Dear Reader,

How free is the church in China? For many outside observers, this is one of the most puzzling questions in their quest to understand Chinese church life. For Chinese Christians themselves, the relationship between church and government can take on a more practical notion as they try to make a contribution to socialist society. Besides, any religious life in China depends on the correct implementation of religious policy. What do Chinese church leaders say about the relationship between church and state in a socialist society? On p3, we take a look at K.H. Ting’s discussion on religion under socialism. Deng Fucun, Vice-Chair of the TSPM, offers another view in an extensive interview focusing on the current church situation. For our summary, turn to p2.

Closely linked to the question of religion under socialism is the ongoing movement for building theology, as one of its aims is to “adapt Protestant Christianity to life in socialist China.” Probably even more important than the adaptation to socialism, though, is the creation of a theology suitable for contemporary China. On p5, Xun Yufeng from Henan Province discusses elements of China’s national culture which could enrich a Chinese interpretation of the Gospel. A more practical view is taken by Christian artist Fan Pu, as she reflects on ways of inspiring the traditional Chinese art of paper-cutting with a new Christian spirit (p6).

These are just a few highlights of this issue, which also carries news and views on social work, women’s perspectives on marriage and more... Discover for yourself.

With kind regards from the editorial desk,

Katrin Friedler

Nanjing Amity Christian Arts Center has moved into new premises:
Amity Christian Arts Center, 16 Da Jian Yin Xiang, 210029 Nanjing, CHINA
Tel: 86-25-4726 478; 86-25-4715 954
Fax: 86-25-4726 478; 86-25-4716 254
e-mail: agroup@public1.ptt.js.cn
web site: http://www.acac.org.cn

The center’s arts products include tapestries, wood carvings, paper cuts, vases, batik, calligraphy, paintings and other gifts. Wholesale, retail and mail-order are welcomed.
Customers at home and abroad are welcome to do business with the center.
How Free Is The Chinese Church? An Interview With Deng Fucun

(ANS) "The Chinese church is a very Bible-oriented church." For Deng Fucun, Vice-Chair of the TSPM, this is one of the main characteristics describing Chinese church life today. In an interview from June's edition of Tian Feng, Deng offers a variety of insights into the current church situation. As author Wang Rongwei explains in an introduction, the idea of the interview was born when letters from readers kept pouring into the Tian Feng offices some time ago. These readers were demanding a Chinese Christian response to US allegations about violations of human rights and religious freedom in China.

In China, there are now 16,000 churches and 32,000 meeting points functioning, Deng starts his outline on the situation of the Chinese Protestant church. This clearly shows that in China, religious freedom is not only guaranteed by law, but is also implemented. Problems do exist, Deng admits, likening the situation to China's economic development: Just as China's economic development does not reach all corners of this huge country at the same time and with the same speed, the implementation of religious policy varies regionally.

In spite of this overall progress, every year the United States brings China's case before the UN Commission on Human Rights. This behavior distorts the truth, underlines Christianity's image as a foreign religion in China, and leads to political confrontation, Deng writes. Thus, the commission striving for religious freedom may become a commission which interferes with religious freedom, the church leader warns. While Chinese Christians do believe that all power belongs to God, they do not believe that God has given any nation the power to play the "police" over other countries' religious freedom.

What is the relationship between the Chinese government and the church? Deng characterizes this relationship with a word going back to Jiang Zemin: "Cooperation in politics, respect in religious matters." As Deng explains, this means that the Chinese church supports government policies and observes laws and regulations, while the government respects the church (as well as other religious communities) in religious matters. "Politics take care of the nation, of common national issues, while religion is a private thing," Deng explains the reasoning behind this.

In September 2000, the Chinese Protestant church also celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the Three Self Patriotic Movement, Deng reminds his audience. The TSPM has achieved independence for the Chinese church, has liberated it from foreign domination and thus laid the psychological groundwork for spreading the Gospel in China. Deng continues to demand a correct judgement of the missionaries and their historical role. "In the 1950s, the TSPM condemned all foreign missionaries as 'imperialists.' This was unjust." On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary, the church leadership also published a lengthy document and an open letter to all believers throughout China. Deng expresses the wish stated in this letter to establish ties with those Christian groups still unrelated to the CCC, and reiterates the CCC's willingness to provide services to those churches outside of formal church structures.
The Chinese Protestant church is a church which deeply respects the Bible and teaches believers to act accordingly, Deng notes. It also is a strongly evangelical church, though ways of evangelizing may differ from those in the West. The Chinese church's commitment to independence does not mean it is a church closed to the outside world. "We want to relate to the church ecumenical on the basis of equality and on the principles of openness, legality and sincerity," Deng states, mentioning that in the past ten years the church has participated in more than 40 projects of cooperation.

