Dear Reader,

It was a historical event for the Chinese church - the exhibition on the Bible ministry of Chinese churches held in Hong Kong in August of this year. Organized by the National CCC/TSPM in cooperation with numerous helpful Hong Kong partners, above all the Hong Kong Bible Society, the exhibition drew 20,000 people within a handful of days.

The carefully selected and beautifully presented exhibits allowed the audience, both Chinese and international, to catch a glimpse of the rich and varied Bible ministry in a nation where more than 35 million copies of Scripture have been printed over the past two decades. A close look at the presentations also revealed that the country into which some indefatigable activists still smuggle Bibles actually exports Bibles. "Are religions allowed in China?" one visitor asked standing in the middle of the show, jet-lagged maybe, but above all confused about what she saw. Reactions like hers highlight the need for information and events such as the exhibition. It is to be hoped that similar exchanges will follow in the future.

Most visitors reacted very positively to the exhibition, a reality that was not entirely echoed in the press coverage, some of which tried to dismiss the event as a politically motivated move. Churchgoers in the US may soon be able to form their own opinions - already there are plans of bringing the show to North America.

In the hope to share both official views and unofficial reactions to the exhibit with our readers, you find much of our autumn edition dedicated to the Bible Exhibition. Happy reading!

With kind regards from the editorial desk,

Katrin Friedler

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ANS Feature:

Bible Exhibition draws Hong Kong crowds

More than 20,000 visitors streamed into the Hong Kong Convention Centre in Wan Chai between August 5-10, 2004 to view the exhibition on the Bible Ministry in China organized by the China Christian Council and the Three Self Patriotic Movement. Theresa Carino reports from Hong Kong.

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Entitled "A Lamp to my feet, A Light to my path", the exhibition showcased a wide variety of Bibles and Christian artefacts found and produced in China since the 17th century. Designed to represent a "time tunnel", the impressive display was divided into nine sections featuring historical records of the Bible ministry in China, publication, printing and distribution, Catholic Bibles, handwritten Bibles, children's Bibles and those printed in ethnic minority languages (including Korean, Miao, Yi, Wa Jingpo, Lahu, the east Lishu and Dai.)

In his speech at the opening ceremony, Bishop K. H. Ting underscored the centrality and significance of the Bible in the life of Chinese Christians. He said, "Christians in China study the Bible carefully and try to understand the word of God regarding Himself and human life so as to actively respond to the call of proclaiming, in this new century, the good news that God is love." Rev. Cao Shengjie, President of the China Christian Council, who also spoke at the opening, stressed that the Bible is "essential spiritual food for Christians in China." She recalled that after the end of the "disastrous Cultural Revolution", the CCC/TSPM made the publication and distribution of the Bible a top priority. Since the 1980s, and especially after the establishment of the Amity Printing Press, more than 35 million Bibles have been printed in China. In the last 10 years, 2.5 million copies were printed every year and distributed through 70 distribution centres throughout the country.

Tung Chee Hwa, Chief Executive of the Hong Kong SAR, top officials from the Hong Kong Liaison Office of the Central Government and Ye Xiaowen, Director of the State Bureau for Religious Affairs were on hand to help cut the ribbon for the exhibition.

According to David Wong, Acting General Secretary of the Hong Kong Bible Society, the exhibition was "truly a historic event to proclaim God's love and blessing to the churches and Bible ministry in China." The idea of an exhibition had been broached in Hong Kong several years ago. It took five and a half months of sheer hard work to execute. More than 16 organizations in Hong Kong worked in tandem with the CCC/TSPM and the Hong Kong Bible Society to make the event a huge success.

The more than 100-strong delegation from China consisted of church leaders, clergy, laity, seminary faculty, students, artists and performers. An equally large number of volunteers from Hong Kong churches worked together to set up the exhibition and guide visitors. Volunteers, many from Guangdong Province, were indefatigable, eagerly interacting and patiently answering the myriad questions from visitors about Bibles and church life in China.
Exciting performances of sacred music and dance were provided by a large contingent of ethnic minority Christians from Yunnan. The display of Christian art was a feast for the eyes and included paintings, calligraphy, paper cuts and pottery never exhibited before. A large wood relief depicting the "Life of Jesus" through 75 intricately detailed scenes exquisitely carved on a single panel of antique camphor wood (11.8 by 5.2 feet), drew the largest crowds. The unique masterpiece took artist Zhang Wanlong 10 years to complete. Other visual attractions included folk art, batik tapestry, carvings on bamboo slices, stone inscriptions and micro-carvings of Biblical verses on gourds.

The exhibit that drew the most media attention was the "imperial edition" of the Bible. This was a special Chinese edition of the New Testament that was published in 1894. With its cover emblazoned in silver lettering, it was presented by a group of Christian women to the Empress Dowager Cixi of the Qing Dynasty on her 60th birthday. There are few surviving copies. One exists in New York and three in mainland China. The CCC/TSPM auctioned one of its copies for HK$ 850,000 during the exhibition and donated the proceeds to the Medical College of the Chinese University of Hong Kong for further research on the SARS virus.

While Hong Kong Christians made up the bulk, visitors to the exhibition included participants from the Youth Convention of the Baptist World Alliance, Christian groups from Taiwan and Korea, overseas friends from Bible societies and church organizations in the USA, Asia and Europe. Bishop Joseph Zen, Catholic bishop of Hong Kong, expressed appreciation for the display during a brief visit to the exhibit.

For many, the exhibition was an eye-opener. Visitors expressed surprise that so many Bibles are being produced in China today. At the section on Bible distribution, viewers were shown how, through the use of vans, horse driven and hand pushed carts, Bibles are being distributed to some of the more remote parts of China. Nevertheless, there were still some "doubting Thomases", who were seen, Bible in hand, checking on displayed Bibles to see if chapters or books were "missing" in the "mainland-produced" versions! Visitors lucky enough to win in a daily "draw" during the exhibit were given free plane tickets to Nanjing for a visit to the Amity Printing Press.

