Dear Reader,

"...there was a time during which the Chinese church neglected to proclaim the [...] Son of Man who came to serve the people. During that time, only Jesus, the Son of God who came to save souls was preached, and social service work came virtually to a halt," Deng Fucun observed at the recent International Consultation on Development marking the twentieth anniversary of the Amity Foundation. In a piece titled "The Son Of Man Came To Serve The People," the head of the China Christian Council's Social Service Department gave an introduction to the CCC's social service work in which he emphasized the need to preach not only the Son of God but also the Son of Man with his concern for his fellow human beings. You find our documentation of his presentation on p11.

In a development that mirrors Deng's assessment, more and more local churches are taking up social service projects. As the example of Luzhou shows (p9), this often has positive repercussions onto the relationship between the church, other social entities and the government. One church-related organization that has (with interruptions) been functioning as a link between the church and society for decades in China are the various YMCA's and YWCAs. On p3, we report about an international peace conference with which the Tianjin YMCA celebrated its 110th anniversary.

Discover more for yourself!

With kind regards from the editorial desk,

Katrin Freuler

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Subscription Renewal for 2006

We hope that you have enjoyed reading ANS over the past year, and that you have found it a source of news and information about the Church in China. If you would like to continue receiving ANS in 2005, please fill in the enclosed subscription form and mail it to us along with your subscription fees.
Big Is Beautiful: Amity Printing Press Breaks Ground For New Facilities

(ANS) By the end of 2005, the Amity Printing Press will have printed 40 million full-volume Bibles. While the press also produces Scriptures for export, the bulk of its production is destined for the Chinese market. For many visitors, coming to the Amity Printing Press and seeing Bibles roll off the press at high speed is a moving experience that alters their perception of religious freedom in China. For 2007, a move into new facilities on the outskirts of Nanjing is planned. In preparation of the move, a groundbreaking ceremony was held at the new location on November 8, 2005. Katrin Fiedler reports.

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Representatives from the Amity Printing Press, the United Bible Societies, the government and the printing industry were rubbing shoulders at the groundbreaking ceremony for the new Amity Printing Press site in Nanjing on November 8, 2005. "I am very happy that more and more Chinese have access to the Bible and have an interest in reading it," Bishop K.H. Ting said in his congratulatory remarks, setting the tone in a ceremony that was both celebration of past achievements and an outlook onto further development in the future.

"Bigger facilities are needed both to meet the existing needs and also in view of the healthy development of the company as a competitor in the printing industry," Qiu Zhonghui explained in his introductory remarks as President of the Board of the Amity Printing Press. The new complex will cover an area of more than 50,000 square metres of constructed area, with the first phase of construction expected to be completed in 18 months. "We hope to receive the continued support from the United Bible Societies as well as to be able to secure bank loans and other donations," Qiu said about the financing of the ambitious project. A printing capacity of 12 million volumes annually is envisioned for the new press once it is fully functioning.

Representing the national church leadership, Ji Jianhong, Chairman of the National Three Self Patriotic Movement, offered a prayer of thanks and asked for the building project to be blessed. Rev. Cao Shengjie, President of the China Christian Council, reminded the audience of the achievements of the Printing Press over the past years. Prior to the establishment of the Press, only 3 million Bibles had been produced in a number of locations from 1980 to 1986, Cao said. After the Press had started functioning in 1987, 6.5 million Bibles had been printed in quick succession, and over the past few years, the Press had continued to produce an annual average of 2 million volumes of Scripture, not including foreign language editions. Editions published by the Press included versions in Chinese traditional and simplified characters, ethnic minority languages and bilingual Chinese-English editions. "We recognize the support of the United Bible Societies and other Bible associations which has greatly contributed to the distribution of Bibles in China," Cao said.

