Following extensive renovations, a thanksgiving service was held at the venerable Mu’en Church in Shanghai on July 28. Rev. (Ms.) Jiang Qianli presided, while Rev. Yuan Shihong preached on the topic of thanksgiving. In his remarks, Rev. Shen Xuebin, chairperson of the Shanghai CC/TSM, reminded the congregation that Mu’en Church was the first of the Shanghai churches to be reopened in the late 70s, and thus “a witness to the reinstatement of the policy of religious freedom.” Rev. Dr. Cao Shengjie, former president of the China Christian Council, was among the 1200 people attending the service.
Dear Reader,

200 people attended a formal celebration of the 60th anniversary of the founding of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of Protestant Churches in China in Beijing on September 28, 2010. In his opening remarks, Rev. Gao Feng, President of the CCC, told Chinese Protestant Christian representatives gathered in the Great Hall of the People that though the accomplishments of the TSPM had been tremendous, this did not mean its work was finished. Elder Fu Xianwei, chairperson of the TSPM reviewed the organization’s history and experience and called for active participation in efforts to build the harmonious society. Attendees were also greeted by Mr. Du Qingling, vice-chairperson of the national CPPCC and Head of the United Front Work Dept. and other officials, including Mr. Wang Zuo’an, director of SARA. Churches, Christian Councils and Three-Self Organizations across China have held their own celebrations, as have Bible schools and seminaries; the experiences and achievements of TSPM have been reviewed to glean lessons and direction for the future.

TSPM is generally seen as a hard-won accomplishment of the senior generation of church leaders, like the late Mr. Y.T. Wu, who was instrumental in launching the movement in the 1950s. In this issue of ANS, readers will find views and responses to the movement by the generation referred to in Chinese as “young and middle-aged.” Tian Feng, the church monthly magazine, canvassed pastors and theological educators from this generation—the heirs to the mantle of TSPM—for their views on its importance and future.

Three articles in this issue, deal with issues in the life of the churches. Mr. Xu Xiaohong serves as secretary general of the TSPM. In his article, delivered as a talk to a workshop on Christian literature work, he points to the need for improved training and highlights the characteristics of a Christian approach to good writing in service to ministry.

Past issues of ANS have carried articles on the growing complexity of ministry in China’s Protestant churches due to urbanization and economic growth. In this issue, Lu Shaobin reports on the Church in Mudanjiang, a city of nearly 3 million in Heilongjiang province. Lu finds that, like other churches in large urban areas, it has experimented with management techniques to enable effective pastoral ministry and future healthy development.

Zhang Yuanlai traces the history of the “charismatic movement” and discusses its growing influence among Protestant Christians in China, its impact on the “traditional” churches, and how they might respond. He feels the churches “need to … nurture the spiritual affections of those in the traditional church and allow emotions and intellect to play a role in the foundation and life of the church....”

Our last article, by Lian Dajie, presents another type of response to the spiritual life—that of silence and solitude, and how Christians can create habits of spiritual practice to bring glory to God and balance to their over-busy lives.

Thanks, as always, are due to our faithful translators; in this issue, Cinde Lee, Emily Dunn, Suzanne Rowe and Kurt Selles. Photographs are used, with thanks, courtesy of ccctspm.org.

Our readers comments are always most welcome.

Janice Wickeri
How the Younger Generation Views Three-Self

The Three-Self Patriotic Movement of Protestant Churches in China celebrates its 60th anniversary this year. A reporter from the church monthly Tian Feng recently visited young and middle-aged co-workers across the country, inviting them to speak about their experience of TSPM, running the church well, glorifying God and benefiting the people. The following selection of their responses appeared in the September issue of the magazine.

My own life can serve as a commentary on the necessity and importance of these 60 years of TSPM. Three-Self—self-governance, self-support, and self-propagation—provides the way and means of running the church for Chinese Protestantism. Building a church that glorifies God and benefits the people is the ultimate goal of TSPM.