During a press conference, Rev. Deng Fucun, Vice-Chair of the TSPM and Director of the Bible Exhibition, said he looked forward to more exchanges and joint projects with Hong Kong churches. He felt that more frequent interaction with people in Hong Kong would help break down some of the myths about the Bible and churches in China. Overseas church representatives, impressed by the exhibition, were eager to bring it on a tour of the USA and Europe. Obviously, the exhibition had generated much local and global interest, not only in Bible publication in China, but more importantly, in developments in church life. Bishop K.H. Ting remarked at the close of the exhibition, how "the Bible unites us." Through this event it had certainly drawn Chinese Christians in Hong Kong and the mainland closer together.
ANS Feature:

Bible Stories: Reactions To "A Lamp To My Feet, A Light To My Path"

"Thank our God who is full of grace and reason. [...] God bless your work", one visitor noted in one of the guest books at the Hong Kong Bible exhibition. The unknown believer was not alone with his or her reaction: most visitors to the show made positive comments after viewing the exhibits. Katrin Fiedler presents some of the reactions to the exhibition.

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"A Chinese interpretation of Christian faith," commented Hong Kong resident Dennis Hopton the Bible exhibition on its opening day. The engineer who had squeezed his visit to the exhibition into a tight working day added: "It looks as if they did a really good job with the exhibits." Most visitors to the show were surprised about the scope and professional presentation of the exhibits. "It is very impressive," Australian-American Margaret Cupit remarked, "it covers all of China, not only Beijing or Shanghai." Born a missionary daughter in Anshun, Guizhou, Margaret Cupit attended Kuling boarding school before her family had to leave China after the end of the civil war. These days, the Chinese church where her parents used to serve is celebrating its one hundredth anniversary.

For visitors with links to China's missionary past like Cupit, the exhibition was a beautiful reminder that the seeds planted by missionaries like her parents continue to grow. Various sections of the exhibition highlighted in different ways the astonishing development of the Chinese church over the past decades. A handwritten copy of Scripture gave testimony to the persevering faith that led Chinese Christians to worship in secret during the Cultural Revolution, and displays about Bible printing and distribution illustrated the numerical growth of the church as well as the importance of the Bible for individual Chinese Christians.

"This is a very nice exhibition," Janet Shope from Louisville, Kentucky summarized her first reaction. She was part of the Baptist Youth Convention that happened to be going on next door, and had made space in her conference schedule to drop in at the Chinese Churches' Bible Exhibition. "It is a pity the souvenir Bible is in Chinese, though," the middle-aged African-American remarked.

Being a first-time visitor to China, she was still grappling with highly diverse impressions and pieces of information that she was being exposed to. "Are religions allowed in China? What about worship services?" Questions like hers highlight the need for exhibitions and other means to raise awareness about the situation of religions on the Chinese mainland.

"This is the first exhibition of its kind for the Chinese church," Rev. Bao Jiayuan, who acted as coordinator of the exhibition from the China Christian Council's side, noted after the opening ceremony. "We started dreaming of this show two, three years ago, but we didn't start collecting items until the beginning of this year." He added: "The Hong Kong Bible Society held a Bible exhibition in 2000, which was very valuable for us because of their experience in organizing the previous exhibition. But
this time, the point of departure is different - we do not only focus on the Bible, but the whole Bible ministry of Chinese churches."

In view of the warm reception by the local Hong Kong audience, negotiations are now under way to bring the displays to the US, where some churches have expressed an interest in borrowing the exhibition. "But," Rev. Bao noted, "mainland Chinese Christians should also get a chance to see the exhibits."

While reactions of individual visitors to the exhibit were overwhelmingly positive, press coverage of the event painted a slightly different picture, with some media trying to depict the show as an entirely politically motivated effort to improve the image of the Chinese government on religious matters. One article in the Straits Times even linked the event to the upcoming Legislative Council elections in Hong Kong, an assessment that seems rather unlikely given the long time needed to prepare the exhibition.

2004.9/10.3

Let More People Hear The Voice Of The Chinese Church

(ANS) In June of 2004, Mathews George, Asia Secretary at the World Council of Churches (WCC), visited the National CCC/TSPM committee in Shanghai. Tian Feng, the magazine of the China Christian Council and National TSPM, used the opportunity of his visit for an interview, which was subsequently reproduced in September's edition of the magazine.

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During his conversation with the Tian Feng reporters, Mathews George talked about the contribution of Chinese, Indonesian and African churches to the ecumenical movement.

According to George, the number of 16 million Chinese Christians puts them on equal footing with churches in Africa and Latin America, and is a sign of the social space for development that the Chinese church is enjoying. In the coming 20-25 years, the number of Asian Christians will slowly rise over the number of Christians in Europe. Mathews George continued to say that he had heard that the number of Chinese Christians had already reached 60 million, but expressed doubts over the reliability of such figures. Undeniably, the Chinese church was growing at an unprecedented speed, he said.

Asked about the planned restructuring of the WCC and why it was aimed at bringing in newly emerging religions, Mathews George replied that the idea of restructuring the WCC was very new and not finally decided yet. When the WCC had been established, it had been through a number of big denominations like the Anglicans, Presbyterians, and the Methodists, that had joined the ecumenical movement. With newly emerging groups like evangelicals and Pentecostals, and the growth of the Roman Catholic Church, the WCC was hoping that the ecumenical movement could encompass these churches as well. In the past, the opinion had prevailed that some
denominations were too small to be of significance, but with their growth they also were aspiring to become part of the ecumenical movement.

As Mathews George explained, in the past the ecumenical movement had been concentrated on Europe, North America and other developed countries, but was now growing with the churches of Africa, Latin America and Asia. In particular China’s and Vietnam’s increase in believers, in spite of the absence of foreign missionaries, was a sign of God’s grace, George said.

At the same time, big churches like the Lutheran or the Methodist churches should be careful not to channel their resources lopsidedly into their own programmes, but should rather participate in an ecumenical sharing of resources that would foster cohesion, Mathews George added.

Asked about the particular role of the Chinese church within the WCC and the ecumenical movement, George replied that the Chinese church had greatly contributed to the ecumenical movement in the past, although there had been a break between 1950 and 1991. After its re-entry into the body, China had taken part in a number of activities, including the General Assembly in 1998, but on the whole it ought to play a more active role, to let more people hear the voice of the Chinese church.

