Dear Reader,

When trying to share the love of God, telling people they're going to hell isn't helpful! Just how are Chinese Christians supposed to spread the Good News to those around them who haven't heard it yet? Shu Xiaozhen offers a few tips on p.2. But then, what happens after people have come to faith? Instead of enjoying "fullness of joy", new Chinese Christians often find themselves burdened down by rules, laws and prohibitions drawn from a very narrow understanding of Scripture and taught within many parts of the Chinese church. Long Zhenquan cautions believers not to give up their "freedoms in Christ" on p.6.

One thing that unites all Christians is the breaking of bread and sharing of the cup, but what does this mean to you? Read a Chinese perspective on p.3. While Holy Communion is something joyful we share, our common experience of pain and suffering in this world is definitely not. This problem of pain has troubled humankind down the ages and has been a challenge to Christian believers who profess a loving and all-powerful God. Zhu Huimin from Guangdong Province offers some helpful insights into this issue on p.4.

Meanwhile, a problem of a very different kind faces those who have benefited from China's recent economic development - how to put newly acquired wealth to good use. In danger of serving both God and mammon? Learn how to put wealth into perspective on p.5.

This issue also carries news from around China, with stories on young people in the church in Luoyang (p.7) and lay training in Shaanxi (p.9). We are also carrying a statement on Taiwan put out by the CCC / TSPM on June 11th (p.11).

With kind regards from the editorial desk,

Katrin Friedel

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A Few Tips On How To Spread The Good News

(ANS) "Full authority in heaven and on earth has been committed to me. Go, therefore, to all nations and make them my disciples." (Matthew 28:18). These were among the last words of Jesus to his disciples before ascending into heaven and apply just as much to us today. The question for Chinese believers is: how do we carry out this "Great Commission" from Jesus in modern-day China? In April’s edition of Tian Feng, the magazine of the China Christian Council, Shu Xiaozhen from Zhejiang Province gives a few pointers.

Shu believes that the first step in spreading the Good News about Jesus is to respect people's self respect. If you tell a virtually unknown person "You’re going to hell," the prospective Christian is likely to say "That’s none of your business." It is essential to meet people where they are and appeal to them through what they know, Shu maintains. The author gives a few practical examples: to a learned person, a believer could say something like, "You have great knowledge and understanding and you’ve read many books, but it is a pity that there is one book you haven’t yet read or understood." This will peak the academic’s curiosity to ask, "Which book?" To a wealthy person, a believer could make contact by saying, "It is an amazing thing that you have all these riches, but you still lack one thing." The rich person will naturally wonder what that thing might be. On the other hand, when interacting with ordinary or less well-off folks, believers could say something like, "People’s lives are brief, people pass away, material things pass away, the only treasure that lasts is Jesus, only Jesus can be relied upon." This may make the person listening want to know how and why Jesus is reliable. To sick people, believers can comfort them with the assurance that their lives are in God’s hands and that Jesus is the hope of this life and the next. The main thing is to take in to account where people are coming from and approach them accordingly. Merely going up to someone and telling them to believe in Christ or they will go to hell is not helpful.

Shu goes on to remind believers that the Gospel message itself is the source of all strength and persuasion when spreading that message. Shu gives the example of Paul whose “success” came from putting the Gospel message before all else, not from his worldly learning or reputation. Whether in prison or in exile, in Rome or in the regions of Asia, Paul put the message of the cross first and only achieved great things in this way. We see how the power of this message was able to move a Roman soldier’s heart, soften the heart of a hardened bandit and even overcome the pride of the Roman Emperor Constantine. Shu cautions readers to rely on the strength of their message and not on their own resources when spreading the Good News. They should also tap the power of the Holy Spirit through prayer for themselves and for others spreading the Good News.

Love is the very essence of God, so love is vital in bringing others to know God. Down through the ages, sinners have turned to saints, prostitutes have become servants of God and robbers and thieves have become ministers of the church. How was all this possible? Because at some point they were touched by God’s love. The whole world thirsts for love and Christians who reflect God’s love will be attractive to those who don’t know God, Shu explains. When non-believers see how believers
care for them and sacrifice time, money, even reputation and material possessions for them then even the hardest heart can be softened and dedicated to God. According to Shu, love is the believer’s strongest weapon against any evil.

