China is still reeling from the devastation of the Sichuan earthquake that took place on May 12th, the worst quake to hit the country in more than a century. This disaster has struck even as millions of poor farmers in central, eastern and southwestern China struggle to recover from the country’s worst snow storm in 50 years.
Dear Reader,

As this issue goes to press, China is still reeling from the devastation of the worst earthquake to hit the country in more than a century. Over 90,000 people were killed or are missing, 5 million people were rendered homeless and close to 50,000 people are now amputees. This disaster has struck even as millions of poor farmers in central, eastern and southern China struggle to recover from the country’s worst snow storm in 50 years. By January 29, snow-related disasters had killed more than 40 people and 1.6 million people had to be evacuated to safer places.

Christians and non-Christians all over China have joined hands to respond to these disasters. There has been a spontaneous outpouring of compassion throughout the country which has been manifested in generous donations and active involvement in relief activities. Christians were present in the worst hit quake areas of Sichuan to dispense food, medicine, blankets and temporary shelters to the victims. In this issue, we provide glimpses of these acts of love and kindness (p. 3 to p. 9).

Much of this issue is also taken up by the Church Order of the Protestant Churches in China adopted on January 8, 2008, at the Joint National Conference of the Seventh Standing Committee of the Chinese Christian Three-Self Movement Committee of the Protestant Churches in China and the Fifth Standing Committee of the China Christian Council (p. 12). A summary of Rev. Dr. Cao Shengjie’s explanations for some of the changes made has been included (p. 10).

With the inauguration of the new Amity Printing Press, up to 12 million bibles can be printed a year, making China one of the largest bible producers in the world. The printing of 100,000 “Olympic edition” Bibles for free distribution to participants and visitors to the Olympic Games by the CCC/TSPM is also unprecedented (p. 19).

The honoring of Bishop K. H. Ting by the International Christian University sows the seeds of reconciliation between China and Japan (p. 21). At the grassroots, the church continues to grow and the establishment of new local Christian Councils and lay training centres will strengthen the understanding of Christianity (p. 22).

We are pleased that Janice Wickeri has graciously helped to edit this issue of ANS and are grateful to our volunteer translators for their invaluable assistance.

Warm wishes,

Theresa Carino
“It is not possible for us just to respond to the needs of church members--everyone in the communities has been affected and we are trying our best to respond to the grief and suffering of our fellow human beings. We have worked non-stop since the earthquake struck,” the evidently fatigued Pastor Wei Kang told our visiting group in June, almost a month after the killer quake hit Sichuan. Wei Kang, the chair of the Sichuan TSPM, and his colleagues have been responding to constant calls for help, giving words of comfort and making countless trips from Chengdu, the provincial capital, to some of the hardest hit areas, delivering food, polyurethane sheets (which are used as temporary shelters), cooking oil and other relief goods to victims of the earthquake.

Many of the Protestant churches in counties around Beichuan, the killer quake’s epicentre, have suffered substantial damage. The latest count had 23 churches affected and there was still no detailed news from members of 100 meeting points in rural areas.

Pastor Wei spoke of the spontaneous responses and the intense desire to help from Christians and non-Christians alike, after the quake. Following the disaster, congregations have been helping to provide medicines, meals and counselling for the wounded and bereaved in hospitals and in tent cities. In Dujiangyan, Christians from other provinces came to set up relief and medical stations, providing help to quake victims. “The earthquake may have destroyed our homes and families, but it has also brought out the best in us. It has awakened the generosity in our hearts and helped rebuild human relationships,” stressed Pastor Wei.

“The scenes of destruction and suffering in the early days after the quake were truly terrible and heart wrenching,” recalled Wei Kang. Almost a month after the disaster first struck, we were still overwhelmed by the scenes of devastation. Our group visited Mianzhu, 30 km from the epicentre. The city center, once a popular tourist destination, had been reduced to a ghost town, a scene of rubble, debris and

**Destroyed homes near Pengzhou, in Hongyan County, Sichuan Province**
collapsing buildings. Nothing seemed to have been spared. Nearby villages were equally brutalized. Eight townships had been completely levelled. There had been more than 11,000 deaths in Mianzhu alone. At least 90% of its population had been affected and most were now living in tents.

The physical devastation was still very visible. The internal wounds of people were much less visible as they were organized into tents but that is where help is most needed. We visited a tent city of some 3,000 people. On the surface, people were calm and seemed to be coping. There was evidence of self-help as teachers and students gathered in make-shift schools. Instead of despair, we found optimism. The public had been impressed with the rapid response and rescue operations of the central government. Their hopes and expectations remained high. There was confidence that there would be recovery in three to five years.

It seemed that the government had also found renewed confidence in religious bodies. According to Mr. Tang, head of the Religious Affairs Bureau in Mianzhu, “We have asked all religions to conduct worship and prayers for the victims and their families. We encourage them to provide counselling because religious groups have done this very well. They have played a very important role.” “The churches do have a particular strength in dealing with the psychological needs of those traumatized,” observed Pastor Joshua Long of the Sichuan Christian Council. To better equip its pastors to respond to such needs, the Council will be holding training sessions on psychological counselling in the months ahead.

Despite extremely difficult conditions, Mianzhu Church had been holding worship services every night in the courtyard of the severely damaged church since the quake. The pastor together with members of his church and neighbours were now living in tents. The 85 year old church, which had been renovated only last year, was badly hit. There are plans to preserve it as a museum and to construct a new building. Meanwhile services are held in the open courtyard. People have been flocking to the nightly worship services, seeking comfort and solace.

Pastor Xiao reports that more than four hundred newcomers have joined the services held at the church, which had an original congregation of five hundred baptized Christians. “Our prayers have been a source of strength,” he said. So have been the faith and generosity of the members of the church, who despite their own troubles, had cooked a hearty meal for us from their limited store of grains and vegetables.

On the cracked walls of Mianzhu Church could be found the comforting words, written in beautiful calligraphy, “He will not break a bruised reed or quench a smouldering wick until he brings justice to victory” (Matthew 12:20).

(This report was contributed by Theresa Carino, who visited Chengdu and Mianzhu, Sichuan Province, in early June, 2008.)
Sichuan Province has over 250,000 baptized Christians, 150 churches, one seminary, and 700 meeting points. It is estimated that more than 35 churches and meeting points were affected by the devastating earthquake that hit Sichuan on May 12, 2008.