Deng closes the interview with some remarks on problems currently troubling the Chinese church. The rapid growth of believers has not been matched by an equal increase in pastors, leaving much of the pastoral work in the hands of volunteers with little theological training. This exposes many congregations to the dangers of heretical teachings.

A development closely linked to the lack of pastors is the strong influence of folk religions among some rural believers. This influence not only creates a hotbed for heretical teachings, but also brings some Christians close to superstitious practices. For outsiders, Christianity may appear hardly distinguishable from other traditional religions. Deng sees this as an obstacle to successful evangelization. [Editor's Note: Church leaders' concern with Christianity bordering on superstition is not only a matter of theological purity. In China, superstition is illegal, whereas "normal" religious activities enjoy legal protection.]

Apart from the insufficient number of theological graduates, the quality of theological education provided in China today remains a problem. As Deng explains, important theological developments which have taken place in the church ecumenical after the 1950s still have no reception in China. This leaves many pastors and pastoral workers unable to fulfill the increasing spiritual demands of well-educated believers. To build a theology adapted both to believers' expectations and the church's socialist environment is therefore a primordial task for the Protestant church right now.

Another problem afflicting the Chinese church today are the missionary efforts undertaken by some foreign churches. According to Deng Fucun, these ventures create chaos and disruption within the church, harm the church's image in society and ultimately hamper its work of spreading the Gospel.

2001.7/8.2

A Look At K.H. Ting's Discussion On Religion Under Socialism

(ANS) How can religion freely exist in a socialist society? This is a question frequently asked by foreign China watchers. Chinese scholars and theologians have provided different answers to that question. The following article by Professor Liu Huajun offers a summary of K.H. Ting's thinking on the problem. Liu contributed his article to July's issue of Tian Feng, the magazine of the China Christian Council.
China's religious circles have made important contributions regarding the problem of religion under socialism, author Liu Huajun introduces his topic. Quoting extensively from K.H. Ting's "Love Never Ends," Liu looks at the bishop's view of the relationship between religion and socialist society.

All religious communities in China have eradicated outdated thinking from their teachings and have made efforts to unify their believers on the road to socialism. These efforts are also aimed at supporting China's modernization, K.H. Ting sums up some of the developments of the past decades in "Love Never Ends." From the government's side, the abolishment of the phrase "religion is opiate of the people" marked an important step forward towards an objective judgement of religion, Ting reminds his readers referring to the famous "Document No.19" which was issued in 1982.

"Today, we ought to look at the side of religion which makes people do good," Ting is quoted, adding that this is a side of religion which also has a positive function on social stability and economic growth.

It is this emphasis on religion as a positive social force which is central to K.H. Ting's understanding of religion in a socialist society, Liu Huajun points out. He then writes in more detail about the idea of "religion as opiate of the people" in Ting's writings.

Going back to the idea of religion as "opiate of the people," Ting underlines that contrary to popular opinion, this idea did not originate with Karl Marx. Rather, Marx only captured the spirit of his times, coining in a handy phrase an idea other philosophers had voiced before him. To see "religion is opiate of the people" as the original product of Marxist philosophy of religion is not only a common misunderstanding, but also inappropriately reduces it to an outdated view. Religion must not always play an appeasing, tranquilizing function like the one described by Marx for class society, Ting points out. The examples of the German peasants' war or the Chinese Taiping Rebellion show that religion can also wake people up. The functions of religion in contemporary society are multi-faceted, Ting is quoted.

Liu then introduces the problem of atheism in K.H. Ting's thinking. Many Western Christians believe that as a proponent of atheism, the Chinese Communist Party must certainly suppress and destroy religion. While such an extremist stance is not necessarily taken in China, the problem of how to confront atheists does exist for Christian churches, Liu explains.