Finally, a believer needs a spirit of patience and trust in God when telling others of the Good News. Some believers are impatient and want to see people converted as soon as they have told them about Jesus Christ. They also feel that if they pray for someone today then that person should convert the very next day, at the latest. All this is unrealistic, according to Shu. When Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, they wandered for forty years before being delivered to the promised land. Some non-believers have a lot of soul-searching to do before they can accept God and this takes time. Shu’s advice is to remain faithful in prayer and love for those we have introduced to Jesus, even if we see no tangible outward signs that they have been moved by this in any way. Shu compares this to farmers who plant seeds and then wait patiently for them to show signs of life, trusting that even though they see nothing, something is happening below ground, and that God will yield a rich harvest in the end. God never gives up on anyone, and we should do likewise.

2001.5/6.2

The Meaning Of Holy Communion

(ANS) Holy Communion has occupied a special position in the life and worship of Christian believers down the ages. It is known by many names, celebrated at different times and in different ways, and has varying degrees of significance for different churches around the world. In China, many church congregations celebrate Holy Communion once a month, less if a congregation has no ordained minister and has to wait for one to visit them. In April’s edition of Tian Feng, the magazine of the China Christian Council, Sun Xipei sheds light on the understanding of this sacrament within the Chinese Protestant Church at this present time. Rev. Sun is a Vice President of the China Christian Council, as well as President of the Zhejiang Provincial Christian Council and the Zhejiang Theological Seminary.

The primary function of Holy Communion, according to Rev. Sun, is to remember: remember the Lord’s sacrifice for us on the cross. Even though this sacrifice was huge and the salvation we receive through it is miraculous, God knows our weaknesses and knows that we easily forget. Communion is a way to “revise” and recall what we know of God’s sacrifice and love. This remembering includes thanksgiving, thanking God for what God has done.

Rev. Sun comments that we should not view Holy Communion as a ritual we can perform in order to atone for our sins. He notes that some churches believe that, after they are blessed, the bread and wine become the actual body and blood of Christ and that Christ sacrifices himself once again every time Communion is celebrated. Rev. Sun teaches that this is not the case, that Jesus’ death on the cross was the one and only act of sacrifice necessary for the forgiveness of all sins. He points out that it is this one act which atones for our sins, not any individual celebration of Holy Communion. For Rev. Sun, Holy Communion is a reminder of Jesus’ sacrifice, not a repetition of it.
When Communion is celebrated, Christians proclaim Christ's death. According to Rev. Sun, the bread and wine do not become Christ's actual body and blood after being blessed but they do become symbols of that body and blood. Jesus said, "I am the bread of life." (John 6:35) Therefore, when believers take the bread at Communion, they are proclaiming how they all have a share in the eternal life which comes through Jesus. Similarly, by dying for us, Jesus himself drank from the "cup of wrath" meant for us as sinners and substituted it with the "cup of blessing". Rev. Sun teaches that, when we drink from the "cup of blessing", we are reminded of how we have been spared from drinking from the "cup of wrath" through Christ’s shedding of blood on the cross.

The act of celebrating Holy Communion also symbolizes sharing and unity within the church. Believers who share the bread and the wine are in communion with each other and in communion with God. The one bread and the one cup from which all share is a proclamation of the unity of God's church. Regardless of our rank or title, our position in the world, all God's children are equal in their share of Christ's body and blood. According to Rev. Sun, this equal sharing at Communion is also a reminder to God's church to preserve its unity and not split apart. It is a call to us all to treat others equally and without prejudice.

Finally, Rev. Sun reminds us that Jesus called his blood the "blood of the new covenant". In the Bible we read of many covenants established between God and humans, and each one was sealed with blood. When Jesus died on the cross, His blood sealed a new covenant between creator and created, with Jesus as the guarantor of this covenant. With this new covenant, humankind entered a state of grace, with no further sacrifices or offerings needed to achieve forgiveness and salvation. Rev. Sun believes that each time we celebrate Communion, we are also reaffirming and proclaiming this new covenant between God and humankind.