Since the earthquake in Sichuan struck on May 12th, 2008, leaders and staff of the Sichuan Provincial Christian Council have been working non-stop, trying to respond to cries for comfort and help from members of churches located in earthquake-hit areas. Until now, efforts are still being made to assess the total damage to lives and church buildings in earthquake hit cities and villages in the province.

In many of the affected areas, the destruction to transport and communication lines have made this effort very difficult and it may be months before a comprehensive assessment can be made. Meanwhile, church and council members are trying their best to render relief to churches and their congregations at a time of great suffering and need. Many of the homes of congregation members have collapsed or are in danger of collapse. Large numbers are living in tents, while others have left to stay with friends or relatives. The Sichuan Christian Council has been providing relief supplies such as polyurethane sheets for shelters, cooking oil, rice and other food supplies and blankets to various quake-hit zones.

Below is an initial report of the damage suffered by churches and congregations in some of the hardest-hit areas of Sichuan Province as of 26th May, 2008:

**Human losses and injuries**

It has been difficult getting confirmations about death and injuries from the 100 meeting points in mountainous areas of Beichuan, the epicenter.

An Xian: 3 dead, 14 injured, 48 missing.
Duijiangyan City: 12 dead.
Mianzhu City: 2 dead.
Jiangyou City: 5 injured.
Guangyuan City: 1 injured.

**Damaged Churches**

The list of damaged churches is incomplete but shows how destructive and extensive the earthquake has been:

1. Jiangyou City Church. The church was severely damaged and must be rebuilt.
2. An County Church. The walls have been shattered and the building is now considered structurally dangerous.
3. Mianzhu City Church. The front of the church collapsed and the church walls were all shattered. All roof tiles fell down. The homes of many church members were destroyed, and two church members were killed. New church needed.
4. Yilong County Church. The church building has partially collapsed.
5. Guangyuan City Church. Two church buildings were shattered and are now considered dangerous.
6. Bai Long Church in Jian Ge County. Damage has made the church unsafe.
7. Kai Feng Church in Jian Ge County. Structurally
unsound and unsafe.
9. Gospel Church in Wang Cang County. This newly renovated church was severely damaged.
10. The Township Church of Guang’An. The church building was shattered and is now leaning to one side.
11. Bai Dou Church, Ren Shou County. The building has collapsed.
12. Long Jiang Church, Renshou County. Collapsed building.
13. Lingxin Church in Santai County. The walls were shattered and the roof tiles have all fallen off.
16. St. John’s Church in Liang Zhong City. There are cracks in the walls, the building is unsafe.
17. Enguang Church in Chengdu City. The top of the church split in two.

The Sichuan Christian Council has expressed deep appreciation for all the support and donations they have received for their relief work. They ask for the continued prayers of individuals and churches in the international community.

Those interested in making financial contributions can contact the following:

Rev. Wei Kang, Chair, Sichuan TSPM
+86-28-86751971 (office)
+86-13808062223 (mobile)
Address: 19 Si Sheng Ci Bei Jie, Chengdu, Sichuan, China. Postal Code: 610017.

Chinese Churches respond to Sichuan earthquake

In the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, like many people in China, Christians throughout the country were heartbroken to see the scenes of destruction and suffering on their television screens. There was a spontaneous outpouring of sympathy and compassion. Many churches held prayer meetings and collections for the victims of the earthquake in Sichuan. It was estimated that by May 29th, 2008, within a month of the earthquake, Christians in China had donated close to 120 million Chinese yuan to relief work. These donations were given through the China Red Cross, CCC/TSPM, the Christian Council of Sichuan Province and directly to Sichuan churches.

TSPM/CCC offers prayers and donations for victims

On May 14, the TSPM/CCC held a special event in their office building to pray and collect donations for victims of the Sichuan Earthquake. Those who gathered for the event fervently prayed for God to bless victims of the disaster with mercy and grace, to relieve their distress and hasten their recovery. Individual donations were given in the amount of 11,030 RMB, which will be used for reconstructing quake-damaged churches. A check for one million RMB was presented to the Red Cross.

Nanjing Seminary: prayers, donations, mourning

Faculty and students at Jinling Union Theological Seminary were deeply affected by news of the earthquake in Wenchuan. Letters of condolence were sent to the Sichuan TSPM/CCC and the Sichuan Theological Seminary, and more than 200 people gathered at the seminary on May 13th to take part in a prayer vigil for victims of the disaster. Candlelight prayer services were held each evening in the days that followed.

Donations from faculty and students were collected on May 16 and then dedicated in a special memorial worship service for the earthquake victims on May 18. Individual donations totaled 42,000 RMB and the seminary donated 80,000 RMB for a total of 122,000. Part of this sum was given to the Red Cross for direct disaster relief and part is being given to help rebuild churches in the aftermath of the disaster.

The Chinese flag on the seminary campus was flown at half-mast on May 19 and at 2:48 p.m., the entire community stood in solidarity with people throughout China to pay 3 minutes of silent tribute to the dead and pray for the peace and recovery of fellow countrymen in Sichuan.
In mid-January 2008, a large portion of China was hit by frigid rain, snow and ice. The provinces of Anhui, Jiangxi, Henan, Hubei, Hunan, Guangxi, Sichuan, Guizhou, Yunnan, Shaanxi, Gansu, Qinghai, Xinjiang, and Chongqing municipality, among others, suffered extreme low temperatures, heavy snowfall, and ice storms. Production and living conditions were adversely affected, resulting in heavy economic losses and a serious calamity.

Pastor Chen Dingtong of the Social Service Ministry of the National CCC/TSPM in Shanghai told reporters that on January 31 the CCC/TSPM transmitted to all CCC/TSPM churches in every province (including autonomous regions and self-governed cities) an “Emergency Announcement on taking vigorous countermeasures to forestall and relieve the disastrous effects of snow and freezing temperatures, and to ensure safety for believers”.

Disaster reports received by the Social Service Ministry from various churches in the country revealed that at present, in addition to the 5 damaged or collapsed churches in Wuhan City, there are also 6 collapsed churches in Hubei Province, where 5 more have been declared unsafe. Hunan’s Xiangtan City church was damaged; 4 churches in Xiangxiang City collapsed, as had 3 in Yiyang City. In Jiangxi Province, 11 churches will have to be rebuilt, while 4 others need repairs; in Shaanxi, the sunroof of Luochuan’s An Ming church collapsed. Communications have been impeded by the snow storm; as this report is being written, many areas have still not been heard from.