What function could the WCC have in the light of the unrest plaguing numerous regions of Asia? Issues of security and peace were complex in Asia, and were a matter of much concern for the WCC member churches, George asserted. It was necessary not only to share between Christians, but also to maintain a fruitful dialogue with other religions, to let all people partake in the message of peace and security. He also mentioned the Philippines and East Timor as the only Asian territories with a Christian majority. Accordingly, Christian voices were relatively weak in most Asian countries. The WCC hoped that Christian communities would engage in dialogue with other religions and social forces, to establish a wide platform for cooperation and dialogue. Finally, he emphasized that the reasons for social unrest in the region were multiple, including factors such as militarism and religious fundamentalism, and that Christians must not idly watch these developments.

2004.9/10.4

Theological Reconstruction And A Ministerial Order For The Chinese Church

In autumn of 2003, an eleven-member delegation of Hong Kong church representatives visited the mainland and met with key church leaders, including Bishop K.H. Ting. The group, which was headed by Rev. Eric So from the Hong Kong Christian Council, also held three sessions with the hosts focusing on the ongoing efforts for theological reconstruction. Below, delegation member Michael Nai-Chiu Poon of the Hong Kong Sheng Gong Hui Minghua Theological College shares some of his reflections. A long version of this article first appeared in Nanjing Theological Review No.4/2003.

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Since the idea of theological reconstruction was formally launched at the Ji’nan Conference in 1998, it has created heated discussions within and outside of China. In particular, the proposal to “fade out the doctrine of justification by faith” has been a
cause of grave concern among some Protestants. Some are even asking whether the Chinese church has reverted to a liberal theological position, or abandoned the Christian faith altogether.

The very fact that leaders of the Chinese church are resolute in undertaking profound theological reflection at this juncture should be welcomed. Perhaps some of the terminology, like the phrases "reconstruction of theological thought" and "fading out of the doctrine of justification by faith" are misleading. Does "fading out" imply the dilution of the doctrine so that it would no longer exist, or would it be better to rephrase the task as the "purifying of the doctrine"? Colleagues at the China Christian Council were sometimes at pains to clarify for the group what exactly they meant by these phrases. Other related questions that an astute theologian could ask are: Is the present theological reconstruction the continuation of the process of indigenization? What next after the "fading out of the justification of faith"?

We have failed to pay due attention to the reasons behind the task of theological reconstruction. Bishop K.H. Ting and other church leaders have repeatedly publicly articulated their alarm at the proliferation of superstitious practices among Chinese Christians. How one identity can emerge from such diversity; that is, that all Christians would come to regard themselves as belonging to one church of China, is not a simple matter, and indeed not an intellectual exercise. Theological reconstruction relates to the concern of how Chinese Christians come to understand themselves as one people, and how the church of China can come to posses an enduring social identity.

Hitherto, Chinese efforts in indigenization have mainly remained at the intellectual level, and have lacked pastoral experience. This is also true in Hong Kong, where, in spite of a local church leadership, churches still follow the "sacrosanct" denominational patterns and divides set by the missionary past. The clearing of the ground through theological reconstruction enables the church to begin a process of radical reexamination of its own mission history and folk Christianity, and to sort out how Christian faith has been perceived and internalized by ordinary Christians.

It is beneficial for us to draw a lesson from the history of the early church. How did the early church establish its unique identity in the face of prevalent Graeco-Latin and Jewish cultures? How did orthodoxy emerge? Recent patristic scholars have shown that the issue of self-identity involves a study of the interactive dynamics between church and society. Christians live in a wider society, hence their experience should never remain at the particular and private level; it must also have a universal and communal dimension.

For the Chinese church to continue to exist as an identifiable community in society, it must address ecclesiastical concerns like: how believers from varied backgrounds can interpret their faith experiences and cohere, acknowledging themselves as members of the one community of faith, to the end that the church can take on a recognizable and influential identity in society.

When believers turn superstitious, this is a wake-up call for the church to reflect more deeply on the questions of its own identity. This is to say, the establishment of a ministerial order should be the vision and goal which sustains the many tasks in
theological reconstruction. "Fading out" is a proactive process. It is not a matter of
diluting (as in diluting instant coffee) which would result in the church losing its
unique Christian identity. It is rather like "fading out" in photography, a conscious
step taken to focus our attention from (what is near and immediate) the doctrinal
stances to the broader horizons, i.e. the vision of a mature church in China, taking its
proper place and hence making its proper contribution within the apostolic church.

To conclude, I hope to attempt to sketch out some strategic elements in the
establishing of a ministerial order for the Chinese church. The first and immediate
task involves the producing of a Book of Common Worship for the whole nation. This
would include a church calendar, a lectionary, an order for public worship,
ordinations, rites for marriages, burials and such like. This would provide a clearer
framework for ordinary Christians to order their Christian lives and grow in holiness.
The publication of a truly Chinese church calendar, with dates remembering Chinese
saints, theologians and so on is of especial importance.

Secondly, the Chinese church may wish to begin the task of producing a full set of
Bible commentaries written by Chinese Christians for the Chinese church. It is rather
disconcerting that Chinese pastors still refer to the Chinese edition of Barclay's
Commentaries as their staple diet in sermon preparation. Can we work towards a set
of authoritative commentaries for Chinese believers, and even for the wider public
(including the "cultural Christians"), that they may be truly regularly nurtured in the
Word of God?

And in the third place, I long for the emergence of a theological research centre for
the study of Christianity in China. Only so can the church be rooted in continuing
theological reflection and formation. I dream of the day when Nanjing theology would
become an established tradition that would be indispensable in the interpretation of
the Christian faith; when there would emerge from among us Christians like Origen
and Antony, to inspire a new generation of young people to devote themselves to
holiness for the sake of Jesus; when there would be a Chinese Eusebius to write a
definitive Ecclesiological History for China; when pastors in their weekly preaching
would be able to enlighten us what is true among the best minds in today's
generation, just as Ambrose had inspired Augustine, and win for the church a
bulwark of strength in the years to come.

2004.9/10.5

Jianshe Theology: Reflections About The Process Of Theological
Reconstruction In China

Since 1998 the project of theological reconstruction has been at the centre of the theological reflection
of the Chinese church. In a recently published article, Tobias Brandner describes the historical
situation to which this reflection responds, some of the guiding principles and hermeneutical and
theological questions involved. Tobias Brandner is ecumenical co-worker of Mission 21 (the former
Basel Mission) in Hong Kong, acting as prison chaplain and part-time lecturer at the Chinese
University of Hong Kong. This article is a summary of an article published in Nanjing Theological
Review (No. 4,2003) and in the International Review of Mission.