The Problem Of Pain

(ANS) Many people down the ages have asked the question: why does a loving God allow pain and suffering in the world? This is a question that Chinese believers today are also wrestling with. In May's edition of Tian Feng, the magazine of the China Christian Council, Zhu Huimin from Guangdong Province addresses this problem and offers a few reflections on it.

Zhu believes that all suffering in this world can be traced back to three main causes: one is that the suffering comes from God as a kind of "refining fire", meant to purify us and help us grow. A second cause of suffering is because of direct attacks by Satan. And a third cause is the consequence of our own sinful behavior.

According to Zhu, we have trouble accepting God's "refining fire" because our view and understanding are limited. We don't know the end of the story, but God does. As a result, what we can only see as "evil" God may actually view as good, because God knows the final outcome will be good for us.

As examples, Zhu cites Joseph and David. At one point in his life, Joseph was sold in to slavery and undoubtedly suffered without understanding why. And yet, this led
to him becoming prime minister of Egypt, one of the most powerful posts in the ancient world. He was also able to use this position to save members of his family and many others from starvation. Pain turned into glory. Similarly, David experienced great pain and expressed this pain from the bottom of his heart in the Psalms. Eventually, though, the pain passed and David emerged closer to God than ever and knowing God better than ever before. In a similar way, when Job emerges from his suffering, he says, "Lord, I knew of you then only by report, but now I see you with my own eyes." (Job 42:5).

According to Zhu, we cannot fully understand what "sweetness" feels like until we have tasted bitterness. Zhu believes that, for most people, it is not so much pain itself that we cannot stand but the fact that we don't know how to face it or cope with it. We can only think of today's suffering and cannot look forward to future blessing. Zhu counsels that, when we suffer, we need to look for something in the suffering from which we can draw strength, some way in which the suffering affords us blessings. When God refines us then it hurts, but its purpose is to make us purer, to teach us patience, humility, obedience and reliance.

Zhu concludes that we need to examine the source of our suffering whenever we are in pain. If it comes as a result of our sinful behaviour then we need to pray for forgiveness and repentance. If it is because of Satan's attacks then we need to ask God to defeat the evil one. But if it is God "refining us by fire" then we need to give thanks to God and ask for the strength to endure to the end. If suffering were against God's will and purpose then God would not allow it. Our task, according to Zhu, is to trust that suffering has a purpose and that this purpose is ultimately a good one.

Building Up Treasure That Lasts

(ANS) In this material world we need to accept the fact that we cannot live without money. Especially in these days of China's rapid economic development, many Chinese Christians now find themselves with money to spare. In May's edition of Tian Feng, the magazine of the China Christian Council, He Anping from Jiangxi Province counsels readers on how to make sure their wealth is a blessing to them and not a curse.

He's first piece of advice is to make sure that we do not fall in to the trap of greed, of wanting more when we already have enough. In Luke 12:15, Jesus cautions us, "Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions." Jesus taught that we should avoid ill-gotten gains and wealth that we haven't worked for, and that our peace of mind does not depend on our bank balance. If a person becomes greedy, they will always be unsatisfied. 1 Timothy 6:7-10 teaches us that "The love of money is the root of all evil, and in pursuit of it some have wandered from the faith." In short, He summarizes, the more money we have, the more troubles we will have. As Christians, we need to realize and acknowledge that our peace of mind and our joy are to be found in blessings from God alone and not through wealth.

Once Christians realize that money is not the root of happiness but God's blessings are, they need to then realize that they need to give away their wealth in order to
receive greater wealth, He writes. If we want to be rich then we need to give first; holding on to our money is a sure way to become poor. He Anping reminds us that God will use the same measure towards us as we use toward others. If we give generously and of ourselves then others will respond likewise to us and God will bless us equally. Those who hoard their material wealth and count every penny should not be surprised if God is stingy with blessings towards them too, He explains.

Finally, He encourages believers to take tithing seriously. He quotes from Malachi 3:10, "Bring the whole tithe into the treasury... put me to the proof, says the Lord of Hosts, and see if I do not open windows in the sky and pour a blessing on you as long as there is need." He acknowledges that it is sometimes hard for believers to tithe, especially for poor, rural believers who hardly have enough to eat or wear and are therefore loathe to give one tenth of the little they do possess. He believes that this is a question of trust, that God wants us to "put God to the proof" and watch when God blesses us abundantly in response to our trust. He believes that if we hold on to that one-tenth, it becomes our sorrow; when we let go of it, it comes back to us with an abundance we can hardly imagine.