Churches are now urgently responding to the CCC/TSPM appeal with all kinds of practical aid, including financial support for afflicted regions and communities, launching rescues, mutual aid, self-help, and...
rebuilding homes and churches. There’s an old saying that when one area is beset by trouble, help will come from 8 areas. This is borne out by the host of activities that was stirred up within the whole Christian body in answering the National CCC/TSPM call to give relief to afflicted areas and people. The church donated generously in cash and in kind, and despite suffering the same predicament as many other victims, the church lovingly rendered aid to others.

A roundup of reports from local areas:

- **Beijing:** The Beijing CC/TSPM responded to the National CCC/TSPM appeal with a groundswell of fundraising, calling on brothers and sisters to become involved in relief activities and to help shoulder the national burden, so victims of the disaster could enjoy a happy lunar new year. On February 5, 2008, a total of RMB 358,255 raised through these efforts was presented to the Beijing Red Cross.

- **Guangdong:** The caring brothers and sisters of Nanshan Church in Shenzhen City brought human warmth to the Shenzhen Railway West Station for 3 days, from January 30 to February 1, 2008. With approval and support from West Station officials, church members handed out boiled water, bread, and canned porridge. Brothers and sisters from all over the area left their warm homes and braved the cold to help. They boiled and delivered water, distributed food and warmth, while sharing the experience of those they came to help. God’s love shone through the everyday act of boiling and delivering water, dispensing it cup by cup, offering it from hand to hand, all with genuine love and concern.

- **Guiyang:** Varying degrees of adversity were also suffered by the churches in Guizhou. Nonetheless, at dawn on January 31, 2008, about 30 volunteers from pastoral staff and church members joined the Guizhou provincial volunteer snow storm relief team. In addition, CCC/TSPM churches donated RMB 2000 to the common relief fund. No doubt this amounted only to a drop in the ocean, but it demonstrated Christian identification with the people’s hardship and Christian efforts to overcome it through faith. Both the CCC/TSPM collaborated remarkably well with other organizations in relief work during the snow storm.

- **Guangzhou:** Hundreds of thousands of passengers were trapped by the recent snow storm at the Guangzhou Railway Station. In order to demonstrate Christian love, many responded to the Government’s and Party’s calls to render aid to the afflicted travelers. Leaders and members of the Guangzhou CCC/TSPM rose to the occasion with food and clothing donations, and fund drives. Christians demonstrated that human kindness can rise above natural calamity and the warmth of love can conquer freezing cold. Guangzhou churches accumulated over RMB90,000 in their fund drive, as well as clothing and other articles. When afflictions abound, love also abounds!

- **Wuhan:** 50mm of snow accumulated in Wuhan between 12 Jan.–early Feb. 2008. 5 churches in the city sustained damages. Wuhan’s CC/TSPM churches appealed to all churches in the city to organize members to plough snow and clear blockages. People were temporarily forbidden to congregate in church buildings in danger of impending collapse. Youths and able-bodied believers were instructed to cater to the needs of old and weak believers. Inspections were made on all CCC/TSPM buildings and properties and emergency repairs undertaken. Secretary-General Luo said: **When afflictions abound, love also abounds.**
“In Wuhan City, 4 assembly centres were wrecked or have collapsed. But, because of the emergency measures observed during this snow storm, no personal injury or death has occurred.”

- Ningbo: Ningbo Church, Shenjiaotang, sent out young believers to the Ningbo Railway South Station to provide care as they conducted operation “Love amidst the Blizzard” for 3 continuous days starting on February 1, 2008. The brothers and sisters witnessed to God’s love to every stranded traveler. Pastor Chen mentioned: “We hope with this little exertion, with love borrowed from God, we can somewhat thaw the cold, open up every frozen heart, that the Gospel might be planted within.” For three nights, from Feb. 1-3, over a hundred stranded passengers sought shelter in the South Station’s basement, where they were supplied with packets of foodstuff and quilts, all infused with the love of God and the love of the brothers and sisters there.

Other disaster relief work:

- Pastor Hu Kaiming of Rongguangtang, the Wuhan City church in Hubei Province told reporters: “In demonstrating Christ’s love, our Rongguangtang Aixin Health Clinic, with support from pastoral and medical staff, continued to maintain a window to serve the public. In one week, 147 needy persons were treated and collections totaling RMB19,750 in cash and kind were received.”
  - Pastor Ma Xin, chairman of Zhoukou City church in Henan Province, headed a team that made its way through the heavy snow to distribute a bag of flour to each poor home to tide them over.
  - The Wuhan CC/TSPM (Hubei Province) contributed RMB 5,000 to the local government for disaster relief.
  - The TSPM church of Zhangzhi City (Shaanxi Province) gave RMB 2,000 to the city Red Cross Society for disaster-affected regions in the south.
  - The YMCA and YWCA also appealed to their members and affiliates to get involved with local relief and aid operations. Together they donated RMB 100,000 for disaster relief through the China Charity Federation.
  - On February 5, 2008, the National CCC/TSPM contributed RMB 100,000 to the disaster relief fund of the Shanghai Red Cross. The Guangdong Province CCC/TSPM raised RMB 100,000 in an event for disaster victims entitled “Give Warmth and Offer Love”. The Hunan Province CCC/TSPM participated in the Hunan TV show “Love can melt the coldest ice ---- Let’s celebrate the New Year together”, urging donors to give RMB 10,000 for relief operations. Haidian church in Beijing was able to gather RMB 100,000 in donations for afflicted areas.

(Source: Tian Feng, No. 329, March 2008. Translated by Peter Lian and summarized by Janice Wickeri.)
Changes to the new Church Order explained

A major document adopted at the 8th Joint National Conference of the Standing Committees of the CCC and TSPM during its January 2008 meeting in Beijing is the “Church Order of Protestant Churches in China.” This document consists of 38 Articles in 8 Chapters. Chapter topics include “Faith,” “The Church,” “Sacraments,” “Christians,” “Ministry,” and “Organization and Management.” Below, Janice Wickeri provides a summary of the key changes and the explanations provided by Rev. Dr. Cao Shengjie for these changes. The complete text of Rev. Dr. Cao’s commentary, translated by Cinde Lee, will be provided soon on the website of the ANS (www.amitynewsservice.org).

A Church Order for Trial Use was introduced at the 5th National Conference in 1991 (translation in CTR: 1991) and adopted at the 6th National Conference in 1996 (CTR: 12). Substantial changes to this previous order are reflected in the 2008 document. Rev. Dr. Cao Shengjie, outgoing President of the CCC, has written a commentary on the revision process which appears in Tian Feng (No. 3, March, 2008). She describes the new Church Order as having greater clarity and organization than earlier versions.

