Dear Reader,

During a high-ranking leadership meeting in autumn 2004, China's church leaders resolved to allow the possibility of consecrating bishops in the future. Mainland China's only surviving Protestant bishop, Bishop K.H. Ting, was consecrated in 1955. Two bishops were consecrated in Shanghai in the 1980s but all of them have since passed away.

As those involved in the decision-making process are quick to point out, this move does not signify a development towards an episcopal system. China's bishops-to-be will not have any administrative powers, but will focus on their tasks as shepherds with a guiding role in theological and other matters of faith. One of the considerations behind this decision is the idea that bishops will help to strengthen the ecclesiastical nature of the Chinese Protestant church, which in its present practice allows a strong role for local congregations. You find our coverage of this development on p1 and p5.

In other news, we take a look at continuing exchanges between the national church leadership and their foreign counterparts (p7 and p9). Finally, two feature articles allow you a glimpse of church life and social service at the grassroots in Guangdong and Hunan (p12 and p13).

With kind regards from the editorial desk,

Katrin Friedes

2005.1/2.1

Church Leadership Discusses Consecrating Bishops

(ANS) Before they united in a post-denominational church, Chinese Protestants came from a variety of denominational backgrounds, ranging from strongly congregational and non-hierarchic traditions like the indigenous True Jesus Church to high Anglican structures. Today, local congregations are held together through a network of Christian Councils on various administrative levels. Although the national church leadership provides guidance and an ecclesiastical framework, e.g. with its Church Order, local congregations are quite independent. In the light of this situation, the decision to consecrate (more) bishops is an interesting development that raises the question of how this move will affect the wider church structure. Currently, Bishop K.H. Ting (who comes from an Anglican background) is mainland China's only living Protestant bishop, consecrated in 1955.
On October 10, 2004, an enlarged leadership meeting consisting of representatives from the national CCC/TSPM leadership decided that the Chinese Protestant Church should consecrate bishops in the future. A committee and a working group will work out the implementation of the plan.

Rev. Cao Shengjie, President of the China Christian Council, and Presbyter Ji Jianhong, Chairman of the National TSPM, jointly presided over the meeting.

Deng Fucun, Vice Chairman of the TSPM, opened the meeting by reporting about the National TSPM/CCC Committee’s Bible Exhibition held in Hong Kong in August 2004. Internal personnel matters were also on the agenda, followed by recommendations that had emerged from a previous seminar on "How the Chinese church can strengthen its ecclesiastical character". As Rev. Deng explained, one of the recommendations from the discussion was that the Chinese Protestant churches install bishops.

During the meeting, Bishop K.H. Ting, Honorary Chairman of the National TSPM and Honorary President of the National CCC, delivered a key speech in which he explained the reasoning behind this suggestion. "I really wish that the Chinese church will strengthen its ecclesiastical nature," he said, adding that most churches worldwide had bishops, including the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox churches and a number of Scandinavian Lutheran churches. "We do not want to turn into a church with an episcopal system, and our bishops do not have administrative powers. The current plan to have bishops is intended to make the Chinese church more complete in ecclesiastical terms."

In his address, Presbyter Ji Jianhong reminded the audience of the specific Chinese situation. Because of the historical legacy of some denominations, the Chinese Protestant church had bishops without an episcopal system.

Rev. Cao Shengjie explained the decision-making process that had led to this development. A series of meetings convened by Bishop K.H. Ting in the first half of the year had shown an overall consensus that bishops would be one further step in building the Chinese church. All historical churches had bishops, and the Chinese church was part of the historical church ecumenical. Keeping the holy order of bishop was a way to incorporate traditions of the church ecumenical into Chinese church life, it was a beneficial move to build the Chinese church, to regulate the functions of vocations within the church and to strengthen pastoral work. Bishops with their authority in matters of faith and theology could exercise a positive function regarding theological reconstruction and the fight against heresies, and having bishops would benefit international exchanges.

2005.1/2.2

Nanjing Seminary Breaks New Ground

(ANS) It was a cold winter morning but unexpected sunshine warmed the bodies and hearts of the more than 200 guests, government officials, church leaders, faculty and students who had gathered in the wide open space marked for the campus to celebrate the groundbreaking ceremony for the new Nanjing Union Theological Seminary on January 17th, 2005. Theresa Carino, Coordinator of the Amity Foundation’s Hong Kong office, reports.