Liu then gives K.H. Ting's analysis of the different types of atheists that exist. According to Ting, the first kind of atheists are egoistic and self-centered persons. They are unscrupulous atheists, and God will not forgive them their wrongdoings. The second group of atheists in Ting's classification are "sincere atheists." They respect the idea of God from a nihilist point of view: "We cannot know whether God exists or not." In Bishop Ting's eyes, this approach is more understandable. The last group of atheists are social reformers and revolutionaries of atheist background. Their atheism has a humanist touch and emphasizes human responsibility for our fate. Towards this last type of person, one cannot but be thankful and full of friendly feelings, K.H. Ting is convinced, and underlines: "God also works through these
atheists who denounce God's name as hollow." There is no reason for Christians to see themselves as morally superior to these people just because they are atheists. On the contrary, we ought to thank them for their contributions towards a just society, Liu quotes Ting.

Some people will critically ask: But how can Christians make these atheists their companions? In his affirmative answer, K.H. Ting points out that throughout history, Christians have cooperated with non-believers, so why should they make an exception today? According to his experience, revolutionaries will try to implement a policy of religious freedom for the sake of unity among all social groups involved in building new China.

As K.H. Ting emphasizes, not only Christianity and socialism call on their believers to do good. In China, one of the strongest "social religions" is the cult surrounding Mazu, the goddess venerated along the Fujianese and Taiwanese coasts. In over a thousand years, this cult has not produced a theology or a clergy. Its most significant characteristic is the emphasis on ethics and morals, on how to be a good person.

Ting writes: "God cares about morals. Our God has such a wide and loving heart, God cannot possibly condemn these people to hell just because they don't believe in the Christian God." Both Christianity and Chinese culture are deeply intertwined with moral ideas. Today, ethics and morals play an increasingly important role in inner church debates, Ting states, adding that this an important step forward.

**Rooting The Gospel in China**

(ANS) Since 1998, a discussion on how to build a genuinely Chinese theology adapted to life in socialist China has been going on in the church. In the following article, Xun Yufeng from Henan Province reflects on the role traditional culture can and must play in this process. A successful building of theology must incorporate elements of China's national culture, Xun argues in her article from June's issue of Tian Feng.

If the ongoing construction of theology is to be successful, it must seek inspiration from China's national culture, Xun starts her article. As she explains, the "Chineseness" of the new theology to be created will serve as a mark for a truly independent Chinese church. Such an indigenization of theology is achieved through drawing from the national culture. Xun then continues to enumerate some of the traditional values in Chinese culture which might play a role in building Chinese theology.

One point of reference for both Christianity and traditional Chinese culture is the ideal of filial piety. Emphasis on this virtue will raise the image of Christian religion among ordinary Chinese and may enhance Christian's pride of their own culture, Xun suggests.

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Another important tradition in China is the idea of benevolent government. Throughout Chinese history, rule by force has been looked down upon. Military matters were traditionally disregarded in China. This explains why Christianity had such a difficult stand in China when it entered the country with imperialist forces in the 19th century, Xun explains.

China has already successfully absorbed parts of other cultures like Islam and Buddhism, Xun points out. Syncretism is a typically Chinese way of reacting to foreign cultures. Similarly, Christianity can only be successful in China if it incorporates elements of Chinese tradition in the process of building theology. In their striving for truth, their conservative power and their ability to fuse with other cultures, Christianity and traditional Chinese culture are alike, the author maintains. Both Christianity and traditional Chinese culture share a deep concern for ethics and the ideal of universal love.

"The excellence of the Chinese people is a fertile soil for building theology," Xun concludes from these comparisons, and invites Chinese theologians to start using a uniquely Eastern way of reflecting on God. All cultures are equivalent before Jesus Christ, but they have different ways of viewing him. Different cultures and languages provide a unique background which shapes people’s perceptions of Christ. If the Chinese tried to see God through the eyes of foreign cultures by emulating their theologies, this could easily alienate them from God, Xun warns.

A first example of indigenization can already be found in the New Testament, the author continues. As she points out, Paul’s letters were not only written in Greek, but clearly reveal a Greek way of thinking which constitutes a first inculturation of the Gospel.

If the Chinese Protestant church manages to create a theology which draws on traditional culture, the Chinese church will have taken one more step forward towards an adaptation to socialist culture, an implementation of the Three Self, and a rich testimony of the Gospel, Xun concludes.