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The process of theological reconstruction is a response to the tremendous growth that has taken place since 1978. It is an attempt to develop a theology that takes into account the changed context of the church in China. Bishop Ting sees the process of theological reconstruction as the third stage of the church after 1949. The first period emphasized patriotism, anti-imperialism and the independence of the Chinese church, the second focused on good management of the church, and the third and present stage aims at developing and strengthening theological reflection (Cf. K.H. Ting, *Tian Fong*, Nr. 6, 2002, p. 22ff.). Theological reconstruction can be seen as a process of *contextualisation of Christian faith* in China. It aims at leading the Chinese churches out of a spiritual and theological marginal existence, and preparing them for further growth. In this process Christian faith is becoming a truly local, Chinese, indigenous faith and losing its character as a foreign religion. At the same time, theological reconstruction aims at maintaining the relation to the worldwide church from a position which is self-defined and independent of foreign influence.

**What are the goals of theological reconstruction?** – Three main goals can be distinguished. The first goal is a *critical examination of the past*. Much of the theological thinking of the churches in China is still shaped by the theology from pre-revolutionary times. Theological reconstruction has a *polemical element* because it wants to liberate theological thinking from elements that are historically linked to the colonialism of the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries. It is critical of theologies that implicitly supported colonialism and of a faith that undermines the participation of Christians in, and their responsibility for society. It is critical of superstitious beliefs because they are on the political level traditionally linked to feudalism.

The second goal of the process of theological reconstruction is *ecumenical*: The church in China is postdenominational and has tried to overcome the denominational divisions of the West. But in some areas old denominational identities and particularities still exist. The churches are partly successful in holding these differences together as a kind of unity in diversity. However, these differences do cause some tensions. The project of theological reconstruction is an attempt to develop a theology that is the theology of the independent, postdenominational Chinese church. It wants to create a uniting bond between all Christians in China, a kind of ‘corporate identity’ of the Chinese church.

But the ecumenism that theological reconstruction has in mind is not only ecumenism between churches. It equally relates *to the world*. The interest in having an ecumenical relation to the world means that elements which are a hindrance to dialogue with the world are questioned or de-emphasized. Accordingly, those elements are emphasized which facilitate the churches’ openness to the world. Such theological reflection regards the context of Chinese culture in which it lives as a gift of God and as genuinely good. It stands in a theological tradition which underlines the harmony between culture and faith.

What this means can be seen from the example of ‘love’, which has great importance in Chinese churches, as the many posters of the Chinese character for ‘love’ in most churches show. The emphasis on love is not accidental, but already an expression of theological reconstruction. Why? - Many Christians believe that only those who believe in Jesus Christ are saved. This view may theologically be correct even if it is not the only possible way of understanding the absoluteness of Christ.
The problem is that such a theological emphasis causes a disruption and a tension between Christians and non-Christians, and thus contradicts Chinese thinking that traditionally sees harmony (he) as of central importance. By focusing on 'love' that surpasses all differences, an important shift happens. It is not so much what distinguishes Christians from non-Christians that is emphasized but what binds them together. The emphasis on love is at the same time an ecumenical strategy to build bridges between the church and the world, and an expression of a contextual faith which reflects the cultural centrality of harmony and harmonious thinking. The question of, 'Who is saved and who is not?' remains untouched and unanswered in this discourse. It may be that this question is not the most important one that Christians have to face, and it reflects an attitude of leaving the decision about who shall be saved to God. It reduces possible tensions in the relationship between Christians and the world.

A third goal of theological reconstruction is a hermeneutical one whereby Christians in China will overcome narrow biblicism and recognize the need for hermeneutical principles in interpreting scripture. This focus has to do with the specific history of China where during ten years of Cultural Revolution there was hardly any public education, and where the Bible until today is often the only tool a preacher has. Applying such principles means firstly to make a distinction between the biblical text and the proclaimed Christ. The different biblical texts refer to a centre which is the proclaimed Christ, and thus may have a different quality depending on how they relate to Christ. It means, secondly, the acknowledgement that interpretation is a pluralistic process that evokes a conflict of interpretations. And it means thirdly that a distinction is made between the world of the text and the world of the interpreter. Not every text, even if apparently clearly understandable, may be translated directly into one's own world. Finally, it includes an understanding of the historical character of the incarnation of Christ. Such understanding avoids a non-historical and absolute application of one's own principles of interpretation. In the case of China it guards the church from treating the principles of the Three Self Movement without regard to history and in an absolute manner. The Three Self principles do not have the status of a Nicene or Apostles' creed. They are not principles of faith but practical principles for ministry in the contemporary situation of the church.

The term 'theological reconstruction' has caused some irritation among Christians in the West. These irritations have mainly to do with translation difficulties. People may ask 'Why re-?', and, 'Why construction?' 'Reconstruction' implies that something was destroyed and has to be reconstructed; the prefix 're-' implies a repeated action that follows when the previous action has failed. In Chinese, jianshe has three basic meanings: (1) to build up (jianli), (2) to (re-) organize (zuzhi), (3) to develop (fazhan). A continuity with the tradition of the church seems implied by the term jianshe. The article suggests leaving the term untranslated due to such differences in connotation between Chinese and English. Would not a Chinese term within the Western theological discussion be an expression of the difficulties of translation?

How to establish a healthy relation to history constitutes one of the on-going challenges in China today. In the context of China, construction and building happen often in a way which implies a disassociation from the past. The preservation of historical buildings and the visible continuity with the past are often disrupted. The article is a reminder that the process of theological reconstruction should be one of
re-examining history, critically looking at history, and not about constructing anew. It is ultimately about understanding the history of China as part of the broader context of God’s history with the world. The old can also act as a witness of God’s new creation. Hence, Jesus did not abolish or dismiss the Jewish tradition but he re-examined it, critically worked through it and gave it a new interpretation and new orientation. Regarding actual church construction the same can be said: A church building that makes transformation and adaptation to new conditions and new needs visible tells a story of God’s work in progress, of God’s continuous re-creation. The process of theological reconstruction ultimately leads to the question how faith relates to history and to modernization.