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Located in the emerging university town of Jiangning, in the outskirts of Nanjing, the new campus for Nanjing Union Theological Seminary will span an area of 33.5 acres (or 12.4 hectares), have facilities for 500 students and stand amidst 13 other institutions of higher learning. Its relocation will provide a fitting environment for challenging theological thinking and encouraging cross fertilization between Christianity and the fine arts and culture of China.

Noting the pioneering nature of the new seminary, Bp. K.H. Ting began the groundbreaking ceremony with a quote from Guatemalan poet Otto Rene Castillo, "Walking ahead of the times
Requires bearing a greater burden of sorrow
Yet,
To be able to love the world
Through the eyes of those yet to be born ---
How great and beautiful a thing that is."

In his remarks, Bishop K.H. Ting, President of the seminary since its establishment in 1952, stated that it was inevitable and significant that the development of the new seminary would be accompanied by the advancement of theological reconstruction. He stressed how important it was for the church to nurture people who had relatively high theological attainment, had well rounded personalities and were knowledgeable in history, philosophy and the arts.

Presbyter Ji Jianhong, Executive Vice-President of the seminary and Chair of the National TSPM, explained that the relocation was necessary since the present campus of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary had been designated a national, historical heritage. There would be little space for expansion and it would be retained as a research centre for the seminary. In the new campus, he made special mention of the seminary chapel, which will be a place of common worship and a symbol of Christian unity. Architecturally, it was hoped that the seminary would reflect the best of Christian traditions combined with Chinese characteristics. He explained that the development of the new seminary was not only in keeping with rapid church growth in China but essential to the health of the church and the fulfilment of its mission. There was an urgency to the task of enriching and raising academic levels, content and pedagogy of theological education. It was his hope that a seminary with the spirit of rationality and new theological thinking would be completed with the support of the Chinese government, and through the prayers and support of fellow Christians in and outside of China.

There have been generous concessions from the Central and local governments. The seminary will only pay one tenth of the market price for the land in Jiangning district. In addition, the central government is contributing 10 million RMB to the constructions costs, which are presently estimated to be around 140 million RMB. During the ceremony, Ye Xiaowen, Director of the State Administration of Religious Affairs, decided to waive reading his prepared speech so that guests would not have to prolong their stay in the cold. Instead, he congratulated the seminary on the occasion and quipped: "If winter is here, can spring be far behind?"

A large contingent of more than 40 church leaders and friends from Hong Kong, Macau, Korea, North America and Europe were represented in the ceremony.
Anglican Archbishop Peter Kwong of Hong Kong expressed his hope that there may eventually be space for students from Hong Kong and Macau in the new seminary so they can have shared theological education and training. Richard Mouw, President of Fuller Seminary, described the seminary as a seedbed for planting new hope not only for the church but also for China. Ray Whitehead, representing Canadian churches, saw the new campus as a place for the renewal of Chinese theology and affirmed that "reconstruction of theological thinking is necessary because of past errors of western Christians." He reminded everyone that the goal of theological education is to "train leaders for a Church that seeks justice for the poor and all who are oppressed; a church that works for peace and the healing of the human community." Renowned Korean theologian, Kim Yong Bock regarded the ground breaking as a historic moment in Asia and "a beginning page for Asian theology."

Also present to express their support were more than 80 representatives from National, Provincial and city-level Christian organisations, seminaries and Bible schools around the country. Faculty and students from Nanjing Union Theological Seminary were present in full force. In a tribute to the students, Whitehead, who teaches Christian Ethics there, described them as a "lovely gift from God". Their voices filled the air following the symbolic ground breaking by leaders, guests and officials. As dozens of doves streamed skyward, the joyful strains of "I love the Church in China" from the Nanjing Union Theological Seminary choir accompanied their ascent. It was a beautiful conclusion to a new beginning.  

Launching American Edition of God Is Love

(ANS) While numerous works of foreign theologians have been translated into Chinese and are available in ordinary bookshops, not many mainland Chinese theological writings find their way into foreign publications. One notable exception is Bishop K.H. Ting, whose collected writings were published by Chinese publisher Yilin Press in English under the title "Lover Never Ends" in April 2000. Now, an American publisher has produced another English edition of this work, as Tian Feng reports in its January edition.

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Around a hundred guests attended the ceremony on 14 December 2004 to mark the publication, among them representatives from the publisher, Cook Communications. Rev. Cao Shengjie, President of the China Christian Council, and Presbyter Ji Jianghong, Chairman of the National TSPM, hosted the book launching at the new headquarters in Shanghai.

Presbyter Ji Jianghong praised Bishop K.H. Ting as an outstanding Chinese theologian, adding that the publication of an American edition of the bishop's writings would further the understanding of the Chinese church among American audiences.