Representing the United Bible Societies, John David brought congratulations on the occasion of the groundbreaking. "At the groundbreaking ceremony for this current printing press, Christians outside of China considered it a miracle that it was possible
to take up the production of Bibles in China again," David said, paying tribute to Han Wenzao and Bishop K.H. Ting who had the vision to establish the Printing Press at the time. In the meantime, Bible production in the company had nearly reached a total of 40 million, and the staff at the Printing Press were among the best Bible printers in the world, David said. "The new facility with up-to-date technological equipment will be an eminent Bible press not only for China but also for many other countries," John David promised.

Praise for the existing printing company also came from unexpected quarters. A representative of the Jiangning district government pointed out that the Press had not only contributed to the cause of religion in China, but was also one of the leading enterprises in the local printing industry, producing high-quality books under an advanced form of management.

2005.11/12.2

Building A Peaceful World Of Pluralistic Cultures

(ANS) Offering a wide range of activities and services, YMCAs and YWCAs play an increasingly important role in Chinese society. At the same time, they are reaching out to their international neighbours through visits, conferences and exchange programmes. November's edition of Tian Feng reports about one such international initiative, a conference dedicated to the theme of peace-building. The international and multi-disciplinary meeting proved to be like its title: peaceful and pluralistic.

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"Building a peaceful environment of pluralistic cultures: responsibilities and pressing duties of the YMCA/YWCA". Under this title, an international conference jointly organized by the Chinese Committee of YMCAs and Tianjin YMCA was held on September 25, 2005. Using the occasion of the 110th anniversary of Tianjin YMCA/YWCA, the local "Y" hosted the meeting at Tianjin's Foreign Language Institute.

This year, China commemorates the sixtieth anniversary of the end of the Sino-Japanese war. To build a peaceful environment for a pluralistic society is not only a concern for the Chinese people, but for peace-loving citizens the world over.

Participants at the conference had come from all over the world and included both YMCA delegates and representatives from other organizations. Among the YMCA/YWCA representatives were participants from Korea, Japan, Singapore, Thailand, the U.S., as well as delegates from over 40 YMCA/YWCAs in China. Five hundred students from the Foreign Language Institute of Tianjin University gave the conference an additional international outlook.

Rev. Cao Shengjie, President of the China Christian Council and also Acting Associate General Secretary of the Chinese Association of YWCAs, preached at the worship service in celebration of Tianjin YMCA's 110th anniversary; she also participated in the ensuing conference.

Zhang Yuanlong, a Vice Director of Tianjin People's Congress and a board member of Tianjin YMCA, hosted the conference. Ma Xiuru from the Chinese International Association for Personnel Exchange delivered a keynote speech with the title "An
Exploration into Innovation and Development". In his speech, Ma analysed the power of innovation as one driving force behind today's development; the influence of technological innovation on economic growth; and the implications these structures held for building a peaceful environment.

Jin Wei, Acting General Secretary of the Chinese Association of YMCAs, explored in her presentation the role YMCAs could play in bringing forth "responsible and moral world citizens". Other delegates brought in a historical perspective, such as the General Secretary of the Japanese Alliance of YMCAs, who reminded the audience of the Japanese invasion of East Asia in the 1930s and the lessons to be drawn from it.

Participants showed themselves highly satisfied with the meeting and declared it one of the highlights of the Tianjin YMCA anniversary celebrations. The way in which delegates shared their ideas about building peace in pluralistic societies was inspiring and motivating. At the farewell banquet, one overseas visitor confessed: "My expectations towards this meeting were not high, I thought it would be yet another YMCA anniversary celebration. Instead, the peace conference proved to be truly moving."

2005.11/12.3

Peaceful Mission: Chinese Astronauts Complete Second Manned Spaceflight

(ANS) Chinese astronauts completed the country's second manned spaceflight in October of this year, returning safely aboard Shenzhou Six on October 17. How do Chinese Christians view this development? In November's edition of Tian Feng, Xiao Wang offers the following reflections on the space mission.

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After the completion of the second Chinese manned space flight, Chinese Christians joined their compatriots in rapturous expressions of joy over the successful mission. All over China, Christians gave thanks to God for the technological progress of their great motherland.