2001.7/8.4

New Wine In Old Bottles: Filling Traditional Paper Cuts With Christian Spirit

(ANS) The use of traditional Chinese arts to spread the Gospel is still a novelty for many Chinese Christians. One of the most fervent supporters of Christian art with a distinct Chinese flavor is Fan Pu, one of China’s best-known Christian artists. Fan is director of the Amity Christian Art Center in Nanjing and specializes in traditional Chinese paper cuts. In a contribution to July’s edition of Tian Feng, she reflects on the role paper cuts can play in spreading the Good News.

Folk art and religion are of mutual influence, artist Fan Pu starts her article. All early manifestations of Chinese art had religious functions and became an important part of religious ceremonies. Later on, different forms of art developed following the changes in Chinese society. Among them, one traditional art form with over 2000 years of history is paper cuts. In their succinct, fresh and sincere language, paper cuts have expressed people’s wishes throughout the centuries: their hopes for luck and prosperity, their prayers for protection and other religious contents.

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In comparison with Chinese folk religions and Buddhism, Christianity is a rather new religion in China, and it has not yet merged with traditional Chinese culture. Accordingly, Christian contents are seldom represented among paper cuts and other traditional Chinese arts, Fan Pu laments.

In fact, paper cuts are very apt to transmit the Christian message, the artist points out. They use an artistic language which is familiar to all Chinese and appeals to their aesthetic sense. What is more, paper cuts are easily copied and tend to become part of local cultures. They play an important role as tools of cultural exchange between different Chinese regions.

For the Christian artist, paper cutting's deep roots in Chinese folk tradition are both a chance and a challenge, Fan Pu continues. While their affordability and popular appeal seem to make them ideal tools for spreading the Gospel, their traditional linkage with folk religion makes them suspicious in the eyes of many Christians. They remember New Year's decorations with gold fish for prosperity and other folk religious contents and discard paper cuts as an art form suitable for Christians.

It is true that through the centuries, paper cuts - and in particular New Year couplets - were directed at folk religious deities, Fan Pu acknowledges. However, this does not mean that Christians must give up paper cuts as an art form. Rather, they must seek to fill this age-old form with new content. Some Christian artists have already successfully adapted paper cuts to the Christian message. Similarly, New Year couplets can be designed to match Christian ideas, Fan Pu is convinced.

The art of paper cutting is an instrument bestowed to us by God, Fan Pu closes her reflections. It is one language among many to speak of Christ, and it is to be hoped that in the future, many artists will bring this traditional art form to new life with Christian content.

Fan Pu:

Talking About Being Reborn
Make Your Husband The Head Of Your Relationship!

(ANS) How does the Chinese church view women and their role in church and society? Recent Tian Feng issues present a mixed picture. While some articles emphasize the image of the "strong woman" as the new torchbearer for the Chinese Protestant church (see, e.g., ANS 2000.3/4.3), there are also more conservative voices to be heard. The following piece - based on contributions to Tian Feng from two American Chinese women - offers some insight into this second stream of thinking.

Men and women were created in God's image, Huang Guoliang introduces her topic. In God's eyes, they are equally precious, though the roles assigned to them are different. When the Bible says man is the head of woman, this does not imply that men are superior to women. Rather, the functions men and women play in everyday life are not the same, Huang maintains.

She then recounts the story of a very capable woman, a delightful person and devoted daughter-in-law. Soon after she married, her husband started having affairs with other women. How could this happen, asks Huang. In her opinion, the husband missed one essential thing in the relationship with his wife: the feeling of being "in charge", a feeling of success and the ensuing self-respect. The wife analyzed, judged, and decided everything. "Let this woman trade her intelligence for some wisdom," Huang advises, "and give her husband the self-respect he needs."

The second piece comes from Chen Meifeng, an American Chinese who introduces herself as a longtime Christian who was influenced by Christian teachings on marriage "to my best," as she affirms. The principle of letting her husband decide, of making him the "head" in many issues only brought her happiness, Chen tells Tian Feng readers. Chen describes herself as dependent in her feelings and easily unbalanced by outside pressures. Another weakness she acknowledges is her lack of consistence in matters of children's education. Her husband, on the other hand, is stronger on principles. To make him take important decisions thus serves as a protection for herself, Chen says.