Representing Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, Prof. Chen Zemin honoured Bishop K.H. Ting as a church leader of enduring faith, whose fate and reflections mirrored the fate of the Chinese church over the past decades.

In his response, Prof. Chen Yilu from Guangdong Union Theological Seminary viewed the publication of Bishop K.H. Ting's writings as part of the general shift from a Christianity rooted in Europe and America towards Asia and Africa as the centres of Christian faith.

In his speech, the author himself thanked all those who had helped him in writing the pieces published in God Is Love. No writer could write alone, Bishop K.H. Ting said, adding that the lively theological environment at Nanjing Union Theological Seminary had stimulated his writing.

2005.1/2.4

How To Strengthen The Chinese Church

(ANS) After initiating the ongoing movement for theological reconstruction, new issues are on the minds of those who guide China's Protestant churches. In December's edition of Tian Feng, national church leaders share some of their thoughts and concerns regarding the task of building the Chinese church.

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Bishop K.H. Ting:
The question of whether the Chinese church will have bishops has already progressed to the affirmative stage. I was one of those who were involved in the negotiations. I wish very much that the National TSPM/CCC Committee will strengthen the ecclesiastical character of the church. The current plan to appoint bishops in China is intended to provide the Chinese Protestant church with a more ecclesiastical nature. I hope that China’s future bishops will create a new situation for the Chinese church through taking on even more tasks and responsibilities for the church as well as the state and the people.

Regarding the ecclesiastical nature of the church, I think a more apt way of phrasing it is to say that our coworkers within the church need to be very conscious of church development. They should be very familiar with church regulations, understand what attitude the church should take towards certain issues, how they should be handled and in how far these ways are different from ways of dealing with issues in other areas. This is also to say that the church will have its own position (this position will be in line with the position of the state and the people). This is the ecclesiastical nature of the church. When a person or a group brings a coworker with such an ecclesiastical notion to identify with our nation, that is love for our country and love for the church. Often, we say to outsiders: The Three Self is not a church, and neither is the CCC - then, where is the Chinese church? Once we have bishops, we won’t have to say any more “there is none”, and the question of “where is it” also will disappear.

Regarding our prospect of building the church, I furthermore hope that the Chinese church leadership will become democratic. No matter whether they are China's future bishops or administrative leaders, everybody should follow the principle of managing the church in a democratic way; Chinese Christianity must be democratic.
We must not only be familiar with each and every regulation to manage the church well, but should also prepare a platform to make the Chinese church more ecclesiastical, youthful, and more theological. This includes establishing a good working environment for our younger coworkers and choosing colleagues with a talent for study and awareness for the church.

**Luo Guanzong, former Chairman of the National TSPM:**

[...] In recent years, on the basis of running the church well, Bishop K.H. Ting has promoted theological reconstruction and led us towards broadening our minds and visions, to reflect on how Christianity and socialism can be reconciled. While we continue with our efforts to train a generation of successors, we have had a leadership transition in many local churches in recent years. These new leaders bring new developments into church work. And most recently, in one reaction to our research on theological reconstruction, we have been considering to consecrate bishops in our efforts to strengthen the ecclesiastical nature of the church. In accordance with the post-denominational nature of our church, this does not mean a re-creation of the episcopal system, but it will give our church more prestige in- and outside of China, will contribute to the building and unity of our church and make it into a golden lampstand beloved by the people.

**Han Wenzao, former President of the China Christian Council:**

[...] During my involvement with building the Chinese church, I have come to realize that adhering to the Three Self does not imply total independence. The Chinese church should become a witnessing part of the church ecumenical. I remember that in our 1996 work report, we emphasized "Running the church well." Times change and today, we attach particular importance to theological reconstruction in our efforts to serve the church with its believers and make it into a church built onto the rock of truth. Generational transitions are natural and the ongoing leadership changes within the Chinese church are a sign of the church’s vigorous nature. The church as an organization needs to be rejuvenated, this is an unavoidable trend of our times and society.

