And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Is. 9:6)

He Qi: Gift of the Magi
Dear Reader,

Our Christmas and New Year greetings come to you closer to Epiphany this year. Communications difficulties slowed production, but our hopes that you celebrated Christ's coming with joy and the prayers for peace in the new year we join to your own are no less heartfelt for arriving a bit late. We are also very happy to convey a Christmas message from Rev. Gao Feng, President of the China Christian Council, on behalf of the national TSPM/CCC.

This issue focuses on the pressures city church experience as a result of increased urbanization. The growth of the church is related to the growth of the economy and of the urban population. The density and complexity of an urbanizing society, the presence of rural migrant labor, and tendencies toward secularization are all factors with which the urban churches must contend.

The size of urban congregations and the increasingly varied demands of continued church growth results in intense pressure on the pastorale and demonstrates the need for more, and more effective, pastoral care—for members and pastoral staff alike. In this issue, Zhang Zhongcheng and Wang Congyou address effective pastoral care and the role of fellowship groups, while XieBingguo discusses the need for churches to be involved in social service as a witness to the church's life of faith. Care for migrants and for rural congregations are important avenues of outreach, both within the church and beyond it. Pastoral workers can choose from a wider variety of methods today: online resources, blogs, instant messaging. Nothing can take the place of personal contact, of course; in addition to teamwork in ministry, fellowship groups can serve as useful complements to pastoral involvement, easing the burdens of administrative and visitation work, for example. In “Guidelines for Pastoral Care in Urban Churches,” Zhang Yuanlai suggests theological education centers for those who will follow other careers while being active in ministry.

At the 17th Congress of the Communist Party of China, religious groups were called upon to encourage activities that would build the harmonious society, a call that has been taken up enthusiastically by the church. These activities, such as social service efforts described above, are ways churches can integrate with society, broadening the space for religion and expanding the churches' role in society.

Finally, Elder Fu Xianwei, Chairperson of the TSPM, provides a retrospective on church leaders' response to the establishment of the People's Republic in its early years, and reviews developments he believes have made the last thirty years the best in the history of Chinese Christianity.

As 2009 ends and 2010 begins, I want to thank our readers for their support and interest. As always, your comments are welcome.

Special thanks to our translators for this issue, Derreck Arce, Emily Dunne, Suzanne Rowe, Kurt Selles, and Mei-Fein Yueh.

With best wishes for 2010,

Janice Wickeri

About Amity News Service:

Editor: Janice Wickeri
Consultant: Theresa Carino

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E-mail: amityhk@pacific.net.hk
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Dear Friends,

Christmas is coming, a holiday that brings joy and hope to us all, a time of Joy to the World.

Yet even in the midst of these days of joy, we cannot forget that there are still in this world many who have no joy. There are millions of children who suffer hunger and inadequate nutrition; many who know sorrow because of natural and man-made disasters; many who need aid in their hardships.

Today, peace and development have become the global mainstream. People aspire to peace and a better life. But we cannot turn away from the fact that there are still armed conflicts and killing and threats of war, greed, injustice, and evil in the world. Precisely for this reason, the world still needs to welcome the redemption, love, and mercy of Christ.

The Chinese church has continued to develop in every phase of its ministry over the past year, making steady progress in theological education, lay leadership training, Bible and Christian literature publication, social service, and exchanges with churches overseas. At the same time, we face problems and challenges, and as our church continues to develop, our friends continue to pray for us. We believe that the Chinese Church, like other churches, will bear an ever more beautiful witness to the God who guides and blesses us.

May God bless you all.

Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year.

Gao Feng (Rev.)
President, China Christian Council
On behalf of the TSPM/CCC
Urbanization generally means that the population is moving toward cities. A transformation in society, demography, space, and the economy occurs, as well as changes in lifestyle, from rural to urban. It is inevitable that the spread of urbanization will transform society and have a tremendous impact on social development. Up to the end of 2007, the estimated city population in China was over 594 million. What will be the impact of urbanization on the churches? Several aspects of the process are worth our consideration: What features will characterize churches during the process?; What challenges and conflicts will churches face?; How should the church respond in terms of its pastoral ministry? These are the main issues that we will discuss in this article.

**How urbanization will affect the make-up of congregations**

First, new types of Christian groups will appear—these groups have already begun to gradually appear in churches in large and medium sized cities. They are mainly made up of Christian entrepreneurs from companies of various sizes with a strong financial base and more highly educated intellectuals. The number of Christian entrepreneurs, such as private business owners, presidents and CEOs and board members of companies, is gradually growing. Such people, whose financial status is strong, are very important in church construction and financial support. Although Christians are still a minority of “intellectual elites” in major cities, their numbers are gradually increasing too.

Second, methods of pastoral work have proliferated and its scope has expanded. The rapid demographic changes in age and education levels during urbanization are noticeable; there is a growing population of young and middle-aged as well as educated Christians. This situation necessitates a diversification of pastoral methods to meet their needs for spiritual growth. In the past, the Sunday sermon, Bible study, and prayer groups were sufficient. However, urbanization makes diversification necessary. Churches have started arranging classes, youth groups, small groups, couples groups, prayer meetings, praise song meetings, and Sunday School for children. In addition, the transient population has increased along with the rapid pace of urbanization and thus the scope of the church’s pastoral work is also expanding. The huge transient population that resides in urban areas for career purposes has spiritual needs due to high stress from work and boredom in their off-hours. This population has a higher tendency to accept the gospel and has naturally become an object of pastoral work.