The successful journey of Shenzhou Six reflects the successful and peaceful rise of socialist China and confirms China's enhanced political, economic, military and technological global position. At the same time, the space mission has an important strategic function in the overall economic, social and technological development of the country and illustrates China's successful and autonomous technological development under the leadership of the Communist Party.

From a global perspective, the Chinese space mission sent a message of China's peaceful development to the world. Peace is the foundation of China's development, and development is one foundation of peace. China's peaceful rise, as illustrated by the journey of Shenzhou Six and its crew, will benefit not only the Chinese people but humanity as a whole.

Technological progress forms an important part of China's current development model with its emphasis on building a moderately well-off society, environmental harmony, sustainable development, and increasing the overall quality of life. The
technological progress resulting from the Shenzhou space mission is expected to create multiple beneficial applications in such diverse areas as communication, exploration and conservation of resources, and urban planning.

Christians believe that the universe was created by God, and see China's latest space mission as a wondrous thing. With its many mysteries, our cosmos is an eternal treasure of humanity. To explore our universe and make peaceful use of space resources will benefit humanity and is a common goal of humankind.

The successful completion of China's latest space mission has greatly contributed to Chinese Christians' patriotism. It also encourages believers to work towards the adaptation of Christianity to socialist society and to participate in building a harmonious society. China's Christians thank and praise God for the successful launch of Shenzhou Six and the honour it has brought China.

2005.11/12.4

Stewards Of Creation: Christianity And The Environment

(ANS) Heavily polluted air and water are part of the price that China is currently paying for its rapid economic development. However, more and more Chinese are turning towards questions of environmentalism, and this includes the church. In September's edition of Tian Feng, Yang Xuelian and Liang Xiuli of Yanjing Theological College discuss the relationship between human beings and creation from a theological point of view.

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We Christians affirm that the universe and all that is in it were created by God. This implies that the created world is good and sacred, just as Genesis 1:10 and 12 say - "God saw that it was good". Therefore, the world is not the territory of any evil one. God created the world, and so is its master; humans are but stewards. This, too, has a biblical basis - in Genesis 1:26, God says "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let him rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." Here, "ruling" is to do with the similarity between man and God, the creator and sustainer of the world; "similarity" refers to man being created according to God's image. Because people and animals must both depend on the fruit of the earth for their survival, man's rule of animals must be one of peace, without lauding power of life or death over them.

Likewise, Genesis 2:15 says that man is to "take care of" the Garden of Eden. Thus, humans should imitate the work of a gardener, cultivating and protecting rather than misusing the world to further their own interests.

Since the world is God's creation, it remains his property; humans have no right to make demands upon it or abuse it. It must be handled according to the sacred standards of righteousness, not the selfish values of humans. Francis Bacon once said that "knowledge is power". Through amazing, miraculous and benevolent knowledge, we do not abuse things, but acknowledge their independence and participate in their life. We do not want to understand them in order to dominate them, but to better participate in their life. At present, the work of creation is still
being done. It will eventually overcome the original chaos and mankind's sinful
destruction of creation, and bring natural and human history into this condition. And
there love, righteousness, and reason will rule.

Whoever reveres Christ must revere all that is created in him. Christ is both Lord of
salvation and Lord of creation. He is the head of the church, accomplishing salvation
through his death on the cross, and everything was created by him. He was before
everything, and everything is built on him. The world was created through Christ, and
he must also save it. It is often difficult to investigate creation and redemption
separately. As K.H. Ting has said, "Creation contains redemption, and redemption
was in order to complete God's creation." The coming of God's word and Holy Spirit
upon the church is a sign of and precursor to God's word and Holy Spirit in the new
creation to come. Finally, "Everything is under one head in Christ" (Ephesians 1:10);
everything is one family in Christ.