Mr. Zheng Cunquan, evangelist, Jiaxing Church, Zhejiang province

As a younger co-worker, I am lucky to be part of the Chinese Church’s period of rapid and good development. This is truly God’s grace. In terms of efficacy, we can look at two periods of TSPM: one from “Three Self” to “Three Well” (September 1959 to November 1988), as the Chinese Protestant churches moved out of a period of tribulation toward revival; the second a deepening and further development of TSPM, the period of the initiation of Theological Reconstruction (from the Jinan Meeting in 1998 to the present), a time for Chinese Christians of greater reflection on faith and greater emphasis on the self-construction of the church.

Rev. Zhang Shaohua, Jiangxi Bible School

As younger clergy, we did not have the opportunity to be part of the splendid event 60 years ago: at most we’ve tread no more than half the path of the TSPM, but the important historical task of carrying forward and developing the TSPM spirit falls to our generation. Guiding our believers to identify with and share a common destiny with their country and compatriots and to join with them in building a harmonious society: this is what it means to love the country; developing the TSPM spirit in running the church well, enabling the church to have a sense of both gospel mission and social responsibility, making a beautiful witness by glorifying God and benefiting the people: this is loving the church.

Rev. (Ms.) Lin Manhong, Nanjing Union Theological Seminary

Three-Self is the lifeline of the Chinese Protestant Church; without the TSPM, the Chinese Protestant Church would not be what it is today. Throughout these 60 years, the church’s faith has grown firmer and the quality of faith of believers has risen. Witnesses to love of country and love of church, and to glorifying God and benefitting the people have been as numerous as the clouds and the name of God has been glorified. The task before us from now on is to continue to hold high Jesus Christ—Christ crucified, strive to run “three well” churches and “harmonious” churches, so that even greater glory accrues to God’s name.

Rev. Niu Tianping, Jicheng Church, Shanxi

Three-Self is an essential path for the healthy development and self-realization of Christianity in China. Without the TSPM, there would be no present or future for Christianity in China. At its inception, Three-Self sought “independence,” so at that time its political side was more to the fore; in 1980 the national CCC/TSPM, based on “three-self,” went a step further in promoting “three well” and Three-Self began to stress the ecclesiology; in 1988 the CCC/TSPM, on this basis of the “three well,” advocated strengthening Theological Reconstruction, and the theological became part of the Three-Self theory and task. Besides the political, ecclesiastical, and theological aspects of Three-Self, its spiritual side should be strengthened: running the church well also requires an emphasis on spiritual cultivation and...
an emphasis on the spiritual life.

Mr. Yang Shiwen, Zhejiang Theological Seminary

The TSPM is not simply a part of our history, even more it represents the thinking and concern for the future of the church of that generation of Christians. In our situation today, we need to study and carry on our history and traditions. Analysis and understanding of the current situation will determine the direction of the TSPM. Our generation of Christians bears a heavier burden and faces a longer road, for we must bring about a mature church. History cannot be ignored. Only by making a clear analysis of the current situation can this generation become Christians who do not abandon history but face the current situation responsibly and with sincere hearts. In the long run, we conscientiously restore the TSPM, whose banner remains our legacy from the first generation of the church workers. We today are far from realizing the vision of that first generation and so we should not simply indulge in sentimental prattle about it, but strive to take up its mantle. Three-Self provides the coordinates for our self-reflection and our reflection about the future.

Mr. Han Yu, Chongqing (Sichuan) Bible School

The 60-year history of the TSPM laid a foundation for the development of the Chinese Protestant Church through its meritorious service, thus making an enormous contribution to our nation, our society, and indeed the world. I have a profound sense that the TSPM was inevitable in the history of Christianity in China and that it is also God’s special grace and love for Chinese Christians. Not only does it possess Chinese characteristics, it embodies unity, peace, and harmony in Christ. It is our standard in the development of the Chinese Protestant Church, the link between the church and the government, between the church and society, and between churches, the path of loving country and loving church, the path of glorifying God and benefitting people. It is the direction we take in moving from Three-Self to Three-Well, from adapting to society to serving society, from building up the body of the church to sharing with all Chinese in building the harmonious society.