Third, the tendency for secularization in the church, which is exacerbated by urbanization, is of increasingly grave concern. As the financial strength of churches increases, secularizing tendencies are more common, as can be seen in some churches in Zhejiang. This is a common tendency as financial strength and material standards continue to rise in the churches as they develop. Secularization in the church is a complicated and pervasive issue. As a matter of fact, secularism in Christianity, determined by the innate character and the social nature of Christianity, has existed since ancient times. The relationship...
between Christianity and secularism, which takes various forms, is quite delicate; we cannot say that certain phenomena will always lead to secularization. For example, the church has to adapt to the society’s needs to develop, and theological views have to accommodate the needs of the times. If things are not handled properly in the church, or if it is not guided by correct theory, the church may focus too much on the economy, on business, on the construction of luxurious and stylish church buildings, and competition may arise between churches; churches may focus on conducting study groups for "Christian business people," they may over-emphasize the salaries and benefits of ministers, and the incessant replacing and renovation of church amenities and facilities: these things may easily lead to secularization.

**The challenges of urbanization**

Pastoral work is not sufficient to meet the current need. In many churches, believers’ needs are not met by the worship gatherings or the provision of activities. Methods may be out of date; if they are new, it may be that it’s just one more meeting that does not provide anything new. Youth groups, for example, may suffer from out of date methods and material that does not meet the needs of younger believers. This is an area that requires consultation by the pastoral ministry of the church. Reasonable adjustments should be made.

There is a shortage of pastors with sufficient professional training. They need not only professional training, but a diversity of talents. The number of Christian intellectuals is increasing and more intellectual elites are starting to join churches. However, the church lacks pastors qualified to minister to them and relevant classes and counseling are lacking, resulting in ineffective pastoral care for these people. The gospel and pastoral care for intellectuals is an important ministry in the urban church, for they are or will be influential forces in society, and may become a storehouse of talent for the church and core co-workers. Therefore, it is important to lay the foundation of their spiritual lives. Ineffective pastoral care for these intellectuals is one of reasons that churches currently lag behind the society. There church has a relative dearth of professionals with diverse skills such as music ministers, ministers trained in psychological counseling, those with foreign language ability, and those with writing skills. We also need people with professional biblical knowledge and literary expertise.

There is a great deal of pressure for churches to regularize their management practices. With the growth in believers and the emergence of new types of groups, the numbers of unauthorized gatherings and meetings will rise. One of the challenges resulting from this complex issue is that it is disadvantageous to the standardization of management in the churches and can lead to disorder. In addition, management and pastoral work are far behind current knowledge and social progress in areas such as literature, archives, membership information, and website management. All this will inhibit progress in the church.

**Pastoral care strategies during urbanization**

The challenges and pressures that churches encounter during urbanization might result in new opportunities. If churches are able to overcome obstacles and problems and make appropriate adjustments, they can make great progress.

It is necessary to expand and broaden thinking on pastoral care and adjust pastoral methods upon the foundation of traditional methods. We should review the traditional model for pastoral care, summarize the pros and cons, and learn from our review. Believers tend to have high expectations of ministers, thinking that they should be superior in every respect, that they are spiritually and emotionally self-sufficient, and that they have many capabilities and can play multiple roles. Sometimes, ministers themselves consider themselves self-sufficient—that they can fulfill themselves and meet every need of the church. But they are often restricted and become defensive, refusing help from others, because if they accept help, they will be seen as losers. Ministers should not be fettered in their pastoral work by this view, but should rather focus on leading their team and drawing on the strengths of the team, thus making it possible for more people to engage in service to the church. This both expresses God’s grace for the whole
church and it gives those engaged in this service an opportunity for growth.

Attention must be given to the pastoral ministry among the migrant population. There are more than 14.7 million migrants, 10% of the total population. A big portion of this population is made up of rural migrant laborers, who are comparatively vulnerable. The church should see this enormous transient population as a great opportunity for pastoral work. Why not, for example, on traditional holidays such as Chinese New Year, Moon Festival, and so on, host special gatherings to bring the warmth of home to these people and alleviate their sense of loss? Also, churches should encourage their members who have the ability to participate in various activities for special groups. For example, a believer in Hangzhou launched the “Chong-Yi Clinics,” which were highly praised for providing service to rural migrants at a discount. Some Christian entrepreneurs established new schools for migrants or provided financial aid to laborers in need. The most important work for churches regarding the big transient population is pastoral care and counseling, and the pulpit is the fastest and easiest venue from which to provide counseling; therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the pulpit ministry and set up a database for the urban pulpit ministry. At the same time, individual pastoral care and counseling should be promptly improved; the small care group model can be used to meet believers’ needs.

Raising the quality of individual pastors is an urgent matter. In pastoral care in the church, ministers must generally play many roles: ministers need to distinguish true and false prophets, true and false teachers; ministers should follow rules and do things in an orderly manner to protect the believers; ministers should care for believers’ spiritual growth; ministers should pursue virtue that is holy and unsullied as that of angels; ministers should treat those under their pastoral care astutely. Thus, improving the quality of ministers themselves is highly important for the church. Diversity is one result of urbanization, just as Chinese cities today are formed of many groups. Churches have to find ways to embody the special characteristics of their community: inclusiveness, mutual respect, and mutual love. Clearly, establishing diverse ministries of the church is a matter of great urgency.

In an era of ongoing urbanization, churches need to face reality and various challenges courageously; ministers should continue to raise their all-round quality through humble study to adapt to the needs of church and society. Let us turn challenges into opportunities and pastor our church so that church pastors may: “reach unity in the knowledge of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:13).

Translated by Mei-Fei Yueh from Tian Feng No.359, November 2009.
Guidelines for Pastoral Care in Urban Churches

As the process of urbanization has deepened in China, we can see in the interior parts of the country many places where churches in the city are flourishing while churches in the countryside are gradually declining. Where the economy is developing well, the church is often also growing. Perhaps instead of lamenting the decline of rural churches, however, we should think about how to do pastoral work better in urban churches in order to let the benefits spread out to rural churches.