However, she has learned from experience that such an obedient frame of mind is not easily acquired. It is one thing to know obedience as a biblical teaching, but it is much harder to learn and achieve it, Chen writes. She particularly remembers the issue of unannounced guests her husband used to bring for dinner, a situation which regularly would make her anxious and angry. Still, she would obey and not get angry, but they discussed the problem later. "I also learned something from this, and this is to never let the fridge go empty." Another issue where she found it initially difficult to be obedient were her husband's and her different shopping habits. While she was used to going for cheaper items, her husband would select and spend more generously. Today, she says: "It is not worth it to hurt the feelings between a couple just for a couple of dollars" - and obeys.
From Bible Brother (Or Sister) To All-Round Evangelist

(ANS) With an average of one pastor for 7,000 believers, the Chinese Protestant church relies heavily on non-ordained personnel for the running of her congregations. Lay workers and evangelists shoulder a large part of everyday work. The training they receive varies enormously, ranging from week-long training sessions for lay workers to several months or years of education for evangelists. In the following article taken from June's edition of Tian Feng, Shi Chengzhong criticizes the purely Bible-oriented training many Chinese evangelists receive.

Many Chinese evangelists have only received a narrow education focused solely on biblical contents, Shi Chengzhong from Jiangsu Province writes. What is more, they are not even interested in acquiring additional knowledge, saying that other scholarly knowledge is unrelated to people's ultimate fate.

In fact, all human knowledge stems from God, not only the contents related to the Bible, Shi reminds his readers. And a broad general education can help us explain some of the Bible passages harder to interpret, he argues. Besides, an increasing number of well-educated believers flock into the churches, believers who demand well-educated evangelists. Their demand is justified and in accordance with biblical teachings, Shi points out, mentioning Paul's extensive knowledge. It is this knowledge which makes Paul's letters rich both in spirituality and knowledge.

Narrow training programs focusing exclusively on the Bible are no longer in line with the demands of a modern church, Shi writes. In a modern, pluralistic society, the church faces numerous challenges in the intellectual arena. For individual believers, but also the church as a whole, well-trained evangelists become essential. The author mentions philosophy, geography, medicine and astronomy as possible areas of interest for such well-trained church workers.

In the 1980s, it was enough to possess a spirit of self-sacrifice to become a church-worker, Shi recounts. In the 1990s, evangelists had to have biblical knowledge and some basic management skills. Today, at the brink of the 21st century, the church needs all-round evangelists who will have broad general education plus the abovementioned skills and commitment.

Bridging The Generation Gap

(ANS) A fifty-year age gap between young seminary graduates and their superiors is nothing unusual in China. Due to the break in theological training before and during the Cultural Revolution, a whole generation of pastors is missing. Today, elderly pastors shaped by a lifelong struggle for their faith and young people of China's reform age find themselves working side by side. In June's edition of Tian Feng, Hong Tiancou offers some advice on how to deal with the problems arising from this unique situation.
In these times of a great dearth of well-trained pastoral workers, seminary graduates bring new life into Chinese congregations. They are the church's hope, Hong points out. However, too often conflicts arise between the newly arrived pastoral workers and their older superiors, making cooperation difficult and ultimately harming the church.

What can be done to improve such a situation? Hong calls on older church workers to give their young co-workers plenty of chances to grow spiritually and in their practical work. While it is true that young graduates lack experience in pastoral care, many of them strongly feel this shortcoming themselves. Hong remembers one young church worker recounting how much he feared starting pastoral work after graduation. Later on, the young person found out that with guidance through the Holy Spirit, all problems could be solved.

Many of the older generation pastors and church workers not only find their young co-workers inexperienced, but also spiritually weak and immature. Here, Hong underlines the positive role older church workers can play in providing spiritual care and guidance for their young colleagues. The quintessential virtue the older church workers need to support their young co-workers with, is brotherly love. Just like the apostle Paul guided Timothy with a loving heart, older church workers must care for their younger counterparts and provide them with plenty of opportunities to gain experiences.

"They fish for three days and dry their nets for two," many church workers of the older generation lament, a lack of perseverance among the young generation. But how, asks Hong, could they possibly have hardened in the same way as the older generation did? They did not experience the same sorts of hardships many of their older colleagues went through.

As for young church workers, Hong sees the biggest problem is their lack of modesty. All humans have different abilities bestowed upon them by God, Hong says, adding that this is also true for young church workers. Some young seminary graduates come to overestimate themselves. Thinking they are perfect, they overlook the graceful aspect of their abilities and forget to be grateful and modest. Hong sees the acceptance of their own shortcomings as an important prerequisite for a successful cooperation with the superiors who are supposed to guide them.