Rev. Zhang Jian, Guang'an Church, Sichuan province

Living in the 21st century as we do, we should deepen the spiritual content and theological basis of Three-Self; unite believers; integrate resources; enhance internal construction; raise the quality of believers; strengthen the capacity of the church for participation in social service projects; and improve the image and influence of the church in society. In our ministries of advocating Theological Reconstruction and creating harmonious churches, we should rely on God, and show forth our blessings. In our social service we should manifest Christ’s humble spirit and be light and salt in witnessing to our Christian patriotism, so that the TSPM may be not only a real expression of the biblical truth of Chinese Christians, but, more, may embody our principle of participation in building the harmonious society.

Rev. Li Yanfeng, Guangxi (province) Christian Council and Three-Self Organization

I studied in seminary for 7 years and then worked among churches at the grass roots as an evangelist. I am deeply aware that Three-Self was not easily achieved. There’s an old saying: Our forebears planted trees that we might enjoy their shade. I think the Three-Self path is a path for the Chinese Protestant Church blessed by God. Our holding fast to the Three-Self path is certainly in line with God’s will.

Mr. Sun Hongzhong, evangelist, Ningxia (Autonomous Region) Christian Council and Three-Self Organization

The independent running of the Chinese Protestant Church following the founding of the PRC, and the self-directed development of the church following Reform and Opening provide sufficient witness to the Chinese Protestant Church’s guiding principle of Three-Self and strategic promotion of contextualization and indigenization. The bountiful harvest of the church today is possible only because of the hard work and unremitting efforts of generations of people in these 60 years. Though not everything has gone as we would wish, and has incurred criticism, we cannot allow problem areas to negate the whole. Three-Self as a guiding principle is a path given to our Chinese Protestant Church by the senior generation of pastors under God’s leading. The renewal of Three-Self is the theological reflection of those of us in
the younger generations of the 70s, 80s, and even 90s. Thus we should take our stand on the Bible and boldly envision, carefully seek verification, and reflect dialectically. With renewal, development, and independence as our base, we should work ceaselessly to enable the Chinese Protestant Church to perfect itself along the Three-Self road. I think this is the task and responsibility of our generation.

Rev. Liu Xuesong, Jilin (province) Bible School

In my 20 years of service in ministry, I have become deeply aware that the three-self principle has allowed Chinese Christians to regain their identity and dignity as Chinese; the three-self principle has eliminated the biases and misunderstandings of our non-Christian brethren toward Christianity; and the three-self principle has enabled Chinese Christianity to establish itself and grow daily. In this new historical period, with God's blessing, the three-self principle continue to write a new chapter for the future of Chinese Christianity—from three-self to three-well.

Rev. Gao Youhong, Inner Mongolia Christian Council and Three-Self Organization

Maintaining the three-self principles and running the church well emphasizes that the church needs to strengthen its self-construction—an internal matter. Concretely there are two elements to this: truth and love. When we meet those believers who are lost in confusion, we cannot simply approach them critically or reject them. Rather, in a spirit of generosity, we must seek them, bring them back, and unite with them, together safeguarding a pure and true faith. The three-self principle enables the church to strengthen its self-construction. That we may love one another in truth (see 2 John): This is the way to true harmony in the church.

Rev. (Ms.) Zhao Wenjiao, Shaanxi Bible School

As young people involved in theological education, we first of all cannot forget the TSPM, initiated by Mr. Y.T. Wu and other church leaders. It was their effort that changed the face of old Christianity in China, they achieved an independent and self-run church, opening a new chapter in the Chinese Protestant Church, making an epochal contribution. Secondly, it is our task, taking into account the context and reality of the church, to lead our believers to love the country and love the church; to love the Lord and to love others; to be salt and light; and to glorify God and benefit people, building up the Body in love, and in love to develop and perfect ourselves, and expand God’s kingdom in relationships of harmony, leading the believers to be witnesses in this age and establish a fine social image for the church.

Su Zhiming, East China Theological Seminary

These 60 years have witnessed the Chinese Protestant Church move from being a foreign mission church to choosing three-self principles to run our church following the establishment of new China; to the reopening of the churches in the 1980s following the Cultural Revolution; and on to the Jinan Meeting and Theological Reconstruction in 1998. This was a movement from its former status as a “foreign religion” to today's reflections on the contextualization of the Chinese Protestant Church; from the embarrassing past marginalization of the church, to today, when it is an active force in the building of the harmonious society. The three-self principle has deepened with the demands of the times and its meaning has been enriched. I believe that with the three-self principle, the church will continue to be ever better.