Issues surrounding church management of property and finances as well as the need for an organized and elected group of representatives from among the congregation, which also functions to give more Christians an opportunity for service in the church, are set out in greater detail. She draws attention to the ongoing emphasis on strengthening the institutional structure of the church and the greater clarity in regulations as a response to both increased government and public awareness of the positive role of religion in the public and social life of the nation, and efforts on both sides to “bring religion into legal channels.” The latter refers to the civic and patriotic duties of religion on the one hand, and the recourse to the law in pursuit of the lawful rights and interests of religious believers and groups on the other. Qualifications for orders of ministry, which include bishop, minister, teacher and elder, are set out in detail.

A noteworthy addition to this revised order is Chapter Two, “Faith.” Since the introduction of unified worship in the late 1950s and the post-denominational approach to inherited differences in matters of faith and liturgical practice has been characterized as “seeking the common ground while reserving differences,” and “mutual respect in matters of faith.” Thus, Cao observes, the chapter on faith in the revised order does not attempt an exhaustive definition, but emphasizes tenets of basic and common faith.

The Order for Trial Use stated that the faith was founded on the Bible and the Apostles’ Creed. The Faith chapter in the new Order extends the phrase to the “whole Bible”. Cao explains this as a safeguard against the tendency to make unilateral interpretations of the text, and to quote out of context. We should also seek

If you are interested in Chinese theology, read the Chinese Theological Review (CTR). CTR provides an excellent follow-up of theological discussion in China.

Find details on the Amity News Service website: www.amitynewsservice.org
the guidance of the Holy Spirit continuously as we read the Bible, so that we may receive new light, because the Bible goes beyond explaining to us God’s revelation in the past; it also leads us in the contemporary world to “become whole, and ready for acts of charity”. The Nicene Creed is specifically included as a basis of the faith as well.

Cao notes, “The Church in China has experienced exceptional development in recent years. Many have joined churches for various reasons, sometimes with only superficial understanding of the faith. Quite a few heretical groups and cults hoist the banner of Christianity in an effort to confuse, entrap and even harm believers. In order to protect the purity of the Christian faith, it is of vital importance that the majority of Christians should clearly understand the substance of their faith. This will enable the church to clarify the basic content of its teaching, and assist believers to improve the quality of their faith, and not be led astray.

“The Church in China has advocated the theological reconstruction for almost a decade. The basic content of the Christian faith remains unchanged; rather the focus of theological understanding must move forward with the changing times. The additional ‘Faith’ chapter clarifies the most fundamental substance of faith.”

She goes on to observe that this chapter was discussed at a meeting which included discussions with professors from Nanjing Seminary and representatives from provincial, autonomous region and municipality level Christian Councils and Three-Self Organizations nationwide. Staff also held several hours of consultation to hear the views of Christians from a variety of faith backgrounds. The Chinese Church, Cao says, should be marked by a “harmonious diversity.”

The extended discussion of the meaning and nature of faith given in this chapter also serves, she writes, to counteract some misunderstandings of the Chinese Church overseas, such as “the church in China believes in Three-Self, not in Christ,” or “the Chinese Church denies that Christ is the Head of the Church.”

The new Church Order emphasizes the ecumenical nature of the Chinese Church. Cao writes: “All believers worship the same God, confess the same Lord Jesus, read the same Bible (although with various theological interpretations), and accept the same Baptism (although by different methods). We think that all churches throughout the world are the work of the Holy Spirit. The CCC participates in the ecumenical fellowship of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and upholds the ecumenical movement. Article 6 specifically points out that ‘the Chinese Church is connected with the Saints of the Church in every place, as mutual limbs [of the body of Christ], in friendly contact, in mutual sharing and mutual respect.’ This is the fundamental attitude of the Church in China towards the ecumenical church. We are definitely neither closed nor exclusive, and are most willing to seek friendly contact, share experiences in ministry, and co-operate with churches outside China.”

A full translation of the Church Order of Protestant Churches in China may be found in the Chinese Theological Review 21, pp. 40-51.

It is available online at www.amitynewsservice.org and www.chineseprotestantchurch.org/en/
Church Order of Protestant Churches in China


CHAPTER ONE

Article 1 This order has been formulated on biblical teachings, the history and traditions of the Church, and the fundamentals of the life of the church ecumenical, integrated with the realities of the Chinese Church.

Article 2 The Chinese Church functions according to the principle of self-government, self-support, and self-propagation (hereafter: three-self principle) which encompasses independence and self-management, actively engages in theological reconstruction, and guides Christians in making a contribution to the building of an harmonious society.

Article 3 Local churches differ in their backgrounds and development, and thus church affairs organizations in the various provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities may draft their own corresponding orders based on this one. However, these orders may not contradict this order, nor may they be formulated in the name of any denomination.

Article 4 The responsibilities of the China Christian Council in church matters visa à vis church affairs organizations in the various provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities include liaison, service, guidance, and supervision.

CHAPTER TWO: FAITH

Article 5 The Chinese Church takes the contents of the entire Bible, the Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed as the foundation of our faith, the main points of which are as follows:

Ours is a Triune God,1 everlasting and eternal. God is Spirit. God is loving, just, holy, and trustworthy. God is almighty Father, the Lord who creates and sustains the cosmos and all that is in it, who keeps and cares for the whole world.

Jesus Christ is the only Son of God, born of the Holy Spirit, the Word made flesh, wholly God and wholly human. He came into the world to save humankind, to witness to God the Father, to preach the gospel; he was crucified, died, and was buried. He rose again and ascended into heaven. He will come again to judge the world.

The Holy Spirit is the Comforter, who enables people to know their sinfulness and to repent, who bestows wisdom and ability and every grace, leading us to know God and to enter into the truth, enabling people to lead holy lives, and to give beautiful witness to Christ.

The church is the body of Christ and Christ is its Head. The church is apostolic, one, holy, and catholic. The visible church is called by God to be a fellowship of those who believe in Jesus Christ. It was established by the apostles as Jesus instructed them. The mission of the church is to preach the gospel, to administer the Sacraments, to teach and nurture believers, to do good works, and to bear witness to the Lord. The church is both universal and particular. The Chinese Church must build itself up in love and be one in Christ.