Reflection and prayer will help young church workers recognize their abilities and faults. United in love for Christ and one another, young and old church workers can overcome any problems emerging in their cooperation, Hong is convinced.

2001.7/8.8

A Visit To Shanghai Orphanage

(ANS) When foreign journalists secretly taped material in Chinese orphanages and presented their findings to the outside world in 1996, observers were dismayed at the dire situation in some Chinese "Children's Welfare Institutions." With the help of the government and independent organizations, the situation in Chinese orphanages has vastly improved since. Increasing affluence and a heightened social awareness
also inspire more and more Christians to help children in need. In June's edition of Tian Feng, a writer going under the name of "Pure Heart" describes a visit to the once ill-famed Shanghai Orphanage.

Thirty-six members of Shanghai's Pure Heart Church paid a visit to the Shanghai Orphanage in February of this year. While believers are quite poor themselves, on this occasion they managed to collect a number of donations, including a large sum of money from an overseas relative of one believer. Children's music, spring wear and summer clothing were among the gifts the group presented to the orphanage staff.

Shanghai Social Welfare Institute, as the Chinese name goes, is home to more than a thousand physically or mentally challenging children. Only a small number of children are in foster care (a rather new concept in China), with the majority of the children living on site. Today, the orphanage boasts excellent equipment. A rehabilitation center, a computer room and a library are part of the facilities which help promote the children's physical and mental development.

Most importantly, staff at the orphanage are extremely committed. With endless patience, doctors, nurses and teachers at the orphanage teach the children basic life skills and are rewarded with shiny eyes and a chorus of "Mamal" calls. The staff members' devotion to the children - 'their' children, left the visiting group deeply touched and impressed.

"... Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me!" (Mt 25:40). As children of God, we ought to show our love to those children disadvantaged and without a family, members of Pure Heart Church had said to themselves before this visit. In an editorial note, Tian Feng editors add that similar social activities are becoming increasingly common among China's Christians: "This is a form of testimony which God likes and which we strongly praise too."

ANS Feature:

**Building Body And Mind: The YMCA/ YWCA Movement in Shanghai**

Ever since its inception in the 1840s and 50s, the YMCA/YWCA [Y] movement has been closely linked with transforming societies and their needs for social services. This is also true for China, where the Y goes back to missionary activity in the early 20th century. After a forced break during the Cultural Revolution, China's YMCA/YWCAs are now alive and active again. Katrin Fiedler reports from a visit to Shanghai.

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In China's countryside, bodybuilding has not yet become fashionable - peasants build their bodies through daily hard work. In the urban setting of Shanghai, though, more and more professionals feel the need to keep fit through regular visits to the gym.

This is the Hua Ai Bodybuilding Club, a gym run in cooperation between a private investor and the Shanghai YMCA. On this gray December afternoon, there are already a number of lightly dressed women and men in colorful sports clothes sweating on, in and under machines.

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China's YMCA/YWCA movement has come a long way, but the principles underlying the Y's work remain the same: "Not to be served, but to serve" is the general motto of the YMCA movement," Ms. Jin Wei, acting national general secretary of China's YMCA's, explains. "Here in Shanghai, we complement it with the idea of "Serve society. Benefit the people." And the ideal of a holistic development of body, mind and spirit has always been a fundamental principle for Chinese Ys just like for their foreign counterparts.

In the beginning, there was also a fitness center. In November 1907, seven years after the inauguration of China's first YMCA in Shanghai, China's first fitness center was opened in the city - run by the Shanghai Young Men's Christian Association. Other services during the following decades included literacy classes for women, letter writing courses for workers, and various kinds of physical activities. During the wartime years, sheltering of refugees and other patriotic activities were part of the Y's program.

After the founding of the People's Republic, the YMCA participated in the Three Self Patriotic Movement. Again, physical education continued to be an important part of its program, along with cultural activities like music classes. From 1956 to 1979, YMCA services in China were suspended.