Church & meeting point: Pastoral care by clergy and lay workers

In the past it was often difficult for rural churches to build sanctuaries because of financial constraints, but today many urban churches, and especially those situated in larger cities, often have an even more difficult time than rural churches in building sanctuaries because of required permits, real estate prices, and financial limitations, among other things. In China, the number of Christians always grows faster than the number of buildings to seat new believers. So, in regards to the vast majority of churches, a more reasonable approach is “church + meeting points”; in other words, connecting meeting points to a centrally located church. In this model, worship meeting points are established with the permission of the local Protestant TSPM/CCC and the appropriate government office according to developing needs of a particular district or community, and are then supervised by clergy or lay workers from the establishing church.

Urban churches rely on teams that combine professional members of the clergy and lay workers to carry out the church’s ministry of pastoral care. The church needs different kinds of gifts and abilities, but no matter how hard any given pastor works or what kind of background and training he or she might have, it is very difficult to satisfy the ever-increasing demands of ministry today. It is more sensible to establish strong pastoral teams that combine professional clergy and lay workers as a ministry foundation and then let the team share the church’s pastoral work. Teams should take the work of the church and divide it up into parts such as pastoral care or administration and let members of the team with specialized training manage these specific areas.

Pastoral care serves as the foundation for the administrative work of the TSPM/CCC

One of the important mandates of the national TSPM/CCC is to serve as the link between the church and the government. Thus, local branches of the TSPM/CCC must put pastoral work at the center, keeping in good contact with the churches under their care, doing a good job of administration and management according to the nature of such an association; that is, administrative work needs to be established according to the needs of pastoral work in the church. In order to promote positive development, the church needs to strive to bring together resources and make a success of its management and pay attention to the supervision and pastoral assignment work.

Regardles of how the work of the church develops, it must not veer from its essential truths—Christ and his cross, the importance of faith, and the standards of eternal truth—these are the essentials that the church must use to face the challenge of the secularized world.

Zhang Yuanlai
The community church + internet pastoral care

In the process of urbanization, more and more large communities are springing up in China, with some communities having permanent residents of upwards of 100,000 people. Many of these larger communities are self-contained urban units with their own institutions including local internet servers, web forums, community schools providing kindergarten through high school education, hospitals, supermarkets, banks, play areas, and so on. Though these communities are often comparable in size to European cities, they do not have churches. This writer believes that the religious life is a basic need for believers. If there is no church in a community, people are quick to start a fellowship and worship in their home or in a club, and after that take the next step and form a church. Under good supervision and pastoral care, groups like this might become viable churches; without good pastoral care, however, they may be easily be led astray by heretical sects and cults, and be “tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes” (Eph. 4:14). In the opinion of this author, the church should regularly meet with the Christians in a community and provide them with pastoral care. This will aid the Christians in these groups after a period of time to take the next step and become an organized church. At the same time, as the internet becomes more and more widespread, churches meeting the right conditions should not be prevented from having their own pastoral care network, their own instant messaging groups, blog spots, and other means of developing internet community and pastoral care.

Pastoral care and follow up for migrants

As the result of China’s household registration system, migrants to the cities, even if they already have a job, feel a sense of alienation. These migrants need to be able to establish their own community support groups. The fellowship that the Christian church provides perfectly meets this need for developing community, and accounts for the “Christianity fever” that has developed in many cities. Unlike in the past when Christian growth depended on the miraculous, compassion, and Western styles of worship, the Christianity fever in today’s urbanizing churches is sounder and deeper. This means that the church should be more intentional in launching group activities for migrants as well as fellowships for people using regional dialects. Regional churches should even survey the situation of migrants in their area and from this data form fellowships according to the needs of the Christians in their city. At the same time, the church should set up regular pastoral care for these migrants and work hard to maintain contact with them no matter what direction they are heading. Although migrants are extremely prone to transience, if the church provides them with ample nurture and pastoral care, it can help them grow into mature Christians.

Establishing fellowships for business people and professionals

It is obvious to all that the present social situation has had a huge impact on Christians in business. The same thing is true in the church as well. If the pastoral structure of a church does not include a special fellowship for those in business or in the professions, it needs to strengthen this area of its ministry. Business people and professionals not only have greater financial resources, but they also have greater social resources and management experience. It is essential that churches use up-to-date management techniques and practices to organize and run fellowships for business people and professionals. Christians who are successful in business will often have mature personalities, ample resources, rich management training, and practical experience, and adding their economic and social capacity to the church will have a positive role in the development of the church.

Five important points concerning pastoral care

- **Paying attention to specific needs**: How pastoral care is done in the urban setting should be determined by looking at the needs of different believers and then organizing different small groups and fellowships according to these various needs. By basing pastoral care on the needs of different groups, the church enables believers to participate in appropriate ways, receive good pastoral care, dedicate themselves, and serve.
- **Effective supervision**: Today churches in some cities use the time-clock system to keep track of office hours for their pastoral staff. These
churches require their clergy staff to work a certain number of hours each day of every week. In the final analysis, however, clergy are not telephone operators or receptionists; their job is to understand and respond to the important needs of the church and society. Consequently, clergy should be assigned to work suited to their training and skills and evaluated by their effectiveness in serving the congregation. Courses on management teach that the most effective people are not necessarily effective by keeping a supervised set of office hours. After all, supervision of the clergy is not merely for the sake supervision, but for the sake of creating effective pastoral care. According to scriptural principles, supervision is for people; people are not for supervision!

- **Working in teams:** One key difference between traditional principles of management and those of today is the emphasis on the importance of working in teams. Teams bring the different skills and abilities of each member into a group organized to work together to achieve a common goal. This should be a principle especially applicable to the church. In the Chinese cultural tradition, it is difficult to establish a sound church on one individual's authority. Rather, it is better to establish a church on the foundation of a strong team of clergy and lay workers who have appropriate talents and proper training. Whether it was Jesus or his disciples, whenever they did evangelism or were doing pastoral care in the church, the work was carried out through a team.