He concludes by reminding readers that everything in this world is temporary, including wealth. For He, the key is to use the temporary in order to gain eternal, spiritual blessings and riches. In this way, we do not become slaves to our riches but know how to employ them to bring blessings that can last.

Forfeiting Our Freedom in Christ

(ANS) In China the church is growing at a tremendous rate and each year more and more people come to know God. Unfortunately, the teachings that many Christians receive from those responsible for their pastoral care leave them uneasy and uncomfortable instead of enjoying fullness of joy. In May's edition of Tian Feng, the magazine of the China Christian Council, Long Zhenquan from Jiangxi Province warns that old-fashioned, biased interpretations of the Gospel may be turning many believers away from the church.

Long gives an example: when new believers join the church in China, the teachings they are likely to hear most often and above all others are "Do not love the world" and "Do not love money". Evangelists spread this message far and wide, and if any believer is deemed to be too interested in worldly things or material possessions, he or she is immediately labelled "un-spiritual" and looked down upon by other believers.

According to Long, this kind of teaching puts a tremendous burden on ordinary believers as they struggle to go about their daily lives and face real material needs and demands. Furthermore, such teaching makes hypocrites out of evangelists who teach others to shun worldly and material things but who then struggle to deal with these things in their own lives.

Eating and drinking are "worldly" things but vital to sustaining life. Having a place to live is also "worldly", as are things like marriage, children, pursuing a career or
profession. Long asks: are Christians really called to ignore all these things and follow only "pure" spiritual pursuits? When believers are caught between "bread" and "faith", what are they to do?

Long points out that "being worldly" in Scripture refers only to putting worldly and material things before God and before life itself. According to Long, God is merely encouraging us not to get so bogged down or sidetracked by worldly affairs that we neglect God and our spiritual lives. According to Long, working hard and enjoying the material results of our hard work is a blessing from God and should not become a source of shame or guilt. What is more, when God blesses believers with wealth and the believers use that wealth to bless others and bring glory to God, this is approved by God too.

When God sets us free in this way, Long questions why so many within the Chinese church seek to take away such freedoms from believers through their teachings. This is just one example, there are many other areas where we end up restricting or tying up ourselves, where we cut ourselves off from God's grace and freedoms. As a result, many people acknowledge that Christianity is good but end up having little time for the church.

Long believes this is because we cling to narrow understandings of Scripture and refuse to open ourselves to new revelations. According to Long, we need to re-evaluate our theological thinking and stop robbing people of freedoms freely given by God.

2001.5/6.6

A "Beacon Of Hope" In China's Interior: Luoyang's Church Youth Group

(ANS) In ancient times, Luoyang in Henan Province was China's capital during nine dynasties. It has a reputation among Chinese as a self-confident if conservative place. Today it is a curious mixture of the old and the new, with the arrival of tourism and industry having opened the city up to the wider world. While highlighting its links with the ancient past, Luoyang also realizes that its future lies with the next generation. The education level of young people in Luoyang is comparatively high, most having completed senior middle school or above. Luoyang's young people are known to be inquisitive, creative and questioning in their thinking and outlook on life. In May's edition of Tian Feng, the magazine of the China Christian Council, Zhu Qingchun reports on how the church in Luoyang has tried to reach out to these young people and provide them with just the kind of spiritual stimulation they need.

Zhu describes how the church in Luoyang has set up a youth fellowship which has grown rapidly since its inception. Young people attend this fellowship from all walks of life – from local schools, colleges and universities, from factories, and also those working in the service and hospitality industries associated with tourism, as well as migrant laborers from different parts of China.