Since its reactivation in 1980, the Y's development has mirrored China's ongoing changes in a close way. Traditional areas of work like the Yu Guang Fellowship, musical education and youth activities are now complemented by vocational and educational training, environmental programs, social services and the abovementioned wellness club. "Apart from our services within Shanghai municipality, we also have developmental and environmental projects in the countryside," Jin Wei's assistant Cai Jingrui explains. "One of our most successful projects was a youth program aimed at raising young people's awareness for refuse and recycling issues." And he continues: "These social service programs are also a sign of the indigenization of our work. In the early beginnings of the Chinese YMCA and YWCA work, many of our programs only reached the privileged strata of society. For example, women who already had some basic education. Today, we reach out to those deprived of opportunities, like in our retraining program for laid-off women workers."

In Shanghai, community outreach through social service programs comprises a variety of activities. The YMCA runs a home and a leisure center for the elderly, a community service center at Fudan University and a re-employment service center. Probably the most unusual service is an emergency hotline for household problems, a program linked to the Luoshan Home for the Elderly. Fees for social service programs are generally low. "It is one of our principles not to exclude people from social programs for financial reasons," Jin Wei explains. Then where does the money for this host of activities come from? The Y's finances are supplied by different sources: membership fees, donations, income from property (like the YMCA Hotel in Shanghai), and government support for projects that are run in cooperation with government agencies. "Of course, we need a good relationship with the government. But the government in no way determines our direction of development," Jin Wei points out. The strong and active commitment of numerous volunteers, a traditional strength of YMCA work, is another important capital for the Y and helps keep costs down.

Outside observers may be surprised about the existence of the Y with its distinct Christian flavor and strong international links in today's China. How important is the "C", the Christian aspect in the work of the YMCA and YWCA? "This is a point we often discuss," Jin Wei admits. Openly religious work is only allowed in registered church premises. Accordingly, it is not possible for the Ys to proselytize directly. But, as Jin Wei underlines, this is not important. "It is the spirit that is the most important thing of our work, the attitude with which we do things. We work in the name of Jesus Christ, we understand our work as a form of witness. And this is something we can very well explain to people if they ask."

Asked about the tasks lying ahead of the YMCA, Jin Wei clearly outlines four: leadership development, strategic planning, networking and capacity building. As I watch her pushing her assistant forward during our conversation in a very un-Chinese manner, it becomes clear how committed she personally is to these goals. Jin Wei herself comes from an educational background. As a Cultural Revolution youth, she never managed to put her childhood dream of becoming a doctor into practice. Instead, she became an educator.
Spy Plane Incident: In July's issue of Tian Feng, editors report having received a number of angry letters from Christians criticizing the American position regarding the "spy plane incident." A letter from churches in Henan is quoted in some detail. "We resolutely oppose American hegemonism and power politics," the writer cites some of his fellow Christians during their discussions. "In America, people believe in God. Why don't they act according to God's teachings? To invade a foreign country can hardly be God's will." For the letter writer himself, the spy plane incident is reminiscent of the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Yugoslavia two years ago, which in China was widely regarded as a deliberate act of aggression. "Are these the human rights Americans proclaim all over the world?" he asks.

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Theological education: Two American theologians will be teaching at Nanjing Union Theological Seminary for a one-year period starting this autumn. It is the first time since the expulsion of all foreign missionaries in the 1950s that foreign religious educators will be teaching theology at a mainland Chinese theological institution for an extended period of time. San Francisco Presbyterian Seminary professor Antoinette Wire is scheduled to teach New Testament in Nanjing. She will be joined by Rev. Carolyn Higginbotham, an Ohio-based Disciples of Christ theologian who will teach Old Testament at China's most prestigious Protestant seminary. Wire and Higginbotham will join American Southern Baptist Faye Pearson, who has been teaching theological English at the seminary for a year now.

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Lay Training: The first training session for Christian secretaries was held in Jiangxi Province from May 14 to 19, 2001. Forty participants had come to Duchang County's Xinghuo Church from cities and counties all over the province. This training program is part of the provincial church's efforts to improve church management through introducing systems and rules for church management.

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Theological Education: The first-ever training program for ordination candidates was held in Heilongjiang Province from May 9 to 13 of this year. The program was aimed at raising the standard of pastoral workers in the spirit of the Sixth National Christian Conference. 25 candidates awaiting ordination as elder or pastor attended the training class.

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to read ANS online and get the latest news on The Amity Foundation.
Places Mentioned In This Issue Of ANS

1) Nanjing (Jiangsu)
2) Shanghai
3) Duchang (Jiangxi)