- **Using professional skills:** Because of the complicated structure of the church, it is very important to apply professional knowledge to its work. Consequently, the church should rely on those with professional training to do ministry. Obviously clergy and lay workers cannot know everything, but at the very least they should have competent training in their particular area of ministry and be able to work well as a team to carry out the church's work.

- **Christ at the center:** Regardless of how the work of the church develops, it must not veer from its essential truths—Christ and his cross, the importance of faith, and the standards of eternal truth—these are the essentials that the church must use to face the challenge of the secularized world.

**Establishing a church culture**

The church should not comment on the core values of society. Instead the topics that society wants the church to speak on should be the topics that the church addresses! What the church is able to communicate to society is the culture of the church. The culture of the church is its faith and practice for living the Christian life in society. Development of the culture of the church not only calls on Christians to adapt to the needs of society, but even more importantly it calls on the church to create a culture built on the Gospel that demonstrates Christian faith and ethics in practice.

**Extending the scope of theological training**

Today there are only about a dozen theological seminaries in China. Many of these schools are geared toward training students who have set aside time for full-time study and who will go on to serve the church vocationally as clergy. But it is equally important for the urban church to provide theological training for students who want to serve the church while remaining in another vocation. Wherever it is feasible, urban churches or the local TSPM/CCC should act as a work unit to establish theological training centers for Christians who have the gifts and desire to serve the church while continuing to work in their profession. After completing their training, graduates from these centers will be able to participate in the pastoral care teams of the local church. For teachers, these training centers could draw on pastors from the local churches as well as guest seminary teachers and other special lecturers. As a matter of fact, these kinds of theological training centers are already within the means of many churches to carry out.

**Care for society**

Concern for society is not only a tradition and responsibility of the church, but it is also a kind of “advertisement.” Concern for society is one important aspect of the church’s ministry. Urban churches should establish long-term and effective mechanisms for demonstrating concern for the needs of society. They should also strengthen and expand existing benevolent ministries as well as create appropriate foundations and organizations that are able to focus on those in society with special needs and disabilities. God has given the urban church...
greater opportunities and resources to allow it to take on more responsibility. One important way that urban churches could take on more responsibility is by aiding rural churches. There are some urban churches in China today that have savings of more than ten million yuan (approximately USD 1.4 million). Some of these churches have no immediate plans for building a new sanctuary, for expanding the work of the gospel, for improving the lives of their evangelists, or for offering help to other needy churches. These churches truly have become tightfisted churches. In regions where urban churches are able, they should send members of their pastoral teams to do circuit preaching and pastoral care for churches in the countryside. This kind of service would not only expand the ministry opportunities of urban churches, but also have the positive effect of limiting the impact of sects and heresies on churches in the countryside. Moreover, by collecting surplus goods, such as used clothing, electronic goods, etc. and giving them to Christians in the countryside, urban churches express love and compassion and create fellowship between urban and rural Christians, not to mention the fact that they are being good stewards. These are efforts that only the urban church can carry out.

From this discussion, we can see that the decline of the rural church and the rapid growth of the urban church are the inevitable result of the rapid process of urbanization taking place in China today. As Christians, we need to look squarely at the decline of the rural church, but it is even more important that we do ministry well in the urban church in order to spread out the benefits of the urban church to the rural church. By doing this we demonstrate that the urban church and the rural church are two parts of the one church.

Translated by Kurt D. Selles from Tian Feng No. 359, November 2009.
The State Administration for Religious Affairs of the People’s Republic of China (SARA) stated that activities leading to harmony should be initiated in places of worship throughout the country. The national TSPM/CCC responded enthusiastically to this request. At recent meetings held by the national TSPM/CCC of chairpersons and presidents at the provincial and municipal levels, the participants all agreed that building harmonious churches is a fundamental necessity for the church’s own development, and not simply a demand from society. Such activities should meet eight basic standards: love for the church and the country; knowledge of and obedience to the law; unity and stability; good order; proper church style; standard management; safety and cleanliness; and service to society. Churches all promote these eight principles. This author will discuss the development of harmonious churches from the perspective of one of the eight basic standards - ‘service to society’.

Such activities should meet eight basic standards: love for the church and the country; knowledge of and obedience to the law; unity and stability; good order; proper church style; standard management; safety and cleanliness; and service to society. Churches all promote these eight principles. This author will discuss the development of harmonious churches from the perspective of one of the eight basic standards - ‘service to society’.

I would like to approach my consideration of harmony-building activities in the church from the angle of service to society. Establishing a correct concept of social service and striving to promote a social service ministry is an important way of experiencing harmony and working hard towards building harmonious churches. Some Christians suppose that the main task of the church is to spread the good news of personal salvation, but they care nothing about serving society or a ministry of social concern. On the contrary, social service has played an important role in the history of the development of the church, since it is not only biblical, but is one of the important fundamentals of our faith. If we study the Bible carefully, God’s love and care for humankind is clear throughout the whole of Scripture. Such care was ultimately demonstrated in the person of Jesus Christ, God incarnate. Jesus taught that the most important commands were to “love God with all your heart, soul, and mind and to love your neighbor as yourself.” To love God with all our hearts, souls, and minds is what we strive for, and it follows that loving others as ourselves is a concrete demonstration of our love for God. Therefore, “loving others as we love ourselves” has become the essence of Christian moral practice. The word “service” is mentioned many times in the Bible. Jesus Christ said, “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.”