Li Liangguang, Chongqing (Sichuan) Bible School

The initiation of the TSPM was a milestone in the history of the Chinese Protestant Church, a witness to the gift of a special love and grace from God the Father to each one of his sons and daughters, God’s Chinese children, to use their own language and culture to interpret and respond to the incomparable love and greatness of heart of the God of the cosmos.

Rev. (Ms.) Zhao Weihong, Zhongnan Seminary

Translated by Janice Wickeri from Tian Feng no. 369, September 2010
On May 12, 2010, the CCC/TSPM held a workshop in Kunshan, Jiangsu, on writing Christian literature, attended by over 90 participants. The Rev. Xu Xiaohong, General Secretary of the TSPM, a prolific author himself, addressed the group.

The CCC/TSPM attaches great importance to written ministry and the development of gifted writers. Our two national Christian bodies recently drew up a three-year training plan for writers; this session is the first to be held since it came into effect. Of course, in reality a couple of days of training are not enough to raise standards all on their own. Nevertheless, we hope that this step will encourage us all to value written ministry, and that it will provide a relaxed space and supportive platform for writing talent.

Kunshan is a fitting location for our workshop, for our written ministry connects seamlessly with Kunshan’s artistic spirit, and the city’s contribution to Chinese culture has been outstanding. Kunqu opera, which spawned many other dramatic styles, originated here, and the famous historical figures of Gu Yanwu (1613–1682), Gui Youguang (1506–1571) and Zhu Bolu (1627–1698) are together well-known as the “Three Sages of Kunshan.”

Christianity has a tradition of attaching great importance to written ministry. Without it, the biblical canon could not have been established and the traditional church classics could not have been preserved. Indeed, the biblical sages left us precious scriptures through their writing. Moses, who mastered the knowledge of the Egyptians, is said to have authored the Pentateuch; in the book of Daniel, God gave Daniel’s four friends “knowledge and skill in every aspect of literature and wisdom” (Daniel 1:17); Ezra the scribe was “skilled in the law of Moses that the Lord the God of Israel had given” (Ezra 7:6); the brilliant disciple Paul was full of passion when he wrote his thirteen letters at the feet of Gamaliel.

In the Middle Ages, the church in Europe was a treasure-house for ancient books and records, and the base from which the cultures within them were transmitted. Thus, written ministry was the most influential of the church’s traditional ministries. Put more emphatically, without written ministry, the Christian gospel would not have spread so widely.

The importance of doing written ministry well cannot be overestimated. Regrettably, the present state of Chinese Christian writing is still not ideal and believers are not particularly satisfied. While there are many reasons for this, the most important is that we do not devote enough attention to this work. Here are a few of my own preliminary thoughts on Christian writing.

Christian writing should be thoughtful

Writing is the most effective form of media, and its effect upon its audience cannot be overlooked. The writer’s thoughts determine what sort of content will be presented, and in turn, that content determines the writing’s depth. One Chinese church leader once expressed the fervent view that in the midst of its revival, the Chinese church should make written ministry its top priority. Those involved in Chinese Christian writing must have all the discernment and sense of responsibility of the prophets and disciples if their voices are to have vitality. The CCC/TSPM encourages everyone to write more pieces that promote love for the country and for the church, pieces that are deeply thought out. It is important not only to adopt the correct political orientation, but also to foster proper theological reflection.

The reflective nature of content means that literary workers must listen to their consciences rather than be opportunistic or seek overnight success. During the Three Kingdoms period,
Cao Pi (187–226) said in his Discourse on Literature that writing essays and governing the nation are both great endeavors which will not pass away, thus illustrating the importance of writing. The Tang poet Du Fu (712–770) similarly reflected that, “A piece of literature may last a thousand years, though no one knows its author’s smiles and tears.” A famous literary figure from here in Kunshan, Lu Ji (261–303) of the Western Jin dynasty, wrote Rhapsody on Literature, which tells us that literature “looking forward, gives models to future generations; looking back, it contemplates images of the ancients.”