2004.9/10.6

**Jianou Christians Show Concern Over Rise In Lottery Gambling**

(ANS) Mah-jong is probably the best known Chinese game (usually played for money), yet other forms of gambling such as cards and betting are equally popular. In some cases, this fascination leads to genuine gambling addiction, with disastrous results for the families of the individuals involved. Below, a Fujian-based writer voices his concern over the increasing popularity of illegal lotteries on the Chinese mainland. As he notes in his article in August’s edition of Tian Feng, the format was copied from Hong Kong, where the Mark Six is a legal lottery under the umbrella of the Hong Kong Jockey Club.

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In recent years, gambling in form of lotteries like the "Mark Six" has sprung up in many places all over Fujian, both in the cities and the countryside, and has turned into a social problem. The government and public security forces take this very seriously and have repeatedly broken lottery rings. Although the impact of participating in the "Mark Six" once is not strong, gambling through lotteries has a strongly alluring and deceptive character for those striving to be rich.

According to the author’s observations, lotteries are very widespread and appeal to young and old, government officials as well as ordinary people, Christians and non-Christians alike. Many Christians know that buying lottery tickets is not good, but are unable to overcome their fascination for the game. In some cases, formerly very devout Christians have turned their backs on the church; their obsession with lotteries has led them into poverty and caused great harm to their family lives.

In severe cases, people want to free themselves from the urge to gamble but are unable to do so: If they have won money before, they want to win more, if they have lost money, they want to recuperate their investment. As a result, the pattern of "gambling ten times and losing nine times out of ten" ruins their families and creates social instability. After losing their money, some gamblers revert to theft and robbery, while others kill themselves by jumping from a building or ingesting pesticides.

In order to deal with the serious social problem of lotteries, the church in Jianou City decided in April of this year to conduct spiritual training relating to the matter in all its 20 churches and meeting points. Believers were instructed that gambling is not in accordance with the Bible. Besides, Jianou’s Christians were taught the correct attitude towards money, i.e. that we cannot rely on gambling for financial success.
and rather ought to work hard. At the same time, believers are to be strengthened in their theological reflection, and the church strives to set a good example regarding lotteries. Participating in lotteries is actually illegal, and believers need to know that being caught in such scams will bring them legal punishment as well as the possibility of being detained.

Besides, a group was formed to help establish a strong spiritual foundation in believers. The speakers of the group, from the church in Jiyang Township, gave testimonies as to how they themselves had overcome their fascination with gambling. Finally, a signature campaign against lotteries was initiated among the city's Christians, 10,000 of whom signed the declaration to "Oppose lotteries and establish a healthy strong faith foundation". All these efforts from the church's side to curb gambling through lotteries were greeted positively by the government and society.

2004.9/10.7

ANS Documentation:

To Share God's Love With More People

Address delivered by Bishop K.H. Ting, at the Opening Ceremony of the "Bible Ministry Exhibition of Churches in China" on 5 August 2004.

Dear friends and distinguished guests,

It is my great privilege to come to Hong Kong again and to attend this Opening Ceremony of the Bible Ministry Exhibition of Churches in China. I trust that this exhibition will be a good opportunity for more friends both within and outside the country to truly understand the churches in China. For this opportunity, let us join together to give thanks to our Lord and to wish this exhibition a full success.

Most of the Christians in China have their own Bible and treasure it. Christians in China have a great love for the Bible. The Bible plays a significant role in both their spiritual and material lives. The Bible is different from other books, because it tells us what God wants us to do. God wants to help humans understand the Word of God and His will.

Christians in China study the Bible carefully and try to understand the word of God regarding Himself and human life so as to actively respond to the call of proclaiming in this new century the good news that God is love. To be able to encounter and to listen attentively to God's word; we must get rid of the improper understanding that all human good comes from the devil and that the beauties of the world trap or corrupt people. We are in need of a kind of Christianity that helps people exalt justice, enhance moral sense and distinguish right from wrong.

Christians with such faith are one of the most beautiful people's groups in the country we love. The churches in China highly value all positive moral and ethical influences in society, are concerned about the global environment we live in, and care about the marginalized people. This shall be the direction that we, the churches that treasure the Christian moral and ethical teachings, are heading for.

God is love. Our colleagues and fellow Christians both in Hong Kong and mainland China have the experience of dwelling in God's love and His presence. God has welcomed us, and enabled us to have life, and have it abundantly.

In 1998, I came to Hong Kong to attend the consecration ceremony for my good friend and dear brother Archbishop Peter Kwong. It has been 6 years since then. On that trip, I found many new and fresh things in this modern city. Our compatriots in Hong Kong have made further great changes. We have reason to believe that such encouraging progress in society is a gift that God likes to give to human beings. People, nation, peace and well-being should be unchanging themes for our theological pursuits.

To our delight, there are encouraging developments on the mainland too. There is continuing development and reform in
modernization, and the constant improvement of people's lives. The improvement of people's lives includes the development of people's democratic right of which religious freedom is a part. Recently, China amended the National Constitution and added to it the new item of protecting human rights. This indicates that China is determined to better implement the policy of religious freedom and to ensure that religious freedom as a basic human right shall be well guaranteed.

Both the great events of the veneration of the Buddha's finger that has taken place in Hong Kong last May and the current Bible ministry Exhibition of Churches in China testify that the religious freedom the Chinese people enjoy today is not something unreal. I believe that in the common cause of enriching the life of human beings, the theists and atheists can work together and the atheists can be our friends instead of enemies. God does not separate Himself from the world; on the contrary, God helps us better understand the relationship between God and human beings through God's message of love and peace so that we are able to reconcile among ourselves. The peace from God certainly contains the peace and harmonious relationship among people. Kwan-yin and Matsu [Guanyin and Mazu goddesses] are both manifestations of beauty; there is no hostility or antipathy between them. Both the five major religions in mainland China and the six religions in Hong Kong are one in the basic truth that human beings are in common need of spiritual orientation which religions call deliverance or salvation. In the same way, the theists and atheists need not be in a life-and-death relationship, but have mutual respect by walking together as brothers or companions based on the principle of seeking the common ground while keeping these differences.