Paul’s letters teach us to “Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone” and that “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Social service provides an important entry point through which the church can integrate with society. How can the church deeply root itself in its own society and culture, and how can it gain society’s complete acceptance and develop? Looking at the ways the Chinese church has engaged in social service, we can affirm that it is entirely possible for the church to integrate with society and gain social recognition through social service. Churches in different areas have already touched society with their love, enabling people to feel that the church is like one who ‘brings coals on a snowy day’ through activities such as supporting the poor, disaster relief, offering scholarships to students and taking people to hospital. Such activities expand the impact the church has on society and establish a fine social image for the church.
Social service is an effective means of building harmonious churches. The word church not only has connotations of giving offerings, help, mission, and evangelism, it also stands for service, caring, healing, reconciliation, removing divisions, of bringing health and wholeness. The church's caring function requires that the church act as the visible hands and feet of the invisible God. Through the church's caring action the great love of God for humankind is made visible and becomes real in service. In this way, it makes the relationships between human beings and God, between people, between humankind and nature, and within the church itself increasingly harmonious.

Bishop Ting has said that a social service ministry is extremely important for the development of the Chinese church; faith in Christ should not only exist in people's minds, but must at the same time be expressed in the real world. Enabling more people to see a demonstration of love and faith through the good deeds and moral conduct of the church means that through its ministry of service the church cannot be separated from people and society. Social service is a great historical tradition of the church. Many churches around the country have established homes for the elderly, nursing homes, and orphanages; they visit orphans, widows, and the elderly; provide aid to the disabled and educational aid, donate to support schools, provide for the poor and bring disaster relief, mend bridges and build roads. Particularly throughout the last ten years of Theological Reconstruction people have gained a deeper recognition of the fact that the service of the church should not take place only in the church, but should extend to every corner of society. In fact, more and more pastoral workers and Christians are gradually moving away from a narrow personal model of faith and are seeing social service as one of the important missions of the church.

Let me give an example from my church in Shanghai, which has recently celebrated its thirtieth anniversary. Over these thirty years, through God's blessing and leading, not only has the number of believers continued to grow, every aspect of its ministry has flourished, and this includes attention to and practice of a ministry of social service. Apart from alleviating difficulty and disaster relief, caring for the weak and vulnerable in society, helping the poor, offering scholarships and assisting those children who have had to leave school, my Shanghai church has also enthusiastically collected donations to build a ‘Project Hope’ elementary school, thus supporting rural education. Some churches are deeply engaged in their communities; many churches are concerned for public welfare, organizing medical workers who volunteer to regularly provide free consultations for members of the public. Some churches organize jumble sales in order to raise money for schools for the mentally handicapped as well as providing for those who have no one to care for them. Many churches have established homes for the elderly like that run by the Shanghai TSPM/CCC, the Enguang Home for the Elderly. Some churches regularly volunteer at these homes for the elderly, while others conduct schools to “benefit the people” and train capable people for society. Some of these are well accepted and commended by society. Many of those who have been helped have a good impression of the church, even though they are not Christians. Some express their gratitude by presenting the church with silk banners that say “Helping students with loving hearts; Christ lives forever”; others use Christ's words, “Be salt and light; glorify God and benefit others.” This kind of service not only helps those in need, but it also strengthens the church itself, enabling it to better communicate Christ's love by serving the needy. And this is a stimulus to building a harmonious church.

In April this year, the author and seven co-workers from the Shanghai church went to Dehongzhou in Yunnan. In 2006 the Shanghai church gave 700,000 RMB to fund Shanghai counterparts launch a program of aid to assist local development work among the De'ang minority. The work achieved very good results, accelerating the pace of poverty reduction among the De’ang people. A De’ang official spoke with great feeling: “The unselfish help from Shanghai has enabled the De’ang people’s development to become reality; thank you, people of Shanghai, for your deep friendship, and thank you, Shanghai Christians, for your love.” After last year’s earthquake in Wenzhou (Sichuan), the Shanghai TSPM/CCC quickly sent notices to every church, calling on all Christians in the city to give with loving hearts to the work of disaster relief. Churches and believers in the city responded enthusiastically, giving over 700 million RMB. This clearly shows the sense of responsibility and service consciousness of clergy and believers.
The Report of the 17th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) stated that [we will] “bring into play the positive role of religious personages and believers in promoting economic and social development.” What can we in the churches do to contribute to economic and social development? I believe that in our social services and support for social welfare undertakings, we are already playing an important part. The National TSPM/CCC has established a Social Services Department to actively develop activities to serve society, so that local churches can play an active role in supporting the poor, helping the less privileged, doing disaster relief, and helping the disabled and the elderly, supporting education and providing free medical consultations.

The Work Report of the Seventh National Chinese Christian Conference emphasized that the church should “Continue to care for society and serve the masses, bearing excellent witness to Christ…” The TSPM/CCC at every level and local churches are to “serve society well, care for the weak and take part in suitable charitable activities according to local conditions, serving society with all their hearts and minds, to benefit the people.” The development of social services has established a better image for the church, led to more harmonious relationships between people, and has become an important expression of faith; it has thus become a significant avenue for building a harmonious church. Harmony is a central theme threading its way throughout the Bible. I think that building a harmonious church is a vision of the church both in China and indeed in the world, and constitutes our God-given mission as Christians. Building a harmonious church should not simply be a slogan, it must be integrated into a specific ministry of the church. The creation of a harmonious church must be more than a response to a government call—it is necessary to the church’s own development.

Translated by Suzanne Rowe from Tian Feng No. 358, October 2009.
Fellowship Grows Amid Harmony

Wang Congyou

"Building a harmonious church" is a major topic involving the church and its administration, coordinating external neighborhood relationships and as well as internal structural matters such as personnel management and a system of procedure. Of course it also involves several of the church’s own development problems. This article only attempts to speak of one person’s viewpoint on the relationship between achieving a ministry of fellowship in the church and the building of a harmonious church.