**Presbyter Ji Jianhong, Chairman of the Three Self Patriotic Movement:**

Bishop K.H. Ting’s suggestion to strengthen the ecclesiastical nature of our church is a very timely and important demand that has a guiding function for us in our efforts to build the Chinese church. Although the Chinese word for bishop differs from the original word and although our system of supervision will be different, the sense of mission and service will be the same. The bishops that will emerge in China today will be different from those that we had in the past. We have to recognize the fact that the bishops consecrated in China 50 years ago belonged to denominations, while the bishops appointed in Shanghai in the 1980s were of a local and honorary nature. Our future bishops will be under the framework of the National CCC/TSPM Committee. They will be united in our uniting church, they will be following their holy call within the Chinese church and will be appointed following the developmental needs of the Chinese church. While there may be an overlap in personnel between the National CCC/TSPM Committee and our bishops, we will observe the difference between administrative powers and the power of the holy call. As for the choice of persons, there will be no consideration for the gender or previous denominational affiliation of candidates as long as she or he is willing to accept the call.
Our local churches need to be guided towards regulating their activities and raising their standards in terms of culture, knowledge and rationality. At the same time, local church leaderships need to become younger; this rejuvenation is a guarantee for continuous development of the Chinese church. Thanks to the grace of God, many church leaders have emerged over the past twenty years who love their church and their country, and it can be said that apart from the remoter parts of our country, all provincial and municipal Christian Councils as well as the main churches are in a position to make a generational change happen. Therefore, the national church leadership issued age-related guidelines in 2002 that require national church leaders to resign at 75, while they must not be older than 70 when appointed.

Rev. Cao Shengjie, President of the China Christian Council: [...] The early church already knew the holy call for bishops. "To aspire to leadership is an honourable ambition." (1 Tim 3:1) The word "leadership" here is identical with the Greek word for bishop, therefore establishing the position of bishops is in accordance with biblical teaching. The church ecumenical also has the tradition of bishops and maintains it to this day, among them the Catholic and Orthodox churches as well as the Anglicans, Methodists and Northern European Lutherans. The Chinese church as a part of the church ecumenical attaches great importance to this historical tradition and wishes to continue it. Being a post-denominational church, our bishops will not be part of an episcopal system and will be non-denominational as well as adhere to the Three Self principles. In an episcopal system, bishops have administrative powers and are heads of the church's management structure. Our bishops will not have administrative powers but will have to take on pastoral duties and watch over the purity and orthodoxy of our teachings, including the threat of sects and heresies. Appointing bishops will strengthen the ecclesiastical nature of the church and prove beneficial for a healthy development of the Chinese church; I approve of the Chinese church's plans to appoint bishops. The national church leadership has long been involved in work to strengthen the ecclesiastical nature of our church; our common catechism and hymnal are fruits of that work.

As we are facing the task of rejuvenating the church, the older generation has to allow a genuine transfer of duties to the younger generation, and our young colleagues have to be aware of their historical mission.

2005.1/2.5

"Our Particular Hope: More Cooperation In Training Personnel"

(ANS) Returning a 2003 visit by the Chinese church leadership, a delegation of 14 persons representing Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) visited the National CCC/TSPM Committee in November 2004. A lively and friendly session ensued, during which both sides shared some of the opportunities and challenges they are facing. Below, we reprint a December 2004 Tian Feng interview with Dr. David Goodbourn, General Secretary of CTBI.

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Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) is an old friend of the Chinese church. On this current trip to China, what is your impression of the Chinese church?
Very obviously, the Chinese church is richly blessed. Churches are very full, and believers follow the service very earnestly. I can also see that Chinese believers have created a very close community in which they mutually help and support each other, and they wholeheartedly serve within the church. All of this has created a deep impression on me.

As a member of the World Council of Churches (WCC), how do you see the ecumenical movement?

First of all, the ecumenical movement experienced tremendous development during the latter half of the last century, as a result of which local churches all over the world realized that they should enhance cooperation with each other. At this point in time, we also realize that the ecumenical movement is facing a number of challenges, the biggest of which is how to rebuild the ecumenical movement not only on the global and regional, but also the local level. As the number of members in the WCC has continually increased, it is very difficult for us to define the character of this movement. We have also started to look for new ways to let this pluralist movement with its many players become more real. While maintaining the tradition of the mainstream churches, the ecumenical movement has always emphasized the wish to incorporate evangelical and pentecostal churches as well.

Could the current format of CTBI, namely the coexistence of various denominations, become a model for the ecumenical movement?

In Britain and Ireland, the number of Christians represented by CTBI is very high. Other countries also have examples of multi-denominational organizations, and we are not the only organization comprising Catholic and Protestant churches. Like many other church organizations, we hope that other churches can join the road to unity. As my colleague in heading this delegation, Mgr. Keith Baltrop from the London Welsh Diocese, has described it, we are in the process of a reform and are trying out new methods to promote cooperation between different churches with our own means.

What role does CTBI play within the social service of the church?