The Bible has been revealed by God and written down by human beings through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The Bible is the highest authority in matters of faith and the standard of life for believers. Through the leading of the Holy Spirit, people in different times have gained new light from the Bible. The Bible should be interpreted in accordance with the principle of rightly explaining the word of truth. It should not be interpreted arbitrarily or out of context.

Human beings are made in the image of God, but cannot become gods. God has given humanity dominion over all God’s creation. Because of sin, human beings have diminished God’s glory, yet through faith and the grace of Jesus Christ, human beings are redeemed and saved, and are granted resurrection and everlasting life.

Christ will come again. According to the teachings of the Bible, no one knows the day of his coming, and any method to determine when Christ will come again violates the teachings of the Bible.
A Christian’s faith and works are one. Christians must live out Christ in the world, glorifying God and benefiting people.

CHAPTER THREE: THE CHURCH

Article 6 Differences in culture, historical experience, and social systems exist among churches throughout the world. Faith is not received in identical ways, and this may produce differences in theological knowledge and interpretation. In its fellowship with the ecumenical church, the Chinese Church is connected with the Saints of the Church in every place, as mutual limbs [of the body of Christ], in friendly contact, in mutual sharing and mutual respect. At the same time, it is an independent and self-run church, without a subordinate relation to any church beyond its borders, nor dominated by any outside church.

Article 7 The church is both a spiritual fellowship of Christians which should build up the body of Christ according to biblical teachings, and a social group, which must abide by the national Constitution, and the provisions of laws, regulations, and policies, fulfilling its duties, such as legal registration.

Article 8 Local churches, in accordance with the three-self principle, and with the guidance and support of Church Councils and Three-Self Organizations, should unite Christians in voluntary observance of this order, to carry out all aspects of their ministry well, with one heart and one mind, to support theological education, to develop social service, and to promote social harmony.

Article 9 The Chinese Church maintains a unified form of worship. At the same time it is aware that Christians differ in spiritual experience and needs. On the basis of the three-self principle, the Church seeks the common ground in matters of faith and tradition and practices mutual respect and mutual acceptance, making no distinctions or attacks. The teachings of the Bible must be observed and every effort made to preserve the unity of heart received from the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE SACRAMENTS

Article 10 Based on the teachings of the Bible and the various traditions of the church, the Chinese Church administers two sacraments: baptism (sprinkling or immersion) and the Eucharist (also called breaking bread).

Baptism is commanded by the Lord Jesus as a sign that the one baptized has died with the Lord, been buried and has risen again. The Chinese Church recognizes the efficacy of baptism both by sprinkling and by immersion, because the Holy Spirit works in baptism, creating a new Christian person.

The Eucharist was established by our Lord Jesus himself. The bread and wine of the Eucharist are signs of Christ’s body and blood. Christians receive the Eucharist in remembrance of the Lord. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, the Eucharist renews the relationship between the Christian and Christ, strengthens the faith and enriches the Christian’s spiritual life while enhancing the unity of the fellowship.

Only baptized Christians may receive the Eucharist.

Article 11 The Eucharist may be administered by a bishop, clergy (including here and in the following, elders commensurate to clergy in various traditions), and teachers (also called associate clergy). Elders appointed by the clergy may also administer the Eucharist, but no one who does not have ministerial orders may be appointed to administer the Eucharist.

Article 12 The Eucharist must take place in a church as part of a specific liturgy and be carried out in a reverent manner.

Article 13 The church may arrange for elderly or seriously ill Christians to receive the Eucharist in their homes.
CHAPTER FIVE: CHRISTIANS

Article 14 Those who come to church for the first time seeking the gospel truth and those who participate in church activities are called inquirers. Inquirers who have attended churches or home worship gatherings for a given period, who voluntarily accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, who repent of their sins, whose actions are upright, and who are law-abiding, may enroll in an inquirers’ class and make a systematic study of biblical fundamentals and what it means to be a Christian. Those who have been examined by the pastors on faith and morals and found acceptable, may be baptized. Following baptism, inquirers may be entered in the rolls of the church and become members.

Article 15 Christians must abide by the teachings of the Bible and the rules and order of the church. They must show respect for the clergy, serve gladly, support all aspects of the church’s ministry, and fulfill their responsibilities to the church.

Article 16 Christians should be good citizens. They should love the country and love the church, be law-abiding, and be in harmony in their families and with their neighbors. They should serve the society, benefit the people, and fulfill their social responsibilities.

Article 17 Christians found to have engaged in seriously inappropriate behavior, or who adhere to heretical teachings, should be educated and admonished by the clergy. The management organization of the church or home worship gathering concerned may report those who persist in such seriously inappropriate behavior to the local church affairs organization. Upon examination and confirmation of the facts, such individuals may be denied the Eucharist or, as a final measure, removed from the rolls of the church.

CHAPTER SIX: MINISTRY

Article 18 Ministerial orders in current use in churches in China are: bishop, minister, teacher, and elder.

Those who have received these orders are referred to as clergy.

Gender equality applies in ministerial orders.

Evangelists (teachers, including here and below, deacons and lay workers who have been involved in preaching) who have been approved by the local church council and clergy are called pastoral workers.

Article 19 Pastoral workers must meet the following criteria: They must be in good physical and mental health and possess a pure Christian faith and lead a pious spiritual life witnessed by good moral character and conduct. They must have the experience of devotion to Christ and service to the church. They must love their fellow Christians and be held in high esteem among other Christians. They must be patriotic and law-abiding and enjoy a good reputation, both within the church and outside it.

They must uphold the three-self principle, unite with believers in loving the country and loving the church, and promote mutual respect in matters of faith.

Article 20 Those seeking Holy Orders must meet the following criteria: Bishops must have a B.Th. 2 or above, be over 40 years of age, have served as pastors for over ten years, be profoundly versed in theology, be active in promoting theological reconstruction, have authored instructional theses or works, have rich pastoral experi-
ence, the ability to unite coworkers and believers, a lofty moral character, and be deeply loved and respected by believers.

Ministers should have formal theological education as well as experience in pastoral work. Graduates with a B.Th. (4 years) or higher, should have at least two years of pastoral work experience. Those with a diploma in theology from a regional seminary or a Bible school education (2-4 years) must have at least three years of pastoral work experience.

Teachers should have formal theological education as well as experience in pastoral work. Those with a B.Th. (4 years) should have at least one year of pastoral experience. Those with a diploma in theology from a regional seminary or a Bible school education (2-4 years) should have at least three years experience in pastoral work. Those who have served as teachers for a year or more are eligible to apply for ordination.