Fellowship ministry is a beneficial extension of the church’s pulpit ministry

It is very difficult for pastors to communicate individual love and concern for believers via a single Sunday service. If you add onto that a church’s large size, then the pastor is left with almost no time to enter into deeper fellowship with each believer. This makes it nearly impossible to understand the spiritual needs of his congregation. Some believers are very dissatisfied with the preaching they receive—it does not touch the heart, or speaks only of non-essentials. However one cannot simply conclude that there is a supply and demand inequality between the pew and the pulpit, for ratios of 1:100, 1:1000, or even larger between pastors and believers in China will surely cause some difficulties in pastoral care. Therefore, some well-organized and well-led fellowship groups whose thinking is consistent with that of shepherding the church as a whole have become useful complements to the pastoral ministry. One example is "caring fellowships" whose goal is to practice the Lord’s teachings and care for their neighbors; “prayer fellowships” which aim at providing intercessory prayer for others. The focus of these types of fellowships is on leading believers to make what is spoken from the pulpit concrete and put it into action. In other words, the pastor in the pulpit is to make clear God’s truth and the fellowship groups are to live out God’s truth in their activities.

From a practical perspective these fellowships can not only help their members (believers) put into practice the Word from the pulpit, but through their practice they can at the same time help the believers earnestly listen to and absorb the sermon message in order to better assimilate into a life of fellowship. Thus the result will be a fruitful complementarity between the fellowship and the sermon messages, thereby promoting the harmonious development of the church.

Fellowship ministry is an important link to effective pastoring

As the number of Chinese believers continues to grow, properly pastoring a congregation has become a difficult issue facing many among the limited number of pastors, especially young and middle-aged pastoral workers. So some pastors constantly remind their congregations from the pulpit not to lose their intimate relationship with God amid the busyness of the world, yet these pastors are being so exhausted by all manner of things that they have lost joy in their work. This leads to hasty preparation of sermons at the eleventh hour, which makes their situation go from bad to worse. To build the physical church it is critical not to lose sight of building the intangible church, as it is the very life force of the church.

In my view you cannot neglect love and concern for the flock in "building a harmonious church." In fact fellowship in the church can actually bring its strengths into play. Fellowship ministry can increase members’ sense of belonging. When the church is large and the pastors few, often members have many problems and needs that cannot be adequately communicated to the preachers in order to be effectively helped. Therefore in the development of the church there will at times be some members who begin to drift from the church; in their view
the church’s cupboard is bare and they are unable to receive true spiritual help. This type of phenomenon certainly poses a challenge to the harmonious development process of a church. It sometimes even affords opportunity for heretical lies to spread, which upsets the proper order of the church. Faced with this situation, fellowship groups can become effective complements. For example a fellowship group can help the sisters and brothers of an outside fellowship group of lay volunteers better merge into the church. Another example is a new-believers fellowship that can provide helpful answers to faith questions. More importantly, each fellowship group’s own activities not only promote bonds of affection between the members of that fellowship, this will increase the sense of belonging they feel toward their churches. In addition life in fellowship can assist the members to solve their own faith and life issues, effectively easing the pressure upon pastors. Many churches have developed visitation programs to address believers’ specific needs, but it is difficult for pastoral workers to actually make the visits due to their busy schedules. However due to the smaller scale of fellowship groups, these visits can be made by members, so everyone becomes familiar with one another and finds it easier to communicate, resulting in greater efficacy of the visits. Fellowship ministry definitely complements the work of pastors to a certain degree, as well as more tangibly displaying the church’s love and faithful care for its members.

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In some churches now, the “responsible” brother or sister must be consulted in nearly everything. This seems reasonable, but in reality this does not lend itself to harmonious development. The responsible person is very important because s/he must lead the overall development of the church, not because s/he is responsible, and therefore all power must devolve on the responsible person or that person must manage all matters great and small. A leader who takes all things upon him- or herself is not a good leader. It is very difficult for a pastor who oversees all important matters him- or herself to become a good church leader. A harmonious, healthy church should have a structured administration, which is why building fellowship groups at each appropriate level is so beneficial to easing and sharing the administrative burden.

One church, for example, started an “audio-experts fellowship,” a pioneering move among local churches. Why do I say this? Because the fellowships in the local churches, e.g., youth fellowships, fellowships for seniors, Bible reading fellowships, or even the more specialized fellowships such as a “legal fellowship” and “literature fellowship” were all aimed at a general audience of believers. However this “audio-experts fellowship” was aimed at those responsible for the audio equipment in the churches. Originally there were only one or two audio experts in the church, falling far short of what was needed. There were frequently situations when there was no one overseeing the audio or the audio situation was utterly chaotic. In addition, the situation caused those audio experts to be suspicious of other people messing up the audio equipment, creating conflicts between church members. So through the implementation of these fellowships the experts were able to train others to manage and use the audio equipment, those

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involved enjoyed a spirit-filled fellowship experience and a sense of service to others. Audio-related issues in the associated churches no longer trouble the pastors, but are handled by this fellowship. It is apparent that this fellowship not only rewarded those involved by easing tensions in the church, but also alleviated administrative pressures.

I have expounded here upon the positive impact of certain fellowship groups on the harmonious development of particular churches; however one thing that must be clarified is that the usefulness of fellowship groups should not be exaggerated. If commitments to fellowship groups are emphasized over those to the church then a circumstance may arise where fellowship groups flourish while worship becomes barren. The author recognizes the benefits of fellowship groups in the development of the church, but these groups should be tied to the gospel ministry of the church and their existence should promote the overall development of the church. Another aspect to consider would be when believers are drawn away to fellowship groups elsewhere because of the failure of the church to organize their own.