We are called to share God's love with more people and to bear the fruit of love in our own contexts while we are establishing a mutual receiving and interdependent relationship with others.

Thank you.

ANS Documentation:

Opening Speech At The Bible Ministry Exhibition Of Churches In China

Speech delivered by Rev. Cao Shengjie, President of China Christian Council, during the exhibition opening ceremony on 5 August 2004.

Honourable Bishop Ting, Vice Chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, Honourable Chief Executive Tung-Chee Hwa, Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, distinguished guests coming from afar, and all sisters and brothers in Christ of Hong Kong,

The "Bible Ministry Exhibition of Churches in China", prepared by China's Three Self Patriotic Movement Committee and the China Christian Council with substantial support from church organizations and leaders in Hong Kong, opens today. This is the first time that the churches from mainland China host an exhibition in Hong Kong. It is a great event of historical significance in the church life of China. On behalf of the National CCC/TSPM Committee, I would like to thank the government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region for its permission to let the exhibition be held here; thank the Hong Kong Bible Society and the other supporting organizations for their concerted efforts in making the exhibition possible; thank Archbishop Kwong and other patrons as well as the 78 consultants for their genuine encouragement, valuable suggestions and concrete assistance. Also, I would like to extend the warmest welcome to all attending this ceremony today.

The Exhibition with the theme "A Lamp to my Feet, A Light to My Path" is manifesting the love of Chinese Christians for the Bible. The Bible is the most important spiritual food of Christianity, and all Scripture is given by the inspiration of God. Most Christians in China have the Bible, and read it every day. They raise their literacy levels through Bible reading and draw strength from it for their work and for living a positive life.
The Bible was translated into Chinese in the 19th century, published in different editions including Wenli and Easy Wenli language versions as well as Mandarin and different vernaculars. The publication of the Bible continued after the founding of New China. After the disastrous "Cultural Revolution", along with the government implementation of the policy of religious freedom, the CCC/TSPM committees placed the publication of the Bible as the top priority onto their working agendas after they had resumed regular activities. Thanks to the concerted efforts of all Christians in China and the generous support from church organizations overseas, we published 35 million volumes of the Bible from 1980 to June 2004. In the last ten years, the number of Bibles produced averaged 2.5 million annually. These are significant figures not only in terms of numbers, but also in terms of the varieties of Bible editions involved, thus meeting the ever-increasing needs of Christians in the rapidly growing churches of China. The Bible has also received greater concern from the different sectors of Chinese society. Intellectuals and scholars in China have become more knowledgeable about the Bible, and their appreciation of the value of the Bible has increased accordingly.

The main purpose for mainland Chinese churches to host this exhibition is to bear witness to God's blessings and His abundant grace for China and the Chinese churches. One of the display chambers of this exhibition is dedicated to the Bible ministry of the Catholic Church in China. We hope this exhibition will help visitors to have a glimpse of the whole process of Bible printing, publication and distribution and of how Christians in China love the Bible. We also hope that our friends will appreciate the many precious, rarely seen art works created inspired by the Bible. The song and dance performances based on the Bible given by different Chinese nationalities reflect in another way church life in China.

We are confident that the exhibition will facilitate and contribute to further exchanges between the churches in mainland China and in Hong Kong. Let us encourage each other, advance together to fulfill the great mission of spreading the Gospel and of building up the Church, the mission that is entrusted to us by our Lord.

2004.9/10.9

ANS Documentation:

A Memorable Witness of Unforgettable Times

(ANS) "On the 5th of August, 2004, the Exhibition of Bible Ministry of the Churches in China was inaugurated. We are so grateful for God's guidance of the Chinese Church's Bible ministry through the years, and I want to express my heartfelt thanks to our counterparts in Hong Kong who offered their warm support for the whole exhibition project." With these words, Ji Jianhong, Chairman of the National TSPM, starts his observations regarding the Hong Kong Bible Exhibition, which we reprint below.

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The Holy Word is the basis and foundation of the Chinese church. It is both a wellspring for the spiritual life of believers and a yardstick that measures our obedience to God's decrees. For more than fifty years we have been striving to build the church according to God's instruction, so that, step by step, the church may attain the whole measure of the fullness of Christ, to glorify God and also benefit mankind.

Guided by the Three Self principles in building up the Chinese church (self-governance, self-support, self-propagation), we have redeemed it from being an instrument of colonialism and foreign aggrandizement, and have fostered an independent Chinese church that is managed by Chinese Christians. This has been a "consecrating and cleansing" work (Eph. 5:26,27) to guide the Lord's people throughout China to be truly authentic in their prayers and supplications, that we may attain the vision found in 1 Kings 9:3, where the Lord says to Solomon, "I have heard the prayer and supplication which you have offered me. I have consecrated this house which you have built to receive my name for all time, and my eyes and my heart will be fixed on it for ever."

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The church is Christ's body; this body must be complete and whole. There is the universal, heavenly sense of oneness, but the earthly, concrete body of Christ must also be "one": the tangible manifestation of that universal oneness, of "Christ on Earth". How to maintain harmony throughout the worldwide church is truly a key sacred work of God.

The oneness of the physical church as it is illuminated in Scripture seems to have administrative limits imposed by space and place. There must be, on the national level, cooperation and coordination. Then, moving down through the levels of the provinces, the cities, the counties, the townships - all of these levels must also have their own cohesive unity and community. And naturally, regardless of considering early church history or modern church history, attending to all of these different entities of the church leads to an ever-intensifying stream of compartmentalization that makes Christ's division seem inevitable (1 Cor. 1:12,13). This kind of partitioning of the body of the Lord is a deviation from God's law. God, however, has made it clear to us through the Bible that His own decrees and plans will surely come to fruition. God is at work in China to bring church leaders as well as the multitudes of believers to see and understand what the Lord requires for "being one", leading us toward ever-closer fellowship in Christ.

"Honour God's Word and be rooted in it." These are two long-held and unchanging principles that have underpinned the whole ministry of the Chinese church. At the time when the Gang of Four was broken up and the Cultural Revolution was brought summarily to an end, the Chinese Communist Party recovered and resumed implementing all those policies that had been sound and proper. The China Christian Council and the National Committee Of The Three-Self Patriotic Movement also immediately organized themselves and took the opportunity to begin publishing, printing and distributing the Bible.