Elders should be high school graduates with five or more years experience in church service. Preaching elders should have some theological education, or one or more years of lay training approved by the provincial, autonomous region or municipal Christian Council and Three-Self Organization.

Article 21 The duties of the various ministerial orders differ: A bishop's responsibilities lie mainly in the interpretation of Christian doctrine, in promoting theological reconstruction, regulating the work of ministry, guidance, and pastoral care for the spiritual lives of ministers, pastoral workers, and Christians. The bishop does not have any special administrative authority. The main duties of a pastor include all aspects of the ministry of his/her church, management of the church and/or home worship gathering, administration of the sacraments, and the pastoral care and guidance of believers.

A teacher assists the pastor in managing the church and/or home worship gathering and in pastoral care and guidance of believers. A teacher may administer the sacraments.

An elder assists the teacher and pastor in church or home worship gathering management. His/her professional duties are limited to the church and its associated meeting points, to pastoral care and guidance of believers, and administration of the sacraments at the request of the pastor.

Article 22 Ordination procedure for ministerial orders:

Candidates for bishop are nominated by the CCC/TSPM executive committee. The candidate’s own views should be sought prior to nomination. The views of the candidate’s provincial (autonomous region, municipality) Christian Council and Three-Self organization must be sought, following which the Joint Standing Committees of the CCC/TSPM must elect the candidate(s) by a two-thirds majority vote.

Applicants for ordination to the ministry must apply in writing, be put forward by the church council of his/her church, recommended by the church affairs organization of the local church and be approved by the city (locality, prefecture or league) Christian Council and Three-Self organization of the district in which the church is located, which then reports to the provincial (autonomous region or municipality) Christian Council and Three-Self organization. The provincial (autonomous region or municipality) level organizations should canvass a wide range of views and carry out its own investigation. Only when the candidate passes this check may he/she be ordained.

Teachers applying for the ministry must pass the same procedures of application, selection, recommendation, and inspection as one applying for ordination to the ministry.

Applicants for elder must make a written application. They must then be nominated by the management affairs organization of their church or meeting point, be recommended by the church affairs organization of the local church and approved by the city (locality, prefecture or league) church affairs organization in which their church is located, which then reports to the provincial (autonomous region or municipality) church affairs organization. This provincial (autonomous region or municipality) level organization may then request the city (locality, prefecture or league) church affairs organization to send an ordination team of three or more pastors and elders to perform the ordination.

Article 23 Ordination to ministerial orders should
follow the relevant provisions of the “Licensing Criteria for Chinese Christian Clergy.” At least three bishops are required to take part in the laying on of hands for the investiture of a bishop. Ordained ministers of good moral standing and reputation may be invited to join in the laying on of hands. Ordination to the pastoral ministry requires joint laying on of hands by a bishop and at least two ministers, or at least three ministers. Ordination of a teacher requires the joint laying on of hands by at least three ministers. Ordination of elders requires joint laying on of hands by at least three ministers and elders, and the one administering the sacrament must be an ordained minister.

The rite of ordination to holy orders must be held openly in a church; holy orders may not be received in private. Following the liturgy the newly ordained person must, in accordance with relevant regulations, be entered in the records of the corresponding government religious affairs department.

Article 24 Evangelists should be licensed in accordance with the requirements of the “Licensing Criteria for Chinese Christian Clergy” and entered in the records of the corresponding government religious affairs department.

Article 25 Gross acts of misconduct, violation of the church order, heretical preaching or violation of criminal law by a pastoral worker require disciplinary action following investigation of the facts. Disciplinary action may include admonishment, suspension from church office, removal from church office, and revocation of ministerial orders.

Disciplinary action against a bishop must be proposed by the National Conference of the CCC/TSPM, which then informs the Christian Council and Three-Self organization in the bishop’s province (autonomous region, municipality). Revocation of a bishop’s ministerial orders must be done with formal deliberation and approval by the Standing Committees of the CCC/TSPM and passed by a two-thirds majority vote.

Discipline of a minister or teacher must be proposed by the Christian Council and Three-Self organization at the provincial (autonomous region, municipality) level. Discipline of an elder must be proposed and declared by the city (district, prefecture, league) level Christian Council and Three-Self organization. Revocation of ministerial orders in these cases must be arrived at through deliberation and approval at a formal meeting of the provincial- (autonomous region, municipality) level Christian Council and Three-Self organization.

Article 26 Discipline of evangelists may follow methods outlined in Article 25, to be decided following deliberation and approval by a formal meeting of the city (district, prefecture, league) level Christian Council and Three-Self organization.

Article 27 Disciplinary action may be rescinded following the aforementioned procedures. The corresponding government religious affairs department must be informed of the implementation of disciplinary action and its cancellation.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CHURCH (CHURCHES AND HOME WORSHIP GATHERINGS)

Article 28 The following conditions must be present for the establishment of a church:

A requisite number of believers; a meeting place set aside for church use; ordained clergy in charge of pastoral care of believers; a management organization or preparatory management organization; a church order; a reliable source of funding.

Article 29 The following conditions must be present for the establishment of a meeting point:

A requisite number of believers; a set meeting place; a preacher approved by the local Christian Council and Three-Self organization; a management organization or a preparatory management organization; a meeting point management plan; a reliable source of funding.

Article 30 The city (region, prefecture, league) and county (city, district, banner) Christian Council and Three-Self organization must conscientiously consider the meeting needs of believers, and based on the requirements stated in Articles 28 and 29 of this Order, assist churches and meeting points in the construction of a suitable venue.
by division of labor and cooperation and govern the church with one heart and mind.

Article 33 The church or meeting point management organizations shall manage the ministry of the church, including:

Arranging all types of gatherings, worship, and sacraments to proceed decently and in good order, so that heartfelt worship of God may proceed and disorder be prevented.

Preachers shall be determined by the pastor to raise the quality of pastoral care and prevent the spread of heresy, divisions within the church, or illegal and unlawful activities.

Christians, especially lay volunteers, should undergo training to raise their knowledge of the faith and their awareness of abiding by the law, to guard against the invasion of heresy, and to strengthen their study and knowledge of relevant state laws and regulations.

A roll of Christians shall be kept and properly organized to preserve church and meeting point information and archives.

Sound and healthy church and meeting point management organizations and group decision making require regular meetings. Resolutions must be passed by a simple majority of the members of the church or meeting point management organizations. Decisions on important issues (such as large outlays of funds, recommending candidates for ministerial orders, etc.) must be passed by a two-thirds majority vote.