There is much work to be done in the process of constructing a harmonious church. The church should set out from its own characteristics and needs, seeking an appropriate way for its own harmonious development. In this author’s view, however, the development of fellowship ministries plays a decisive role in this process because the harmony they bring is not a matter for public boasting, rather it takes root in the hearts of people and produces great fruit.

He Qi: Nativity

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Thank You!
Sixty Glorious Years

October 1, 2009 marked the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China. Sixty years ago, a new chapter in Chinese history began as China entered a new era. This new era was brimming with hope and spurred people on. The Chinese people—who had been through so much—embarked on a great national rejuvenation. In this new era, the Three-Self Patriotic Movement was also reinvigorated and set out on the road to glory.

Christianity had entered China three times in the past, but each time had been unable to put down roots and had become lost to history. In the early nineteenth century, Protestant Christianity entered from the West once again. After undergoing years of upheaval and the calamity of war, Chinese Christianity still faced significant difficulties on the eve of the founding of the PRC. The basic reason for this lay in the historical background of the intertwining of the missionary movement with Western powers’ colonialist aggression towards China. Christianity was used by imperialism, and some missionaries played a dishonourable role in acts of aggression, injuring China’s national pride. Culturally, Christianity also retained Western supremacy and self-centeredness. This created antagonism and conflict between Chinese and Western cultures and prevented Christianity from assimilating with Chinese culture. Further, Western missions shackled the Christian truth to their own denominations, and demanded that Chinese believers join their own organizations in order to expand their influence. They referred to themselves as “parent organizations” and reduced Chinese churches to the status of “offshoots” without any sovereignty to speak of. Thus, the story of Christianity in the old China was a tragedy, and it had a dismal and uncertain future.

Having come to a fork in the road, which path should Chinese Christianity take? Follow the familiar way of the bygone era, turn its back on the tide of social progress and drift further away from the people, or bravely innovate and extend itself for the good of the nation, taking the path of sharing a common fate with the motherland and its people? Chinese Protestant leaders turned to prayer. In May 1950, a delegation of Protestant leaders led by Wu Yaozong went up north to Beijing. Premier Zhou Enlai made time in his busy schedule to hold three frank and open discussions with them that went...
all through the night. Their mention of the ideals of self-support, self-propagation and self-governance advocated by Chinese Protestants over recent decades met with Premier Zhou's praise and approval. The talks with Premier Zhou firmed the resolve of Chinese church leaders to cut ties with imperialism, shed their reliance on foreign missions and start on the road to independence, autonomy and self-management. For this reason, forty church leaders, including Wu Yaozong, set out a proposal which was to become known as the “Three-Self Manifesto” – an essay entitled “The Direction of Endeavor for Chinese Christianity in the Construction of a New China.” The People’s Daily newspaper published this declaration on September 23, 1950, and lent support for it in an editorial entitled “Patriotic Movement Among Protestants.”

The Three-Self Patriotic Movement was both an expression of national awakening and patriotism in the Protestant sphere and also consistent with Christian doctrine and biblical teaching. It was, therefore, enthusiastically supported by patriotic believers. From this time on, Chinese Protestantism cast off the yoke of imperialism and threw off the shackles of Western missions’ control, broke through the confines of Western conservative theology and removed the binding fetters of being a “foreign religion.” The TSPM thereby restored the original face of the gospel, enabling Christianity to be a glorious witness for the Lord in the new China.

The Three-Self Patriotic Movement enabled Chinese Protestantism to break completely free of Western missions’ control in the areas of personnel, finance, and administration. Chinese Protestantism was no longer a subsidiary or a replica, but had erased the insult of being a “foreign religion” to become rooted in Chinese culture. The church came to be truly supported, propagated, and governed by Chinese believers; this in turn caused Chinese people to change their impressions of Christianity and removed obstacles to people accepting the gospel. The TSPM both inherited and promoted the fine traditions of national righteousness and patriotic sentiment, and undertook to heighten patriotism and socialist consciousness. It fanned Chinese believers’ passion for loving the country and loving the church, and encouraged believers to contribute to the construction of the new China and socialism. It realized the longstanding desire of Christians who loved the country and the church to assert the church’s sovereignty and establish a Christianity that reflected their own identity.

The TSPM not only tided the Chinese church through a difficult period, but also found a new and living way for its development and laid a firm foundation for running the church well. It provided the conditions in which believers could obtain pastoral care and healthy spiritual growth. It increased mutual understanding between Protestant denominations and brought about greater unity. On the basis of mutual respect, the TSPM started on the path to united worship in 1958. In this historical step on the road to church unity, it freed itself from denominational disputes and ended fragmentation. The TSPM increased cordial interactions between Chinese Protestantism and the ecumenical church, raised the status of the Chinese church on an international level, and was hailed by churches in Third World countries as a fine example of church decolonization. The Chinese church became both more Chinese and more global. The Three-Self is an enriching and unique contribution from the Chinese church to the ecumenical church.

In the late 1970s, China implemented reforms that released the people from ideological and structural constraints that had bound them and brought to an end China’s isolation. Over the last thirty years, the Party and the government have re-examined religion scientifically and implemented a policy of freedom of religious belief. In recent years, the Party and the government have emphasized the need to “give play to the positive role of religion in promoting social harmony” and “give play to the positive role of religious leaders and believers in advancing economic and social development.” The advancement of these new thoughts, viewpoints, and actions constitutes a major theoretical innovation in the sinification of the Marxist view of religion. It reflects an increasing maturity in the religious theory and policy of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and a continual deepening in the Party’s understanding of religion and its role in society.
At the same time, the TSPM has drawn on its abundant internal energy to remain engaged with the times, constantly deepening and developing over different historical periods. With China’s reforms, the TSPM’s focus shifted from running the church independently to running the church well. Since this time, it has also promoted Theological Reconstruction, helped believers to foster a vibrant spiritual life and positive approach to life, and lived out the witness of being salt and light in the world. The last thirty years have been the best time in the history of Chinese Christianity! The following factors provide clear evidence for this:

- **The public image of Chinese Christianity has improved and the political status of Christians has risen with the restoration of order and implementation of religious policy.** Thirteen members of the current CPPCC are Christians, and church leaders sit on Peoples’ Congresses and Political Consultative Congresses at both regional and national levels.