CTBI participates in all kinds of social service activities, both within the UK and abroad. The biggest social service department within CTBI is the organization Christian Aid. With huge funds raised from Christians and non-Christians, they help persons in need. Last year, they collected 60 million British Pounds. This organization operates social service programmes not only in Britain, but also participates in some social service projects initiated by the ecumenical movement. In this regard, the main issues that we are concerned with are multi-ethnic justice and the needs of migrants. From a denominational perspective, every denomination has its own programmes, the biggest ones being those run by the Salvation Army. In our delegation, we have a representative from the Salvation Army. The Salvation Army mostly helps the homeless, the poor, the handicapped and other people in need.

Through this visit, what areas of cooperation between CTBI and the Chinese church do you expect to further develop?
Of course I hope that we can strengthen our relationship. Through exchanges, British churches hope to understand how a post-denominational church like the Chinese one works, and they hope to continue their exchanges through the China Desk of CTBI. As I mentioned in my speech during our sharing session, we particularly hope to cooperate in the areas of training for personnel and theological education, and hope to strengthen our working partnership.

2005.1/2.6

**Chinese And German Churches Open "New Page" In Chapter Of Friendship**

(ANS) Following an invitation from the National CCC/TSPM Committee, a high-ranking German delegation visited China in October 2004. Headed by Bishop Huber, Chairman of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), the group visited the national church leadership in Shanghai on October 15. Tian Feng conducted an interview with the bishop that first appeared in its December 2004 edition and is reproduced in translation below.

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*This is your first visit to China and Chinese churches. What are your impressions after this trip?*

First of all, I would like to emphasize that more and more people are developing a strong interest in China. Before I came on this visit, my friends who had been to China on business trips or for leisure all told me what a profound and deep impression China had made on them. Therefore I was eager to come to China and see for myself. I have to admit that my impressions of China have changed over these past ten or twelve days. Through this trip, I have come to feel that China will play an increasingly important role in the 21st century. Whoever wants to understand the global changes in the 21st century will have to understand China. Of course, during these brief ten or twelve days I cannot arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the country, because in this short period of time I am only collecting impressions and listening. China is so vast, its population is so numerous and the country has such a bright history, it is impossible to understand this beautiful country with its long history and multicultural background in such a short span of time. I will take up three aspects in my reply to your question. The contribution of the Chinese Protestant Church, the aims of the church and the special way in which the church is seeking to contribute to Chinese society are the three things that impressed me most during this visit.

*Could you say something as to how German churches see the relationship between the church ecumenical and the independent nature of churches on the national level? How is this relationship defined according to theological teachings?*

Both for Chinese and German churches, this is a special question. Maybe we can find an answer to it in the New Testament. China and Germany have many things in common, and many testimonies relating to the New Testament can be found in our countries. In the New Testament, it is mentioned that churches are of local nature, but are also in touch with other churches. In the New Testament it is phrased like this: "Church" (Ecclesia) means both individual churches that come together for worship, and the wider unity of these churches. Therefore I believe that "church" has
always had a local nature, and it refers to the body made up by persons who join for worship, baptism and communion. At the same time, "church" represents the relationship between these individual local churches. On the one hand, an individual church stands for itself, on the other hand, it has close relationships with other local churches. Therefore, a church is never limited to itself alone. A church should have an ecumenical nature as well as a local nature.

The social services provided by German churches have become an integral and very important part of life in German society. Could you briefly introduce the situation to us? And what is the role and function of EKD in these social services?

EKD has 23 member churches, together they have 27 million church members and represent one third of Germany's population. The Catholic church has about the same number of church members, and altogether they represent the majority of the German population. Both Catholic and Protestant church leaders are of the opinion that the church should take on a special responsibility in society and create a good image in the view of the public. The church also represents the political and social responsibility of Christians. Therefore, whenever a social problem emerges, we have to stand up and speak for those who cannot demand justice for themselves, to speak up for the weak segments in society. EKD has a branch organization that is specially responsible for social activities and to establish special organizations like kindergartens, youth activity centres, centres that provide care for the impaired, homes for the elderly and so on. At the same time, our churches also have branch organisations that meet the requirements of the service organizations mentioned above, that understand the special responsibilities of these organizations and their position within society, and these branches also care for the weaker elements of society. Because we are a Christian church, this benefits our witness, so that those weaker people will command the same respect as those who are strong, that those who are poor will be as respected as those who are rich. We cannot think of the rich as the blessed ones and the poor as the cursed ones. On the contrary, we ought to believe that no matter what social position and situation people are in, they all have the same human dignity. We ought to implement social reforms, supporting the promotion of human equality for all.

