

Signatories: Ethnic Flowery Miao theology students from the classes of 1996-1999
Places Mentioned In This Issue Of ANS

1) Wenzhou (Zhejiang)
2) Foshan (Guangdong)
3) Wuhan (Hubei)
4) Dalian (Liaoning)
5) Urumqi (Xinjiang)
6) Xinde (Jiangsu)
7) Jinan (Shandong)