The gist of the portrait of literature Lu gives us in his Rhapsody can be paraphrased in modern language this way: “Literature has been written in order that it might be used. It has passed down many principles through the ages. The Great Way contained within literature enables us to travel great distances without obstacle, and to ferry back and forth between millions of years of wisdom. The literature left behind by forebears becomes the precepts that are respected by later generations, and by reading it, descendants can understand and follow the example of the ancients. … The classics were inscribed on bronze and stone, ensuring that their morals and principles were spread far and wide. Flowing through music which has been handed down, they are ever new.”

1700 years have passed since Lu Ji wrote his Rhapsody on Literature, but its meaning remains instructive for today’s authors. All who are involved in the ministry of Christian literature must have an attitude of responsibility towards society and the church, just as Li Dazhao (1889–1927) said: “great shoulders carry morality and justice; great hands write essays.”

### Christian writing should be oriented towards the church

In contrast to other types of literary work, we are engaged in the church’s ministry. This entails that the main objects of our service are the church and its members. From a Christian perspective, the church is sacred. The expression of the sacred must come from the heart, and literary work must be consistent with the expression of the church. It is often the case that because our writing does not come from the heart, we dispense guidance but forget to consider its readability. Of course, nor should we forfeit guidance for the sake of accommodating Christian readers. Emphasizing orientation towards the church reminds us that we must pay attention to the needs of both the church and its members, and so these two considerations must be balanced wisely. Aristotle once said that the effectiveness of a speech is measured by its influence upon people. The same can be said of literary work. In this vein, we can also say that the church’s written ministry can be measured by its influence upon Christians.

The literary historian Gisbert Kranz of Aachen said that the task of workers in Christian literature is to “make God the center of people and the world”—that is, “workers in Christian literature are concerned with God and with people at all times.” Put simply, addressing the needs of the church and its members must be a priority for Christian writing. It is a distinctive feature of Christian literature that its writing must not only be beautiful, but also have spiritual depth. The CCC/TSPM is always thinking about how best to cultivate more Christian columnists—how to bring out their writing gifts and gradually bring a group of Christian writers together. Only in this way will our written ministry draw closer to the church and its members, and attract more readers. Christian literature must act as a bridge between shepherd and flock, and the church and its members. In the words of our Lord Jesus, “I am the Good Shepherd. I know my sheep, and my sheep know me” (John 10:14).

### Christian writing should be relevant to our times

Having a finger on the pulse of the times is the key to success in Christian literature. In other words, our ministry will only be effective if people want to read what we write, and enjoy reading it. We need everyone to join in brainstorming and discussion.

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Church Life

about how we might bring this about. At present, our written ministry is represented primarily by two departments and one committee in the national CCC/TSPM—namely, the editorial and publishing departments of Tian Feng magazine, and the Media Ministry Committee, which incorporates the CCC/TSPM website. More broadly, of course, this ministry also includes all manner of books, periodicals, websites and web pages published by churches and seminaries all over China. Everyone who is here today has some sort of writing gift, and the future of Chinese Christian literature lies in your hands.

What does it mean to be relevant to our times? Generally speaking it is the opposite of being steeped in history. Being steeped in history involves approaching issues from a long-term perspective; being relevant to our times involves approaching issues from a starting point of the present reality. Relevance is not the same as popularity, and things that are popular are not necessarily relevant. The notion of relevance to our times requires that literary workers exercise foresight in handling and evaluating information, and tailor it to the times. If they do not, they cannot be said to have grasped the pulse of the times. Sometimes, those involved in Christian literature stray from the “prophetic” tradition. They have fallen behind the times and are not able to take hold of the real issues accurately or promptly. This has become a common problem in many places, and is one of the reasons why literature and sermons are proving unable to attract Christians—particularly groups of intellectuals—in some areas. It is time to face up to this issue; Christian literature must work on tailoring its message to the times. This calls not only for skill in writing, but also for life experience and thoughtfulness.