God is love and loves all that he has created; there is no creation that is not
important in his eyes. All the created have their own rights and dignity because they
are included in God's covenant. In God's covenant with Noah, he said "I now
establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you and with every
living creature ..." (Genesis 9:9-10). From this we can see that humans and all living
things are God's covenant partners, and are equal before God. Nature is not
humans' "private property"; humans are not nature's master or owner, but its
steward, managing and ruling this world on God's behalf. Therefore man's work is
not to destroy nature, but to care for it. The living things of the natural world are our
"brothers" and "sisters"; we should respect them, irrespective of their monetary
worth. It is only when humans put nature on an equal footing and acknowledge its
rights that nature can be liberated from its oppression.

In the section on creation in Genesis, "God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in
our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over
the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the
ground.' So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful
and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and
the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.' Then
God said, 'I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and
every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food.' And it was so.
God saw all that he had made, and it was very good' (Genesis 1:26-31). "The Lord
God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it"
(2:15). From this section of scripture we can see God's intention when he created
the world. He told humans to live in harmony with the world and act as its steward.
He did not tell man that he could use its resources as he wished, but instructed him
to "manage" it. What does this imply about humans' place in this world? That
humans should be leaders, governing and guiding rather than wantonly dominating.

In conclusion, as leaders of creation, we should love the world more, and protect it
as an elder brother. I think this is what the Bible teaches us; it was God's intention in
creating the world, and is mankind's duty. Humans should be sincere and loyal
stewards, not selfish dictators. We should care for this environment in which we live
together. This planet belongs to everyone in it; it is our common resource. We should
be more mindful of protecting it and conscientiously perform our duty, carrying out God’s instruction to “rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air.” It is a public responsibility, a human obligation. God created this world and saw that everything was good. Returning the world to its original state is something that every person - and moreover every Christian - should strive for.

2005.11/12.5

"We Ourselves Are Only Human Beings Like You!": An Evangelist Speaks Out

(ANS) They are overworked and underpaid, yet many see them as superhuman beings: China’s grassroots evangelists. Due to a severe shortage of pastors, many congregations lie completely in the hands of preachers with little training and a never-ending Ist of duties. What is more, many congregation members believe them to be nearly superhuman. In November’s edition of Tian Feng, evangelist Li Ming from Zhejiang Province speaks up.

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After having worked as a grassroots evangelist for more than ten years, having had all kinds of experiences and after also listening to fellow evangelists, there is one thing I would like to say from the bottom of my heart: "We ourselves are only human beings like you!" (Acts 14:15) Paul and Barnabas utter this sentence after having healed a crippled man in Lystra. In response to their act of healing, the local people had seen the two disciples as incarnations of their gods and prepared to offer sacrifices to them.

Not only the superstitious inhabitants of Lystra, but also some contemporary Christians, especially those with a fervent faith and little educational background, are inclined to see evangelists as divine beings.

This tends to happen particularly in those cases where an evangelist is blessed with a special gift for preaching, praying, or even healing, gifts that are all highly regarded among grassroots believers. In some cases, the brothers and sisters develop such a predilection for the sermons of one particular preacher that they refuse to listen to anybody else preach, and they take each of the evangelist's words as a divine pronouncement. When there are people who disagree with the preacher or tend to have a different opinion about her or him, these believers see it as an attack from Satan. When a preacher has a special gift for praying, they will request prayers for all kinds of matters, and will believe that only prayers by this particular evangelist will prove to have the desired effect.

In fact, whatever gift a preacher has, it has always been bestowed to him by God, who uses certain persons as his instruments and makes their holy work successful. Believers should certainly respect preachers, but this does not mean to favour them, let alone elevate them into a divine position. Besides not being accurate, this kind of behaviour can have unpleasant effects. The evangelist concerned may become proud, and the brothers and sisters in question may lose their focus on God. Besides, once they discover that the preacher concerned has faults and commits errors, they may be bitterly disappointed or even leave the Lord.

A second related issue is the fact that believers with the tendency to venerate evangelists will have very high expectations towards them, expecting them to be
perfect. An evangelist is a servant of the Lord, but he also is only human and will have weaknesses and commit sins; it is necessary to give preachers the chance to improve and mature.