The key to the success and growth of the Luoyang youth fellowship has been in providing a variety of activities suited to the needs of the young people and attractive to them at the same time, writes Zhu. As well as hymn-singing, worship, Bible study
and prayer, other activities have included compiling a "chalkboard newspaper", staging religious dramatizations and engaging in discussions and debates. Debates are very popular with the young people and are modelled after popular debating shows on television. A recent topic debated by the group was "Lying" and whether it is permissible for a Christian. Before the debates the young people enthusiastically carry out extensive Bible studies in order to find Scriptural justifications for their points of view. Zhu notes that, as a result, the group has very quickly become familiar with Biblical texts.

As well as debates, the youth fellowship publishes its own magazine containing spiritual devotions, book reviews and parables composed entirely by the young people themselves. The publication is circulated internally within the church and is well-received by the rest of the congregation, Zhu notes. Through these many and varied activities, the young people are stimulated while at the same time receiving a good opportunity to explore and express their faith. This is very appealing to the members of the fellowship.

The Luoyang church also seeks to foster a sense of social responsibility among their young people, both within the group and within the wider society around them. During the spring vacation the church organized a bicycle tour along the banks of the Yellow River. 27 members of the youth fellowship participated and they covered 65 kilometres in total, taking in famous landmarks and even visiting the Yellow River Film Studios along the way. The journey was not always smooth but provided many opportunities for the young people to express their love for each other in practical ways. Whenever someone had bicycle trouble another would spring to their aid; if someone fell down, many willing hands pulled them up; if someone felt hungry or thirsty, the whole group would dig in to their rations to offer up their "five loaves and two fish". The group frequently stopped along the way to sing and worship, and the music of the hymns helped the young people forget their fatigue from a long day's cycling, explains Zhu.

Similarly, members of the youth group have participated in community service at the Luoyang train station. With visitors from home and abroad passing daily through Luoyang, the youth fellowship set up a stall at the train station to offer help, advice and light refreshments to travellers. On one occasion, two business travellers were leaving Luoyang and were carrying a heavy load of sample clothes. Their train was already in the station and one of them struggled to get the load on to the train while the other rushed off to buy tickets. The youth fellowship immediately sprang into action to help the first man get the load on to the train. At first the man was startled and thought the young people were trying to trick him or rob him. Only when they showed him their church badges did he finally let them help. Afterwards, the businessmen tried to thank the young people for their help by offering them some money. The young people refused, saying "Thank God instead!" When the businessmen heard this and saw the crosses embroidered on the young people's coats, they replied, "You really are good people!" In this way, the youth fellowship in Luoyang bring glory to God through their practical service to others.

Zhu notes that the Luoyang youth fellowship still has some shortcomings to overcome: time is always short, the turnover of members is high as many young people come and go, and the young people are often immature and inexperienced in
their Christian faith. Nevertheless, the Huyang church believes that the youth fellowship will be able to grow and mature and will continue to be a blessing to both the young people and the congregation of which they are a part.

Tailor-Made Training Fits Shaanxi Lay Church Workers Better

(ANS) The province of Shaanxi, located in the heart of China, is best known for its impressive terracotta warriors in the provincial capital, Xi’an, or the Yan’an caves from where Mao Zedong directed wars against the Kuomintang and the Japanese in the 1940s. The province is huge, bordering on Sichuan to the south and extending all the way up to Inner Mongolia in the north. According to the latest statistics (December 1999), there are 250,000 Protestant Christians worshipping in over 1,300 registered churches in Shaanxi. Unfortunately, there are only 44 ordained pastors, 140 elders, 26 teachers and 445 evangelists available to minister to these believers. A lack of pastoral workers and regular sound teaching has meant that various sects and superstitious practices have managed to extend their influence within many remote churches in rural Shaanxi. In order to better provide for the needs of believers scattered throughout this vast province, the Shaanxi Provincial CC/TSPM committee decided to organize a training program with a difference last year. Nong Pu provides more details in May’s edition of Tian Feng, the magazine of the China Christian Council.

The essence of the program was to provide systematic training organized and supervised from the provincial level but taking place locally and according to the particular circumstances of local grassroots believers, writes Nong Pu. The Shaanxi Provincial Bible School in the capital Xi’an already offers a one-year training program. However, places are limited and it is virtually impossible for believers, mostly poor rural farmers, to leave their fields and families for one year to attend such training. The provincial CC/TSPM committee decided, therefore, to divide up the province into three areas and arrange for simultaneous training to take place in the cities of Hanzhong in the south, Weinan in the middle and Tongchuan in the north of the province. This would also cut down on travel expenses for the participants. The training took place between October and December last year, a time of year when farmers are usually less busy with their crops, Nong Pu notes.