Through this visit, what hopes do you have for developing friendship and progressive cooperation between the Chinese and German churches?

This visit follows a visit by the Chinese national church leadership a year ago, and it has broadened and deepened our friendship. It has deepened our friendship because it has made our mutual understanding grow, and this visit has helped us to broaden our vision in many ways. The success of this visit is also thanks to your perfect organization; the schedule was very balanced and well thought-out. Every day, through the exposure programme we gathered new information in every single hour from dusk till dawn. In the countryside, we were exposed to the real situation, and experienced some projects first-hand. This visit has widened our friendship because it has added new opportunities to cooperate in some areas and on some issues, as well as opportunities for exchange. We are very happy that as a result of this meeting, the Chinese National CCC/TSPM Committee and the EKD delegation were able to agree on a number of specific areas of cooperation, and these activities
will necessarily bring EKD and the CCC closer together in their cooperation. These three areas of cooperation are: theological education, social service, and theological dialogue. All of these are topics that are currently of great importance. Through cooperation, our respective colleagues will find out the best system for cooperation. Through our visits and this meeting, a new page has been opened in the friendship and cooperation between our churches.

2005.1/2.7

Music For Medicine: Shanghai "Ys" Raise Funds For AIDS Victims

(ANS) With one million HIV-infected persons, China is on the brink of a pandemic if thorough prevention measures are not taken soon. The government has recognized this and has drastically stepped up education, prevention and care for victims of the immunodeficiency disease. Likewise, more and more independent groups are joining the fight against AIDS, among them Shanghai's YWCA and YMCA. True to their spirit of serving society, they jointly organized a charity concert to raise awareness and funds for the fight against AIDS, as Xiao Wang reports in December's issue of Tian Feng.

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On October 24, 2004, a fundraising concert jointly organized by Shanghai's YMCA and YWCA took to the stage. Themed "Caring about AIDS, Enjoying life together", the concert gathered a crowd of 500 people in the great auditorium of the People's Political Consultative Conference Building.

Decorated with red ribbons, the global symbol of solidarity with AIDS victims, the auditorium was brimming with activity, joining the young and the elderly, wealthy and less wealthy supporters. Apart from the concert proper, a charity sale and the collection of donations added to the funds raised on the occasion.

Through a variety of musical forms, the 2004 Golden Autumn Charity Concert helped to raise the audience's concern for AIDS victims. Misunderstandings and fears disappeared in favour of a feeling of social responsibility. Supported by a number of charitable organisations, including the Asia Foundation and the Amity Foundation, the event featured choirs from the YMCA, YWCA, Shanghai's Community Church and musicians from Shanghai's universities on stage.

Worldwide, the current AIDS crisis is a major concern. Globally, 14,000 persons are newly infected with the HIV virus every day, and 8,000 people die from the disease. In China, the number of HIV infections is rising by 30% every year, hitting mostly younger segments of the population between 15 and 49 years of age. In line with Christian ethics, Shanghai's YMCA and YWCA are actively involved in the global fight against AIDS, hoping to dispel wrong notions about the disease as well as prejudices against those infected, and striving to help prevent new infections.

"The YMCA and YWCA are making AIDS education an important part of their programmes," explained Wu Jianrong, head of the city's YMCA. "Through a number of activities, we hope to educate the city's 100,000 young people on how to protect themselves. AIDS prevention has to start with the young generation." In this concert, Christians and other members of society jointly enjoyed the beauty of life through the language of music, while people's awareness of AIDS and the concern for its victims
were being raised, Wu said, adding that the concert also served as a kick-off for the "youth" AIDS-related programmes.

2005.1/2.8

ANS Feature:

A Winning Combination: Seminary And Social Service

(ANS) China's society is aging at a rapid pace, and together with changing family patterns, this creates the need for social services for the elderly. Many churches are picking up on this trend and initiate homes for the aged. Below, Katrin Fiedler reports on a particularly winning combination - what is probably China's only retirement home that is an integral part of a seminary community.

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It's colourful. It's musical. It's interactive. Yes, and soon it will be aromatic as well. What looks like a small, spartan room with blackened walls turns out to be an oasis of sights and sounds, thanks to a computerized system in the background. As a cloud of colours weaves its way up the dark wall, Ci Xiaolan claps her hands, and the cloud breaks into an explosion of multi-coloured shooting stars.