But in the eyes of some Christians, each and every evangelist should be like Peter or Paul or even Jesus Christ himself, totally absorbing his listeners' attention in every sermon, causing a crowd of five thousand to renounce sin on every occasion, and healing a sick person with every single prayer. If these things do not happen, they doubt whether the evangelist is really God's chosen servant and will debate whether he or she has indeed been touched by the Holy Spirit. They demand total dedication from their local evangelists, expecting them to arrive with the promptness of an ambulance in the case of sickness or death and also to be faultless otherwise.

The workload of grassroots preachers is tremendous, they do not have days off and sometimes have to go out in the middle of the night to pray with believers. Their salaries, on the other hand, are extremely low, often hardly enough to make ends meet, and evangelists face all kinds of sorrows and concerns. If local believers do not reach out to them with care and understanding, how can they be expected to do the Lord's work well?

2005.11/12.6

Seminal Beauty: Plans For New Nanjing Seminary Unveiled

(ANS) They had been the object of much speculation: the plans for Nanjing Union Theological Seminary's new campus. Finally, first plans have been revealed and October's edition of Tian Feng offers a glimpse at the future face of China's foremost Protestant seminary.

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Following the groundbreaking ceremony for the new campus of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary (see ANS 2005.1/2.2), details of the planned complex have now been revealed. A series of light-coloured buildings will be loosely grouped on the campus. Situated on the outskirts of Nanjing, the new campus covers nearly 201 mu [one Chinese mu equals 0.06 hectares] and will offer living space for up to 500 people. Boasting the facilities and functions required of a modern university, the new complex is estimated to cost about 140 million RMB [US$ 17.5 million approx.].

At the spiritual heart of the complex will be the seminary chapel, which will cover 5,760 square metres and will serve liturgical, artistic and musical purposes. The sanctuary will combine a simple and modern style with Chinese elements. A bell tower of nearly sixty metres height will crown the church on its eastern end.

Another focal point of seminary life will be the library. Spreading over 6,063 square metres, it will offer space for book storage, administration, reading rooms, computer facilities and more.

In August of this year, a fundraising committee for the building project was established. Headed by Bishop K.H. Ting, the committee had its first meeting in September 2005, during which the guiding principles for its fundraising efforts were discussed. Elsewhere, the Provincial Christian Council of Shandong Province has also initiated fundraising activities for China's flagship seminary.
"The Bible Unites US": Chinese Bible Exhibit Will Travel To U.S.

(ANS) "The Bible unites us," Bishop K.H. Ting reminded the audience at the opening of China's first Bible ministry exhibition in August 2004, referring to Paul's call to brothers and sisters in the Corinthian church to "be united in the same mind and the same purpose" (1 Cor 1:10). In the spirit of this message, Chinese Christians are now preparing to reach out to their brothers and sisters overseas. Xiao Wang reports in November's edition of Tian Feng.

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In August of 2004, a Bible exhibition organized by the China Christian Council in cooperation with Hong Kong partners introduced the Bible ministry of Chinese Christians to an international audience. After the successful show, several overseas churches expressed hopes of bringing the exhibition to their home constituencies. In February of this year, a delegation led by Rev. Cao Shengjie, President of the China Christian Council, visited the U.S. and had opportunity to meet with important church groups and leaders, among the former U.S. president Jimmy Carter. During the visit, a tour of the Chinese Bible exhibit to the U.S. was planned for Spring 2006.

Titled "A Lamp to my feet, a light to my path", the exhibition introduces the Chinese Bible ministry over the course of different historical phases and reflects the development of the Gospel in China as well as the deep love of Chinese believers for the Bible. Divided into six sections, the show focuses on "Bible ministry in history," "Bible publication after 1980"; "Bible distribution after 1980", "Bible ministry among China's ethnic minorities," "The Bible in church life," and "Chinese Christian art". Combining testimonies, historical pictures, artwork and exhibition pieces as well as multimedia presentations, the exhibition illustrates how Scripture unites all Christians.