Retired clergy who enjoy good health may be invited to preach in the church or meeting point, if there is need.

The ministry of the church shall be guided and supervised by the local church affairs organization. The church affairs organization shall consult fully with the church or meeting point management organization on issues related to the church or meeting point, and conscientiously hear their views. Decisions reached following consultation should be implemented by the management organizations of the churches and meeting points.

Article 31 Churches and meeting points which meet these requirements shall install a senior pastor (or a serving elder as the equivalent). The senior pastor presides over church activities and pastoral care for believers, leads believers in resisting heresy and infiltration, and publicizes and implements all decisions of the CCC/TSPM.

Article 32 Establishment of church and meeting point management organizations

A church shall establish a church management organization (comprised of at least 7 persons). A meeting point shall establish a church affairs management team (comprised of at least 3 persons). A church management organization consists of the senior pastor, pastoral staff/pastors and the requisite number of representatives from the congregation, elected by a meeting of delegates from the congregation or through consultation. The period of service shall be three to five years. Re-election and continued service are allowed, in principle not to exceed two terms. The church or meeting point management organizations shall fully develop democracy, listen widely to the views of the congregation, proceed

Beijie Village Church, Henan Province (will open in December 2008)
Article 34 Management of finances by churches and meeting points

Management organizations of churches and meeting points shall set up a finance committee to draw up a system of financial management and strictly adhere to it in their work, including procedures for opening the donation box, keeping accounts, issuing receipts, depositing cash in the bank and so on. Pastoral workers and others in charge at churches and meetings points and their families shall not count the money or serve as accountants.

Management organizations at churches and meeting points shall regularly report revenue and expenditure and accept oversight from the local Christian Council and Three-Self organization. When necessary the congregational meeting may request the local Christian Council and Three-Self organization to examine the accounts or request relevant government department to carry out an audit.

A strict system of financial examination and approval shall be formulated. Large expenditures should be discussed and decided collectively by the church and meeting point management organizations.

Article 35 Property and business management for churches and meeting points

The property of churches and meeting points belongs to the church and no person may privately occupy or divide it. It is the responsibility of the church or meeting point management organization to take maintain the property and there should be a designated person or team in charge, with a feasible and practical management system in place. Houses used for meetings, buildings, and residences for the clergy shall not be transferred, mortgaged, used as investment properties or given to others.

To do our general work well includes management and upkeep of property, utilities, and security.

Article 36 Church and meeting point organizations shall uphold self-government, self-propagation, and self-support and resist all harmful outside interference of any sort.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Article 37 This Order shall be effective on the date of its passage and promulgation by the National Conference of Joint Standing Committees of the CCC and TSPM. Revisions follow the same procedure.

Article 38 This order shall be interpreted by the Standing Committees of the CCC and TSPM.

The Chinese text governs.

Notes: 1 Shangdi/Shen alternatives are given for each instance of the term God. This reflects historical usage for the name of God within the Protestant community of China. Both “Shangdi” and “Shen” versions of the Bible are published, so that individual Christians may read and use the term which is part of their inherited faith tradition. 2 The B.Th. degree is awarded by the national seminary, Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, to those with university-level education. The other regional seminaries award diplomas.

(Translated by Janice Wickeri. The full version is also available in the Chinese Theological Review No. 21, 2008.)
Bibles for the Beijing 2008 Olympics

Rev. Xu Xiaohong, General Secretary of the TSPM and Director for the Publications Department of the CCC/TSPM confirmed that 50,000 more copies of a special “Olympics” bilingual edition of the four Gospels will be printed for distribution during the Beijing Olympics in August, making a total of 100,000 copies. At present, 50,000 copies have already been printed and distributed to Beijing and five other cities where the Games will be held: Shanghai, Qingdao, Shenyang, Tianjin and Qinhuangdao. The special edition Bible with the Olympics logo on its cover will be distributed free to athletes and visitors. Beijing will be given the lion’s share, with 30,000 Bibles to be distributed through the help of the Beijing Christian Council and the more than 20 main churches under its umbrella. Rev. Xu indicated that if necessary, more Bibles will be printed.

In addition, 10,000 bilingual copies of the New International Version of the Bible will also be distributed through churches in Beijing, during the Games. According to Rev. Yu Xinli, Head of the Beijing Christian Council, there will be at least 16 English-speaking volunteers from churches in Beijing and Yanjing Seminary who will be stationed at the chapel in the Olympics Village. They will be on hand around the clock to conduct worship services, offer prayers and to serve the spiritual needs of competitors and visitors at the Village.

All 20 churches in 18 districts in Beijing will be open to visitors as well. In the past two years, five brand new churches, with space for more than 1,000 worshippers each, have been constructed in Beijing. Two new ones were built in 2007 in Haidian and Yanqing and three new ones in 2008 in Men Tougou, Daxing County and the Changping area.

All the Bibles for the Olympics will be printed by the Amity Printing Press located in Nanjing.

World’s largest Bible factory inaugurated: the new Amity Printing Press

More than 100 people from around the world gathered in Jiangning, a suburb of Nanjing City, on May 18, 2008, to inaugurate the new premises of the Amity Printing Press. Celebrating the fact that the new plant, with its Timson T32 high-speed web-press, has the capacity to print a million bibles a month, Rev. Cao Shengjie, the former president of the China Christian Council, declared, “The time when the Bible was in short supply in China is now consigned to history!” She paid tribute to Bishop K. H. Ting, the late Dr. Wenzao Han and leaders of the United Bible Societies for their vision in establishing the Amity Printing Company (APC) more than twenty years ago. It opened a channel for ecumenical cooperation and the international sharing of resources between the church in China and overseas churches.

She also noted that 2008 is a special year for the APC and China since the Olympic Games will be held in less than 3 months in Beijing. Not only is it a premiere sporting event but it would be a “gathering to promote mutual understanding, to share the message of peace and friendship with people from all over the world.” Rev. Cao announced that the Chinese Church would be printing Bibles for the use of athletes and other participants in the Games. Prayers were being offered in churches all over China for the success of the all-important event.

In his message, which was read by Qiu Zhonghui, the general secretary of the Amity Foundation, Bishop Ting said that “the Bible bears witness to the reconciliation between God and humankind, between human beings and between man and nature. The incarnation provides the foundation for reconciliation between God and humankind. The policy to build a harmonious society not only provides opportunities for religious freedom and allows religion to play an active role in society, but also provides more channels for Chinese Christians to participate in social ministry.”