This is a "multi-sensory room" that allows clients to deal with anxiety, depression and other moods in a creative and harmless way. Considered upscale even in homes for the elderly in developed countries, it certainly sets Luke's Home for the Elderly in Guangzhou apart from its competitors, and shows the level of professionalism the institution is striving for. Located on the campus of Guangdong Union Theological Seminary, the young home in service of the aged has been rapidly making a name for its dedicated and professional care. This success did not come easy, though.

"The biggest problem for us in the beginning was that we didn't know anything about geriatric care," says Ci Xiaolan, after switching off the multi-sensual system. "We didn't know enough about behaviour of the elderly and how to interpret it. I remember one staff meeting shortly after the home was started. One of our superiors was asking us how we were doing, and we all said: We feel like breaking into tears." A kindergarten teacher by training, the middle-aged woman has been with Luke's Home for the Elderly since the beginning, mostly in an administrative capacity. "But we do a lot of multi-tasking, sharing a number of jobs between different people," she explains.

To overcome these initial difficulties and upgrade their professional skills, the home's staff embarked on a series of training sessions, some of them in cooperation with overseas supporters. Today, they feel competent enough to train incoming employees ("It is very important to give them good training"), but still organize occasional lectures on specialized topics for the benefit of all staff.

One of the home's newest residents is an old lady who hails from Hong Kong. Her move is proof not only of the service quality in Luke's Home for the Elderly, but also signals a growing trend among Hong Kong's senior citizens. With the same language and cuisine across the border, but much better value for money, more and more Hong Kong elderly are moving into retirement homes in Guangdong Province. Tucking into her lunch side by side with her new neighbours, the newcomer seems to be settling in well.

Accommodation and services for residents vary according to their needs and financial position. Living costs are priced between 550 RMB [US$ 69 approx.] in an eight-person dorm to 950 RMB in a single room, on top of which the cost for personal care is added - another 150 RMB to 900 RMB per month, depending on how much attention a client needs. George Zhou is among the lucky ones who can afford a deluxe double room with aircon and TV - "It's like a hotel," the alert retiree with the cultivated speech says. "My wife and I moved in about a year ago. My wife is suffering from rheumatism, so she needs care. I didn't want to stay behind alone and made the move with her. We now share a room here in the home." For those who, like Zhou's wife, need medical help, rehabilitation is part of the daily routine. More agile patients while their time away with TV and specially organized activities like handicrafts, singing, health-related talks and excursions.

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China are establishing homes for the elderly, this is probably the only home for the aged that is an integral part of a seminary - a relationship that is reflected in the schedules of both institutions, and from which both sides benefit.

"Seminary students will come to volunteer at the home; for them this is a kind of service learning experience," says CI. "And when we have special celebrations, performances and the like, we invite our friends from the seminary over."

With so much going on at the home, there should be little need for multi-sensory room. But then, age follows its own laws.

2005.1/2.9

ANS Feature:

Ready For The Second Century: A Glimpse At Churches In Hunan Province

(ANS) Although today the historic role of foreign missionaries in bringing the Gospel to China is viewed ambivalently, at least in official statements, their memory and heritage continue to be cherished by many at the grassroots, as Katrin Fiedler discovered during a recent trip to Hunan Province. Below she takes a glimpse at two churches that trace their roots in missionary times.

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With its mountainous scenery, pristine forests and spectacular caves, Zhangjiajie in western Hunan province has developed into one of the hottest internal tourist destinations in China over the past years. Few people know, however, that the city is also home to one of the biggest churches in the region. Situated on the outskirts of the city, Gospel Church with its 47-metre high clock tower rises majestically amid small huts from a muddy landscape. Combining a neoclassical entrance with a red-and-white brick structure boasting large windows, the church is an eclectic mix of various western styles and probably most impressive for its sheer size. "We accommodate a thousand believers every Sunday," Rev. Li Xingwen proudly introduces his church, "and on special occasions like Christmas we have 2,000 visitors for the worship service."

With its daring design ("We showed a picture to the architect"), the current church was erected in 1997 and constitutes the third church building on this site. It replaces an older structure that had been destroyed twice, once in 1934 and later during the Cultural Revolution. Still standing right next to the new church is the very first chapel this congregation ever had - a simple white structure dating back to 1905. Finnish missionaries brought the Gospel to this western corner of Hunan, together with a number of social services like a school and two clinics.