With the help, support and prayer of Chinese and American Christians, the exhibit will visit the U.S. from April 27 to June 15, 2006. Stations for the exhibit will be Los Angeles' Chrystal Cathedral, followed by Second-Ponce de Leon Baptist Church in Atlanta and St. John's the Divine Cathedral in New York. "With God's guidance, we firmly believe that the Bible Exhibition will be a successful, meaningful and epoch-making witness to the ministry of the church in China," Chen Meilin, director of the China Christian Council's Overseas Relations Department, affirms. "May God prosper the work of our hands." (Psalms 90:17)

2005.11/12.8

ANS Feature

Drumming For Christ: A Look At Luzhou Church Life

(ANS) During a recent visit to Luzhou, a city situated in southern Sichuan, an international delegation had the opportunity to visit a variety of social projects initiated by the local church. While Luzhou is a particularly successful example of church-run social service projects, it also highlights the ongoing trend for increased church involvement in social services in China.

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Long before the church is in sight, it can be heard. As the group of Amity visitors turns around the corner, it becomes clear that what sounds like a Chinese dragon dance is, in fact, a Christian welcome procession. Clad in red pajamas, a cross gracing each satin chest, a group of Christian performers marches down the street. Their vigorous drumming does not only stop the traffic, it also causes the last soul in this sleepy side street of Luzhou to notice that there is something exciting going on at the local church. Chinese Christians may not be allowed to preach in public, but they are doing a pretty good job at drumming, and their thunderous performance is a wonderful way of inculturating their faith as well.

Inside the church, dancing and hymn singing follow in this welcome ceremony for an international group of visitors who have come to learn about the life and witness of Luzhou Christians.

This is one of Luzhou’s four churches and 13 meeting points that accommodate the approximately 13,000 Christians which constitute the city’s Protestant population. Luzhou’s main Protestant church was constructed in 1913 and goes back to the work of Canadian and British missionaries who came with the China Inland Mission. Today, church life is thriving, not only in terms of Christian drumming. As Rev. Liao Xiaojin explains, the congregation has about 1,000 baptized members and welcomes another 2,000 seekers each weekend. Those who decide to become Christians have to attend church activities and catechism classes for a year before they will be baptized. Currently, around 1,000 baptisms take place in Luzhou each year.

"There are various reasons why people feel attracted by the Christian faith," says Rev. Liao. "Many people come with health problems, others are going through difficult times in their families. Today’s increasingly competitive life is another reason why many feel compelled to seek support from a Christian community. Some simply are very moved by the loving care of Christians who reach out to their neighbours." She tells the story of two women who met in hospital when they were both diagnosed with uterine cancer on the same day. One of them was a Christian from Liao's congregation, and even though she was suffering herself, continued to look after her new friend throughout the illness. "The family of the second woman was very moved by this," Liao recalls.

Luzhou Christians do not only reach out to their neighbours individually, but also through a variety of services and institutions set up by the congregation, most notably a home for the elderly, a kindergarten and a clinic that are situated next to the church. The Amity Foundation partially supports these projects through equipment and training. All these endeavours, it soon becomes clear, are not only characterized by the dedicated service of those involved, but also an openness to work with outside groups that is rarely seen among Chinese Christian congregations. The kindergarten rents out some of its rooms for evening language lessons, for example, and one of the doctors at the clinic used to work with the Health Department.

This strategy pays off: Luzhou’s Christians do not only drum in the streets, the Christian church is also "advertised" in TV spots that offer advice for those needing marriage counselling. "There is no other organization people can turn to," Liao simply says.

The excellent cooperation with other social players is certainly also the product of an unusually open municipal government. "The church here is blessed to be able to step along with society. The government here is very open and recognizes that the church serves society," Rev. Liao explains. "As a result, the non-party organizations in Luzhou are very strong, such as the People's Political Consultative Conference, the Youth League, the Disabled Persons Federation and so on."