In the early 1980's, although the printing and distributing of the Bible was set into operation in Shanghai and Fuzhou, owing to limitations in the production capacity of those printing houses, it was not possible to meet the demand of all of the churches and individuals who desired a copy of the Bible. The National CCC/TSPM and the Jiangsu Provincial Christian Council discussed the possibility of starting a Bible production/distribution centre in Nanjing. The prospect of being able to contribute to the Bible ministry thrilled me. Thereupon, I began contacting as many people as I could, but because the book binding technology in the factories there was inadequate, they could not undertake this arduous task.

Just at the time when I was the most anxious and at a loss, a friend of mine, a non-believer, called my attention to something. The People's Liberation Army had a printing press in Nanjing, operated by the Nanjing Military Zone's Rear Services Division, that was quite capable of handling the work in a quality fashion. Surely there was no harm in approaching them, my friend said. This was an unexpected, delightful prospect, and yet in my heart I harboured suspicions. Could a PLA printing house, where Mao's works are printed, possibly agree to also print the Bible for us? While harbouring these thoughts I went to pay a visit to the supervisors of the PLA Donghai Printing Press. I managed to calmly and sincerely explain what I had come for, emphasizing that a vast number of Christians regard the Bible as their life - that the Bible is a guidepost for Christian living. But then I felt that the more I continued to explain the importance of the Bible for Christians, the more awkward and inarticulate I became. It was therefore quite contrary to my expectations that the senior supervisor very warmly said "The Chinese People's Liberation Army should resolutely implement and carry out the policies of religious freedom as laid down by the Party Central Committee and our country, so we are more than happy to serve you in this respect and guarantee the proper printing of the Bible." What surprised me even further was the sympathy that was shown us in regard to financial difficulties. It was agreed that payment could be deferred until after the printing. In this way, from 1983 to 1986 at that printing press, 450,000 copies of the Bible (Old and New Testaments) were printed. This progress, though very slow, meant that supply began to meet the demand at that time.

Another matter worth mentioning is that when the Chinese church, with the help of the United Bible Societies, founded the Nanjing Amity Printing Press, the first impression of Bibles were printed using the PLA Donghai Printing Press' plates.

The Chinese church's consistent manner in following the essential principles of honouring and being rooted in God's Word has earned
respect from the Chinese people and the government.

The witness that is now provided by the Chinese church printing their own Bibles strongly refutes those claims by a few people overseas who would make tarnishing remarks such as, "The Chinese government does not allow the printing of Bibles." "The Communist government makes sure that Bibles in China are without the book of Daniel in the Old Testament and the book of Revelation in the New Testament," "You cannot buy a Bible in China," etc. Through this Exhibition of Bible Ministry of Churches in China, I believe that more of our brothers and sisters abroad will better understand the Chinese church, and that we will share more together in God's grace and be more "one" in lifting up God's praises.

2004.9/10.10

ANS Documentation:

News Release On The Bible Ministry Exhibition Of Churches In China

Speech delivered by Rev. Deng Fucun, Residentary Vice Chairman of the National TSPM, during a press conference on July 26, 2004.

The Bible Ministry Exhibition of churches in China, themed as "A lamp to my feet, A light to my path", will be open to the public between 6th and 10th of August 2004 in the Central Exhibition Hall in Hong Kong (the opening ceremony and pre-exhibition viewing will be on August 5th). The exhibition is sponsored by the National Committee of the Three Self Patriotic Movement of China and the China Christian Council (CCC/TSPM) in cooperation with the Hong Kong Bible Society as well as many Christian organizations from the Protestant and Catholic churches in Hong Kong. This will be the first exhibition in Hong Kong by the National CCC/TSPM on the Bible ministry of the Chinese church and will have far-reaching influence.

For the exhibition, the CCC/TSPM organized a special team for the preparatory work and publicized the event among Christian believers for the collection of displays. Through the involvement of church leaders from different levels, it is hoped that the unity among Christians and their love for the country and the church will be further reinforced.

Through various exhibits on display coupled with other activities, the exhibition will show Christians and churches in Hong Kong an independent, self-reliant and self-managed Chinese church, which is vigorous and of great promise in the practice of its faith in loving the country and loving the church. The exhibition is also a testimony to how the Chinese church and its numerous believers benefit from taking the path of self-governance, self-support and self-propagation. It will certainly help more people to see a blessed church in China.

After the founding of New China, the Bible ministry continued. With China's reform and opening to the outside world and the government's implementation of the policy of religious freedom, there has been an unprecedented growth in China's Protestant church. The number of believers has exceeded 16 million and that of churches and meeting points is now more than 50,000.

The CCC/TSPM always take it as an important ministry to meet the growing needs of Christians for the Bible. The accumulated number of Bibles printed from 1990 to June 2004 has already come to 35 million. The exhibition may also help to prove the fact that Christians in China are enjoying the full right of religious freedom, thereby refuting the attacks and outrageous distortions from overseas, and bearing witness to the blessings and the guidance of the Lord for the Bible ministry of the churches in China.

The exhibition boasts eight chambers, covering the following topics: the Bible ministry in historical records; Bible publication, printing, and distribution after China's reform and opening to the outside world; Bible ministry of the national minority churches, the Bible and church life and the Bible ministry of the Chinese Catholic Church, as well as church music and artworks. Through the exhibition, the audience may feel the unceasing efforts of Chinese churches in Bible printing, publication and distribution; and see how Christians in China admire and study.
the Bible in consolidation of their faith, enhancing their confidence, loving the country and loving the church to honour God and benefit the people.

The CCC/TSPM has always given remarkable concern and support to the ministry of translating, revising and publishing the Bible in ethnic minority languages. Since the 1980s, over 470,000 volumes of the Bible in 8 ethnic languages and different versions have been published. They include those in Korean, Miao, Yi, Wa, Jingpo, Lahu, Lisu (east) and Dai languages. In some poverty-stricken areas where the national minorities live in communities, Bibles are distributed free of charge. By the end of 2003, hundreds of thousands of Bibles had been distributed by the National CCC/TSPM as gifts.