Resuming church life after a twenty-year break due to the Cultural Revolution was not easy. Only twenty believers gathered for the first service in October 1985 - and they had no church. After much praying and with a financial investment of 1.5 million RMB [US$ 187,500 approx.], the current church building was consecrated on Easter Sunday 1997 and now is home to 1,800 members. Apart from a variety of regular weekly activities, Gospel Church also offers a training class for volunteer church workers once a year.

Like Gospel church, Rev. Li's Christian background is long for Chinese standards. Rev. Li comes from a family that "became Christian during the Qing dynasty," as he proudly explains. Li, who has been involved in church work the past 16 years, was ordained four years ago, after studying at the Hunan Bible School for two years, some additional training and several years of practical working experience in the church. Zhangjiajie is an
ethnically diverse area, and among the city's Christians are members from twenty national minorities. Like his congregation, around 60% of which belong to the Tu Jia ethnic minority, Li has links to this indigenous group - his mother was Tu Jia. Li is one of two ordained pastors in Zhangjiajie. Apart from the city church, there are 47 rural congregations. "Do you have to travel to these rural churches to celebrate communion and baptism services?" "No, they take care of themselves," says Li.

Resuming its social service tradition, Gospel Church has started a number of small-scale social service projects, some of which have petered out over time. "We had a small orphanage, but the children have all grown up now. At one point, we opened a kindergarten, but because we are somewhat inconveniently located, this hasn't worked out." However, there are two initiatives that have survived: Gospel Church takes care of a number of elderly who live on the premises, and there is a small clinic supported by the congregation. Started with capital given by the Amity Foundation, the clinic's turnover from patients' fees and medicine sales is now high enough to keep it going. Huang Yuanwen is a young doctor who comes daily into the clinic to diagnose patients and offer basic medical services. She draws a salary from the church, but there are also a number of volunteers who help regularly in the clinic.

In the future, the congregation hopes to become active in AIDS education and counselling, explains Rev. Li. "Because of its tourism-related prostitution, Zhangjiajie is probably number three or four among Hunan cities in terms of HIV infections, and Henan [the province most affected by HIV infections] is also not far from here." In cooperation with the Hunan Christian Council, church members have already received some basic AIDS training.

A few days later, a Sunday service in the provincial capital Changsha shows another, very urban slice of Chinese church life, as a large and well-dressed congregation gathers for its Sunday service in the city's Northern Church. In fact, two services have to be held every Sunday to accommodate a crowd of around 3,000 believers in total. Other activities during the week include catechism classes, Sunday School, visitation of the sick, counselling for seekers, prayer meetings, Bible study, and youth fellowships. Like Zhangjiajie's Gospel church, the congregation of Northern Church has got a centenary history; its origins lie with the American Presbyterian Church.

"I had always felt that there was God, but I didn't know who He was," says Deng Xiangya, a lively woman in her fifties, after the service. "In 1991 I walked into a church - that's how it started. I came to truly experience God's benevolence." In 1998, Deng joined one of the church's two choirs. "I studied some musical theory and had to take an exam. People who wish to join the choir also have to be spiritually mature. As the Bible says very clearly, singing in the choir is to communicate with God." The retired accountant has found a new job and now works for a Christian boss "who gives me every Sunday off. I am very happy now."

A choir colleague of hers, a woman who gives her personal name as "Shan", describes her faith journey: "A friend brought me along. At that time, I was often in a bad mood, I was going through a difficult time. The atmosphere in church was very good and friendly. I had Sundays off, so I started to come every week. After two or three months, I was baptized. I also received a lot of help from the others, which always moved me a lot." With enthusiastic members like these two women, Changsha's Northern Church looks well equipped for its second century.

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NEWSBRIEFS

Serving the blind. Christians from Xiaoxi Church in Luquan County, Yunnan Province, organized a meeting for the blind following the Sunday service on October 10, 2004. Ten blind persons who had come from seven different meeting points attended the fellowship that was intended to give them a good start into the winter season. During them meeting, woolen pullovers were distributed to the blind, a gesture that left them speechless with gratitude.

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Singing for silver. On October 31, 2004, Hangzhou's Christian Choir participated in the Second West Lake Singing Festival. With the help of renowned church musician Yang Lufu, the choir won a silver medal as one of the six finalists. After the competition, the choir received additional praise from local government bodies. For the sixty singers, the event proved that Christians can actively participate in the cultural development of their city.

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Honouring the elderly. Christians from Pujiang in Zhejiang Province celebrated a worship service in honour of the elderly on October 18, 2004. For local Christian, it was the first such specially dedicated service. 107 representatives of the aged took part in the service, during which greetings from young Christians were received.

The China Christian Council has moved!

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