Most unusual perhaps in the Chinese context is the good relationship between Protestant and Catholic Christians in town. "The Catholic priests are also young, therefore we find it easy to communicate. We engage in interfaith dialogue and occasionally sing hymns together," reveals Rev. Liao. "The Catholics also lent us money for the construction of our new training centre. We still owe them 500,000 RMB." [US$ 62,500 approx.]
"The Son Of Man Came To Serve The People"

(ANS) During the recent International Consultation on Development marking the twentieth anniversary of the Amity Foundation, Rev. Deng Fucun, director of the China Christian Council's Social Service Department, gave the following introduction to the CCC's "Church-Run Social Service Ministry in the Context of Theological Reconstruction".

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These days, one of the most frequently discussed topics is building a harmonious society. At the same time, many voices can be heard that affirm the traditional superiority of religious circles in this endeavor. So where exactly lies the superiority of the religious world in this matter? All religious faiths and their doctrines contain the ideas of doing good, of serving society and the people. Talking about Christian theological doctrine, it clearly states that Christ, the word that became flesh, is both the Son of Man and the Son of God. His nature is both entirely human and entirely godly. Jesus says: "The Son of Man has not come to be served but to serve the people, and he will give up his life in redemption for many." The first half of this sentence talks about the mission of the Son of Man, and the second half of this sentence speaks about the mission of the Son of God.

When Bishop K.H. Ting visited Xi'an churches in 1999 and saw the social service programmes offered by the local YMCA, he said to various co-workers: "This also is the church!" This comment caused people to reflect. Below, I would like to take the opportunity to express a few viewpoints regarding the social service work of the Chinese Protestant Church.

1. A faith that serves society

Christian faith with its belief in the word that became flesh clearly expresses the ideal that it is not only concerned with the salvation of human beings, but also the physical needs of people. God loves not only the souls of human beings, but also their bodies. The Christ proclaimed by Christianity should be both the Son of God who is concerned with the salvation of people, and the Son of Man who is concerned with serving them. After the 1950s there was a time during which the Chinese church neglected to proclaim the side of the Son of Man who came to serve the people. During that time, only Jesus, the Son of God who came to save souls was preached, and social service work came virtually to a halt. In the mid-1980s, the government appealed to other groups in society to participate in social services and social welfare projects. At that time, Bishop K.H. Ting, together with some fellow Christians and a number of non-Christians, jointly established the Amity Foundation to engage in social service activities, and over the past twenty years Amity has earned praise from all areas of society.

2. Services that care for the weak groups in society

From both Biblical and theological concepts we gather the teachings and example of our Lord Jesus Christ, who called on the disciples to "help the poor" and to do good deeds to "the least of my brothers". The good Samaritan who helps the victim of a violent attack from robbers wins over the priest who observes his religious laws but fails to raise a hand to help the injured victim. These teachings by our Lord Jesus Christ very clearly teach his disciples to help those in need and to care for the weaker groups in society.

3. You give them to eat

When Jesus and his followers are confronted with a crowd that has listened for a whole day to Jesus' preaching, it is the same: The disciples ask Jesus to tell the crowd to disperse and go home to eat, but Jesus replies to his followers: "You give them to eat!" This shows clearly that Jesus Christ is not only concerned with people hearing the news about the kingdom of God, but also cares about their physical needs, and the disciples have the duty to make sure that "the hungry are fed".

4. To give is more blessed than to receive

A giving spirit is the foundation of a serving society. Those who serve and those that are served share equal importance. In real life, those who are served ought to be taken
seriously; regarding eternal life, giving is more blessed than receiving. For a very long time, contributing within the church was understood to mean giving money. Financial contributions are an important part of giving, but giving can have a number of meanings and does not only refer to money. Personal energy, contributions in time and knowledge transfer are all part of it. By making use of domestic resources, the CCC’s Social Service Department wants to lead believers in our church to channel some of the resources that would normally be used for building churches towards social service projects.