150 believers were enrolled in the training program throughout the province. The provincial CC/TSPM committee provided the syllabus and curriculum for the program, drew up the timetable and appointed teachers for each place. Two or three teachers were assigned to each location, with other teachers drafted in for one or two sessions during the program according to need and subject matter. Teachers were usually selected from the local area so that they could better relate their material to the actual conditions faced by local believers and, more importantly, so that they could teach students directly in their local dialects, thus eliminating language barriers. Nong Pu explains that a side-effect of choosing local teachers was to establish a bond between church pastoral workers and the 150 future lay workers.

Running such an ambitious province-wide training program was no mean feat for the Shaanxi Provincial CC/TSPM committee, Nong Pu continues. The church in Shaanxi
is not rich and resources are scarce. It is difficult for the Shaanxi church to even manage its day-to-day affairs, let alone take on any big new project. Thankfully, outside groups were more than willing to lend a hand: The national CCC/TSPM committee assisted with providing desks, chairs, beds, basic provisions and study materials. They also provided subsidies to students from exceptionally poor backgrounds. The participating churches themselves did what they could too. For example, the church in Tongchuan didn’t have much space but wanted to make sure students wouldn’t have to take their meals in the open air, so they erected a tent which acted as a dining hall. Meanwhile, provincial religious affairs departments also lent a hand. When officials in Hanzhong noticed that the weather had turned cold during the training program, they arranged for heaters to be installed in the students dorms. With such outside assistance, the program got off to a good start.

The key to the success of the program, however, lay in the quality of the teaching, writes Nong Pu. Six months before the training programs began, the Shaanxi CC/TSPM committee arranged a training class on building theological thinking for all the teachers who would later teach in the programs. Rev. Zhao Zhi’en, a professor from Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, was specially invited to run this pre-training class. During the actual training programs in the three different locations, teachers focussed on how the church can best take Bible truths and adapt them to modern times and circumstances. Religious affairs officials were also invited to give briefings on current religious policy and laws. Participants were also given classes in basic writing skills in order to improve their literacy. To underline the importance of the training programs, elderly Pastor Wang Huaiiren, Chairman of the Shaanxi Provincial CC/TSPM committee, travelled long distances back and forth between each of the three training sites during the program.

In recent years, churches in Shaanxi have fallen victim to the influence of sects such as the “Disciples” and the “Eastern Lightening” (see ANS 99.5/6.4, ANS 97.12.3). These sects teach that Jesus has come again for a second time, that believers should give up their work, their families, their homes and their study. The sects spread their own versions of the gospel and cause considerable distress within affected congregations. Meanwhile, even in churches unaffected by sects, superstitious practices abound: some congregations spend most of their time chasing miracles and faith healings, driving out demons or speaking in tongues. Others use the Bible as some kind of magic charm with which they can exorcise evil spirits. In such congregations learning, logic and reasoning are largely ignored.

Nong Pu concludes that the recent province-wide training program went a long way toward tackling such problems. After graduating last December, 150 newly trained lay-workers solidly grounded in Biblical truths and sound theological thinking were sent out to all areas of the province, equipped to tackle such obstacles as those described above. Shaanxi Christians now have new reason to believe that the future development of their church will be somewhat more secure.
Statement on the Taiwan Issue
by
The National Committee of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement
of the Protestant Churches in China
and
The China Christian Council

June 11th, 2001

Since ancient times, Taiwan has been a territory in which God has graciously endowed all China’s nationalities in their quest for peaceful and meaningful lives. Taiwan is an inalienable part of China. We are grateful for and cherish this gift bestowed by God.

Evidence which supports Taiwan's being an integral part of China includes archeological findings, shared cultural backgrounds on both sides of the Straits, Taiwan-related historical archives and international law.