The United Bible Societies’ general secretary, Rev. Miller Milloy, marvelled that few would have believed in 1987 that the Amity Printing Press would 20 years
Successful book launch: “Reconstructing Christianity in China”

Internationally known for his writings on Christianity in China, Philip L. Wickeri was in Hong Kong on June 27th 2008 to launch his new book “Reconstructing Christianity in China: K. H. Ting and the Chinese Church” (516 pages, ISBN 978-1-57075-751-8). The event was coordinated by the Amity Foundation Hong Kong Office and supported by ORBIS Books, the book’s publisher.

Held at the International YMCA, the event attracted close to 45 guests from a wide variety of churches and organizations in Hong Kong. It had the Most Reverend Peter Kwong, Archbishop Emeritus of the Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui as guest speaker. The Archbishop Emeritus recommended the book as a “must-read” and one of the most comprehensive accounts of church life in China over the last 50 years.

The book tells the story of K.H. Ting in the renewal and reconstruction of the church in China in a tumultuous age. Wickeri locates Ting in the Chinese context as an intellectual, theologian, church leader and patriot, working tirelessly for the church within the rapidly changing environment of Chinese political realities.

Philip L. Wickeri is Flora Lamson Hewlett Professor of Evangelism and Mission at San Francisco Theological Seminary. He has been a prolific writer and is author of the book “Seeking the Common Ground: Protestant Christianity, the Three-Self Movement, and China’s United Front.” Wickeri was the first coordinator of the Amity Foundation’s overseas liaison office in Hong Kong and spent more than 20 years in Hong Kong and China, working closely with Bishop K. H. Ting. He was the first foreigner to be ordained in China since 1949.

The book can be bought at the Amity Foundation Hong Kong Office at a discounted price of US$45. There will be additional charges for postage for overseas orders. Please send inquiries or orders by email to: amitybk@pacific.net.hk or write to: The Amity Foundation, Hong Kong Office, 13/F Ultragyace Commercial Building, 5 Jordan Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong.
China-Japan relations received a boost at the people-to-people level when the International Christian University in Tokyo conferred an Honorary Doctorate on Bishop K. H. Ting. The event took place on December 14, 2007, at the Nanjing Union Theological Seminary in China.

The International Christian University’s delegation consisted of President Norihiko Suzuki, Managing Trustee Kano Yamamoto, Dean of International Affairs Peter McCagg, Professor Jackie Wasilewski and Dr. David Vikner, the president of the Japan ICU Foundation in New York. The ceremony also brought together faculty and students from the Nanjing Theological Seminary, a group of ICU students studying at universities in Nanjing and a wide variety of Bishop Ting’s colleagues and friends.

As part of International Christian University’s recognition of Bishop K. H. Ting, it has been decided that a central lounge in a new guesthouse on the ICU campus will be named in his honour. Because of the lingering tensions between China and Japan, this lounge on the ICU campus will take on added significance. It is seen not only as a very appropriate way to honour Bishop K. H. Ting, but also as an appropriate way to affirm the historic commitment of ICU to reconciliation, and most especially its growing commitment to reconciliation between the people of China and the people of Japan.

In Japan, Bishop K. H. Ting is known among Christians as an influential Christian leader, a distinguished theologian, an educator, a social worker and a good neighbour for Japan. Bishop K. H. Ting was recognized for his ecumenicity and his close working relationship with the international Christian community.

During the conferment, his leadership of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, the China Christian Council and the Nanjing Union Theological Seminary through the years was described as having contributed immeasurably to the development and strengthening of the Christian churches in China and also of Chinese theology through deepening an understanding of the teachings of the Bible in the modern Chinese context.

He was also cited for his leadership of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) and the National People’s Congress, at various times, during which he had helped to promote a general understanding of Christianity in China. Bishop Ting was also recognized for promoting social welfare, educational and development programs in China through the Amity Foundation, of which he is the president.
In order to improve the preaching skills of evangelists at the basic level and especially their ability to resist heresy and its influences, the Caoxian (Korean) autonomous prefecture’s Christian training centre was inaugurated on 1st August 2007 in Yanji city, Yanbian, Jilin province. Its establishment received strong support from the Religious Affairs Bureaus at the county and provincial levels. The inauguration coincided with the launch of the first term of the missionary training course conducted in the Korean language.

Rev. Liu Doufeng, the head of the CC/TSPM at the county level, gave a sermon at the centre’s opening ceremony while Rev. Qu Weiping, head of the provincial CC/TSPM, gave his greetings. A plate was presented to the centre by the Religious Affairs Bureau director, Jin Zhengyi. A total of 50 evangelists from 8 different counties and cities attended the first term of the training course in Korean. The course content included Bible study, pastoral ministry, legal studies and lessons on how to counter heresy under various circumstances. Some well-known Korean preachers were invited to guest teach at the centre. Within three months, there were notable improvements in the overall skills of the evangelists. Also included in the study modules were visits to the county’s enterprises by students in order to increase their awareness of contemporary society and the need to strengthen the churches. Courses in Mandarin (putonghua) are expected to be run in February 2008.

(Source: Tian Feng No. 322, November 2007. Translated by Christine Nicholson.)

Yanbian Christian Training Center established in Jilin

Inaugural meeting of Christian representatives in Yuxi City, Yunnan

The grand opening of the first conference of Christian representatives in Yuxi City in Yunnan on July 29, 2007 was attended by 76 Christian delegates. It was held at the Yuxi Veterans Activities Centre.

Vice Mayor Ming Zhengbin gave a very warm welcome at the opening ceremony on behalf of the city council and the city’s governing committee. He said at the meeting that the city authorities have always acknowledged the important role of religion in development and will make sure that the relevant party policies will be properly implemented in order to protect every citizen’s right to religious freedom, ensure the smooth running of churches’ normal activities, and secure churches’ legal properties according to the law. He expressed appreciation for Christian contributions to the building of Chinese socialism and the construction of a harmonious society. He also appreciated the contributions Christians had made to the promotion of Christian unity, ethnic harmony and the socio-economic development of Chinese society.

Ma Lingchang, Head of the city’s Religious Affairs Bureau, pointed out in his speech that the inauguration of the city-level CC/TSPM Conference was a successful realization of the government’s policy on religion and a dream come true for many Christians. The CC/TSPM symbolized the unity of Christians in the city and constituted one of the biggest events on the agenda of Yuxi city’s religious affairs as well as for local Christians.

(Source: Tian Feng No. 322, November 2007. Translated by Christine Nicholson.)