5. Let people give love

Five loaves and two fish are certainly not enough to feed five thousand people, but this gift, through the blessing of our Lord Jesus Christ, is not only enough to feed five thousand people, but even to fill twelve baskets with the leftovers. "We love because God loved us first." "Nobody has ever seen God, but if we love each other, God will be among us." "The word that became flesh is in our midst, full of grace and truth, we have seen his light and it truly is the light of God’s only son." Based on such convictions, the CCC’s Social Service Department promotes the involvement of grassroots churches in social service projects.

Finally, I would like to talk about the nature, function of and relationship between the Social Service Department and the Amity Foundation.

In the mid-1980s, following the policy of reform and opening, people's understanding of social service work deepened, and the general understanding was that social welfare and social service work should be undertaken by social groups, and the government called on social organizations to become involved in social service work. At that time, the Chinese church was preoccupied with the task of implementing the policy of resuming normal religious activities, and did not have the capacities to become involved in social service work. Bishop K.H. Ting together with some other church leaders grasped this opportunity to establish the Amity Foundation, in which Christians and non-Christians work together in social service projects. It is a non-governmental organization that is independent from the church and at the same time a successful example of cooperation between Christians and non-Christians. The social service projects run by Amity include work in the areas of education, rural development, poverty alleviation, emergency relief, blindness prevention, medical and health work, and social welfare. Through Amity’s three-in-one principle (with local governments, beneficiaries, and Amity each giving one part of the portion), a channel for the ecumenical sharing of resources with overseas church-related social service agencies was created. The Social Service Department is an organization within the church and focuses its work on:

1. the promotion and organization of grassroots churches to become involved in social service projects according to their capacities. Among the projects currently promoted are homes for the elderly, church-run township clinics, orphanages, training for HIV prevention programmes, autism rehabilitation, support for school-less children, support for the rebuilding of churches after natural disasters, and support for church workers in poverty-stricken areas;

2. making use, wherever possible, of domestic resources, organizing exchanges and specialized training;

3. where possible, to promote cooperation with overseas social service organizations in the implementation of projects.
Christmas Greetings From The China Christian Council

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

On behalf of the Protestant Christians in China, I bring you warmest greetings for a merry Christmas and a happy New Year!

In the past year, China has made rapid progress on its way of building a harmonious society. The successful manned spaceflight of Shenzhou Six inspired the enthusiasm of the Chinese people. Meanwhile, we remain determined that China must choose a way of peace and development, for what we believe is the King of Peace.

The churches in China are still developing. Nanjing Union Theological Seminary held its groundbreaking ceremony for the new campus in January of this year. The renovation project of the Holy Trinity Church is estimated to start next year after the design and formalities will have been finalized. As in previous years, new churches have been built throughout the country over the past year. A so-called mega-church, Chongyi Church in Hangzhou (Zhejiang Province), was opened last summer with a capacity of 5,000 people. We are grateful to God for all these achievements.

Overseas relations of the CCC/TSPM are also developing. More than 800 overseas guests have been received in our new headquarters so far. On one occasion, we received more than 60 foreign friends at once, who had come to China to attend the 20th anniversary celebrations of the Amity Foundation. The CCC also attended the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism in Athens, Greece, in May 2005. During the conference, we held a workshop introducing the current situation of the churches in China. Next February, the CCC will send a delegation of five to attend the 9th Assembly of WCC in Porto Alegre, Brazil. During the period from April to June 2006, the CCC/TSPM will hold a China Bible Ministry Exhibition in Los Angeles, Atlanta and New York and we are now busy preparing for it.

We hope that through all these activities, foreign churches will gain a deeper understanding of the situation of the churches in China and that our fellowship will be enhanced.

We are thankful for the efforts made by the editorial team of ANS to bring information about the churches in China to the ecumenical world. We also would like to thank all readers for their care and prayer.

Rev. Dr. Cao Shengjie
President, China Christian Council

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Places Mentioned In This Issue Of ANS

1) Nanjing (Jiangsu)
2) Tianjin
3) Luzhou (Sichuan)