- **Steady growth in the number of churches and believers.** Today, there are over 55,000 churches and meeting points across China, of which 70% have been built recently. The largest church can accommodate over 7000 worshippers! According to partial statistics, there are approximately 20 million believers throughout the nation – almost thirty times the 700,000 believers that were counted in the early years of the People’s Republic. The quality of clergy and believers is also constantly increasing.

- **The TSPM and CCC organizations are stronger, and their management better.** The national TSPM reconvened in 1978. Following the establishment of the China Christian Council in 1980, Protestant TSPM/CCC organizations were set up across the nation to serve the churches. There are currently 29 Protestant TSPM/CCC organizations at the provincial (22 provinces, 5 autonomous regions and 4 directly administered municipalities—ed.) level, excluding Xinjiang, Tibet, and Taiwan, and efforts are underway to extend these institutional bodies to the city and county levels.

- **Bible printing and distribution continue to expand.** As of August 2009, the national TSPM/CCC had printed in excess of 50 million Bibles and set up more than 70 distribution points throughout the nation in order to deliver Bibles into believers’ hands quickly and efficiently.

- **Continual development of theological education.** In the early 1980s there was only one seminary in China – the Nanjing Union Theological Seminary; now, there are 19 seminaries spanning the national, regional, and provincial levels. Training for volunteers is also widespread and has effectively alleviated the shortage of clergy.

- **Theological reflection is more dynamic.** Since Theological Reconstruction was initiated in 1998, theological reflection in the Chinese church has become more dynamic. Thinking that was at odds with biblical principles and out of step with the times has retreated from the pulpit; believers have a better grasp of loving the country and loving the church, faith and works, worship and service, faith and reason, Life and everyday life, this life and the afterlife.

- **Ecumenical contact is increasing; international status is rising.** Contact between Chinese Protestantism and the ecumenical church gradually resumed and is now on the increase. Cordial exchanges have advanced our friendship with the ecumenical church and have also made it aware of China’s true religious policy and freedom of religious belief.

- **Strengthened sense of social responsibility and service.** The TSPM encourages believers to care for others and believe that “a good Christian should be a good citizen.” It has increased believers’ understanding of subjects such as patriotism and abiding by the law, protecting the environment, serving society, maintaining social stability, national unity, and national unification. The Chinese church’s ministry of social service has also gathered strong momentum. Now, as we face both opportunities and challenges, the infiltration of hostile foreign forces in the Christian sphere is increasingly intense. For this reason, we must hold unwaveringly to the Three-Self patriotic principles, continue to promote Theological Reconstruction, deepen our understanding of the theological significance of the “Three Selfs,” withstand infiltration, and strive to run an independent and autonomous Chinese church well.
TSPM/CCC Group Participates in Taiwan Forum

Six pastors were members of a TSPM/CCC group attending the “Cross-Straits Modern Urban Church Service Forum—The Urban Church and the Modern Soul” held in Taipei from 13-14 November, 2009. Eighty participants from various churches in Taiwan also attended the one-and-a-half-day meeting.

The twelve papers presented at the forum addressed six topics from a cross-straits perspective: 1) a historical review; 2) Christianity and social development; 3) theological education and modern social change; 4) church bodies and social concern; 5) the churches’ care for the elderly; and 6) lay training and church development. Each topic was presented as a “cross-straits” issue with papers read by local and mainland participants respectively. Mainland participants took questions from their Taiwan counterparts, elucidating the “one China” and “Three-Self” stance of churches on the mainland.

The forum followed similar conferences held in October 2006 at Tunghai University in Taiwan and in April of this year at the Taiwan Baptist Seminary. Following the conference the six mainland participants visited churches and other church bodies around Taiwan. These meetings are of great significance in maintaining links and fostering understanding and confidence between Mainland and Taiwan churches.

The State Administration of Religious Affairs (SARA) has recently proposed that activities be held to create harmonious places of worship. This will be of great benefit in promoting religious harmony and maintaining social stability. Christianity is by nature a religion that teaches harmony, reconciliation, and peace. Accordingly, the TSPM/CCC and churches throughout the nation will set up activities and deepen the Three-Self Patriotic Movement so as to increase the capacity of Chinese Protestantism for self-education and self-management and increase its influence.

In these activities, the TSPM/CCC should emphasize learning, leading churches and believers not only to have a thorough understanding of biblical teaching, but an understanding China’s current pattern of development and governance so that they can follow it. Churches should build themselves institutionally by promoting a democratic operating style, instituting rules and regulations, establishing effective mechanisms, and generally being well-organized and well-managed. The church should foster talent and cultivate a group of highly skilled people who love the Party and the nation, have a high level of religious education, and are held in high esteem both inside and outside the church. The TSPM/CCC should emphasize unity within the church, continue to uphold and strengthen combined worship services, and overcome differences of opinion. We must also be willing to serve those believers who have drifted away from the TSPM/CCC and unite them with us on the path of respect for law, love for the nation and love for the church.

In holding to Three-Self patriotic principles in this new environment, Chinese Christianity should embody the spirit of moving with the times, keeping up with society, and being of one heart with the people. As we celebrate the sixtieth birthday of our great nation today, may more Christians join together in unity. May we work together to be a more perfect witness for Christ in the midst of China’s social and economic development, and the building of a harmonious society.

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