It is a credit to the exhibition to have the Catholic church in China join in introducing the history of the Bible in China and its Bible ministry in the last 20 years. The Catholic church in China now has more than 6,000 churches that have been restored or newly built and it has published over 3 million volumes of the Bible or related books. On display at this exhibition are over 100 varieties of the Bible and its related books, some of which were published more than 60 years ago while most were newly published in the last 20 years. Also on display are books and utensils concerning church liturgy. Paper-cuts based on Bible stories and photos reflecting activities of Bible study classes were selected for the exhibition too. All these witness the faith of the Catholic church in China. For the Bible alone, the Catholic church in China has published 1,565,000 volumes over these past years.

Visitors may also be attracted by the video shows and the sacred music concerts given by Christians of Chinese ethnic groups with unique national flavour. Among the exhibits are objects of attractive artworks based on the Bible, reflecting in another way the history of the Bible ministry of the churches in China. They also embody the Chinese Protestant Church’s outlook on the Bible and its unremitting efforts for the promotion of theological construction.

The displayed exhibits include handicrafts with a certain rustic charm created by farmers as well as precious artworks, some of which are unique treasures displayed for the first time in Hong Kong, such as a king-size wood-carving, refined delicate paper-cuts, a long scroll of Scripture in Chinese calligraphy, and a micro-gourd carving.

After China’s reform and opening to the outside world, the Chinese church has paid much attention to Bible printing, publication and distribution. Moreover, it always attaches great importance to how the church will help the bulk of ordinary Christian believers to acquire a proper comprehensive understanding of Biblical truths. Through Bible studies, Christians will better understand God’s mystery and will, act on faith and receive new enlightenments bestowed by God.

The Holy Bible is the most important classic of Christianity, and all Scripture is given by inspiration of God. Since it was translated into Chinese, the Bible has been always cherished by Chinese Christians. Bishop K.H. Ting once said, "Most Chinese Christians possess the Bible. They cherish the Bible and study the Bible. The Bible holds an important place in the heart and life of the Chinese Christians."

2004.9/10.11

ANS Documentation:

How The Christian Community In Hong Kong Supports The Bible Ministry Exhibition Of Chinese Churches

Speech delivered by Mr David Wong, Voluntary General Secretary of the Hong Kong Bible Society at a press conference on 26 July 2004 in Hong Kong.

Today, I am most thankful to God and am indeed much honoured to speak, in my capacity as General Secretary of the Hong Kong Bible Society on how the Christian community in Hong Kong supports this Bible Ministry exhibition of Chinese churches, organised by the National TSPM/CCC Committee. The Hong Kong Bible Society is a
nondenominational Christian organization (including representation from the Catholic churches), that has been dedicated to translating and distributing Chinese Bibles for over 50 years; we also serve the needs of Chinese Bible ministry works abroad. Ever since the modernization of China in the 1980s, we have worked very closely with Chinese churches, like members of one family. The Hong Kong Christian community indeed gives a very wide support to this exhibition. A total of 18 Christian organizations, besides the Hong Kong Bible Society have joined hands in this most meaningful endeavour; they are the Hong Kong Christian Council, the Hong Kong Chinese Christian Churches Union, the Chinese YMCA, the Hong Kong YMCA, the Hong Kong YWCA, the Amity Foundation Hong Kong Office, the United Bible Societies, the CWM/Nethersele Fund, the Hong Kong Theological Education Association, the Association of Christian Publishers, the Association of Christian Organizations, the Ho Shai Ming Foundation, the Christian Cultural Society, the Scripture Union of Hong Kong, Studium Biblicum O.F.M, the Catholic Institute for Religion and Society, the Hong Kong Chinese Theology Association, and the (Catholic) Centre for the Research of Faith. We joined hands not only in names, but indeed we have pooled our expertise and resources from all-strata of the participant organisations: from pastors and deacons to volunteers etc. to work together. We may not be a perfect team, but God’s grace is sufficient for us.

During the whole preparation, we maintained nearly daily contact with our TSPM/CCC partners; and leaders from both sides shuttled between Hong Kong and China to hold workshops and discussions. Behind the works, there was one prayer group dedicating their prayers to the Exhibition. We trust that God would answer our prayers. Also, I wish to mention that after Hong Kong’s return to China, the average Hong Kong Christian has little knowledge of the Bible Ministry conducted by Chinese mainland churches. This exhibition will provide a good opportunity for them to know more. To encourage people to visit this exhibition, the Hong Kong Bible Society together with the Hong Kong Chinese Christian Churches Union will co-sponsor a public essay competition with the themes “A Lamp to my feet, A light to my path” and “My reflections after visiting the exhibition”. Winners of different classes of the competition will be awarded free trips to Nanjing and visit the Bible printing press there.

Lastly, I would like to thank the National TSPM/CCC Committee most sincerely on behalf of the Faculty of Medicine of the Chinese University of Hong Kong for donating a treasured Bible for auction, the proceeds of which will go to research work for SARS treatment.

May God bless Christians in Hong Kong and China in their unified effort to promote Bible ministry work so that more people will accept the Word of God!

Glory be to God, our Heavenly Father!

2004.9/10.12

NEWSBRIEFS

Journey to the West. Rev. Cao Shengjie, President of the China Christian Council, visited Gansu Provincial Christian Council as well as the Provincial Lay Training Centre from June 8 to 11 of this year. Part of her visit was a discussion session with lay workers in training at the centre. In her presentation, Rev. Cao highlighted the historic and enduring role of the Three Self Movement for the development of the Chinese church. She also emphasized the need to engage in theological reconstruction (including the establishment of a correct view of the Bible), and called on her audience to have a clear-cut stand and resist foreign forces that tried to infiltrate China through the means of religion.

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Lay Training. The Ulumuqi (Urumqi) Christian Council in Xinjiang Province conducted a nine-day lay training course in May of this year. 54 church workers from all over the city participated in the programme that focused on worship and liturgy.

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Theological Training. A patriotic recitation competition was held on 6 June at Fujian Theological Seminary. Thirteen chosen student representatives recited works that they had composed by themselves, with titles such as "Talking with our neighbours about patriotism", "My country and I" and "China, I cheer for you". The latter piece won its creator, third-year student Fang Yusong, the first prize.

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The China Christian Council has moved!

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