Japan forcibly occupied Taiwan for fifty years [1895-1945] following the war of aggression against China [1894-95]. The December 1943 Cairo Declaration issued by the Chinese, United States and British governments stipulated that Japan return to China all the territories it had stolen from the Chinese, including Northeast China, Taiwan and the Penghu Archipelago. The 1945 Potsdam Declaration signed by China, the United States and Britain [later endorsed by the Soviet Union] stipulated "The terms of the Cairo Declaration shall be carried out." In August the same year, in its instrument of surrender to the Allied Forces, Japan promised it would faithfully fulfill the obligations laid down in the Potsdam Declaration. On October 25, 1945 the Chinese government regained sovereignty over the areas of Taiwan and the Penghu Archipelago.

Historically Taiwan has never been a separate country. There is only one China in the world and Taiwan is part of it. The government of the People's Republic of China is the sole legitimate government representing the whole country. The "One China" principle is universally accepted by the world community today. The United Nations, as well as more than 160 countries which have established diplomatic relations with China, continue to abide by this principle and pledge that their relationship with Taiwan will be handled within the framework of the "One China" principle.

In the 1972 Sino-U.S. Shanghai Joint Communiqué, the 1978 Sino-US Joint Communiqué on Establishing Bilateral Diplomatic Relations and the Communiqué of August 17, 1982, the United States agreed that the People's Republic of China is the sole legitimate government representing the whole of China, and that Taiwan is a part of China. During his 1998 visit to China, President Bill Clinton explicitly pledged the U.S. government would support a "Three-No" policy towards Taiwan: No Taiwan independence; No "Two China" policy or "One China, One Taiwan;" and No Taiwan membership in any organizations where statehood is required.
"Let your word be 'Yes, Yes' or 'No, No'; anything more than this comes from the evil one" (Matthew 5: 37). Respecting facts is the least any honest human person should do; conversely, twisting facts is a profanity to the testimony God gave to people through history. We strongly oppose words and actions that in any way seek to divide China. We strongly oppose any propaganda and action supporting "Taiwan independence," the creation of "Two Chinas" and "One China and One Taiwan." We support all efforts to peacefully reunite the two sides of the Taiwan Straits and pray reunification will come soon.

The Taiwan issue is an internal Chinese matter and must be resolved by the Chinese people ourselves. We oppose any kind of involvement and interference by foreign forces.

We staunchly believe the reunification of the motherland is the common wish of the Chinese people. We hereby admonish any and all groups or individuals seeking to separate our motherland and conspiring to create "Two Chinas" or "One China, One Taiwan." They must not attempt to turn back the clock and think they can ever slow the peaceful process of reunification of the motherland. If they insist on their own way, they will be condemned by history and by our nation.

We call upon Chinese church friends abroad to respect historical facts and the feelings of Chinese Christians and the Chinese people: support the Chinese people's endeavors to peacefully reunite our motherland.

We witnessed with great joy the peaceful return of Hong Kong and Macao based on the principle of "One country, Two systems." These peaceful transitions testify to the fact that different political systems and ways of life can co-exist within the same country. We sincerely hope that peaceful reunification can soon take place between the two sides of the Taiwan Straits following the model of "One country, Two systems."

How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity! (Psalm 133:1)
Corrigenda:

In ANS 2001.3/4.10, "Church Administration," we mistakenly reported that the meeting of Ningxia Autonomous Region's church representatives was "presided over by Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB) representatives." The passage should read: "The ceremony, held on 29th and 30th December 2000, was attended by 57 church representatives from throughout the province. Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB) officials from municipal and county levels attended the meeting as observers." We apologize for the mistake. -- The Editors

NEWSBRIEFS

Publishing work: On March 20 and 21 of this year, the CC/TSPM committee of Hubei Province held a conference on publishing work in Wuhan. Bible distribution and government regulations regarding religious books, objects and artwork were among the conference topics studied. Participants also exchanged experiences in the field of publishing and discussed how to serve believers at the grassroots.

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Social service: On March 1, 2001, the church in Zigong City formally opened an old people's home, Sichuan's first church-run institution for the elderly. Six elderly Christians have already moved into the "Home of Benevolence and Love," which offers space for twenty inhabitants. The home not only caters for the elderly's physical needs, but also offers times for common worship and reflection. In the moderately priced institution, where service is based on the ideas of "benevolence" and "love", inhabitants immediately feel at home.