Christian writing should embrace national character

Christianity came to China from the West, and so its styles and methods of theological reflection have followed Western patterns. The Chinese Church does not intend to completely reject the historical traditions of Christianity—on the contrary, it sees itself as returning to biblical and church traditions. However, we must also recognize that from the instant that the seeds of the gospel fell upon this great land, Christianity had to turn to the Chinese cultural environment for nourishment or else it would wither and decay due to thirst and hunger. Thus, the primary task before it is not to change the whole country, but to adapt to its new cultural environment. Zhang Dongsun (1886–1973) said in his work, “Why modern China needs Confucius,” that we must recognize not only differences of “ancient and modern” between Chinese and Western cultures, but also those of “Chinese and non-Chinese”;—that is, differences in national character and identity.

Paul’s evangelistic methods met with such success because he became “all things to all people” (1 Corinthians 9:22) rather than seeking to make others more like himself. At the moment, an important project for Chinese Christianity is Theological Reconstruction, which advocates using a contextual approach to consider the future of the Chinese Church. It is my own view that while we have basically cast off the label of “foreign religion”, Christianity in China has yet to become completely Chinese. How many of our new church buildings have incorporated Chinese cultural elements? Instead, old architectural styles that have been abandoned by the West are reappearing in China. Our actions show that we give subconscious consent to being a “foreign religion,” as if to do otherwise would not be truly Christian. Chinese Christian authors should undertake to make national and state interests of primary importance at all times, while also seeking to defend the rights and interests of the church.

It is my hope that our literary workers will be able to give greater expression to their national culture in their writing, and to make Chinese Protestantism truly Chinese, and part of an advanced culture.

Christian writing should employ diverse methods

Choice and diversity are trends in this postmodern era. Modern media long ago ceased to involve one single format. From print media, audio media, visual media or multimedia to the Internet

ANS September 2010  Page 8
and the digital media of today, there are technological advancements with each passing day. Church ministries cannot depend solely on experience to spread their message; rather, equal weight should be given to messages from the pulpit and print, electronic, Internet and digital messages. There are already too many negative lessons that have been learned from outdated methods of Christian communications. It is virtually impossible for Christians overseas to obtain objective news of the church in China; secular scholars researching Christianity seem to have a monopoly on the microphone when it comes to the situation of the church in China. The problem is not just that we do not pay enough attention to this, but also that we sometimes become preoccupied by the happy fact that “the number of people saved increases daily.” We ought to know both how many Christians have been added to the church and also how many it has lost, and that most of the time, the ones that “get away” are the “big fish,” or core members of the church.

Good methods produce twice the results with half the effort; the alternative is to get half the results with twice the effort. What we need is diversity: both highbrow and popular literature can produce miraculous effects. One important feature of modern society is the gradual shift from serving majorities to serving minorities. By “serving minorities,” I mean serving groups of people that are more finely delineated, and providing more professional services aimed at different levels and needs. It is the same with writing—not everyone is equally proficient.

Aside from looking to God, experience and devotion are among the most important qualities of a Christians. All of you should offer your own suggestions for our written ministry, particularly as you know the needs of different groups in different places better than us. The CCC/TSPM is willing to keep revising its thinking so as to serve the church and its members as best as possible.

Pastors, you are the writing talent of the church in China today. The ancient Chinese had sayings such as “the function of literature is to illuminate the Way (dao),” “the function of literature is to piece the Way (dao) together” and “the function of literature is to convey the Way (dao).” All these sayings reflect the moral responsibility and historical mission that our writing must undertake. Hans Küng points out that that Western Christianity currently “faces voids in meaning, values and norms.” The attitude of workers in Chinese Christian literature should be: “Poor writing won't go far.” Without good theory, it is difficult to guide practice. But may we all take up the responsibility of written ministry, and do all that we can to help Chinese Christianity run the church well according to the Three-Self principles, which will be a contribution to Christianity worldwide.

Translated by Emily Dunn from Tian Feng No. 366, June 2010

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Thank You!
St. Michael’s Church, Wuhan, July 11. A service of ordination was held during the Sunday worship service. The Rev. Dai Youding officiated, with participation by Revs. Wang Zhenren and Zhu Zhiguo of the Hubei CCC/TSM. During the solemn worship, Ms. Qu Yanping, Hanchuan Church, was ordained as minister, and Ms. Cheng Jinlian, of Dawu County Church, and Ms. Xu Xinju, of Tongshan County Church, were ordained as elders.

Kunming, Yunnan, July 4-9. The ninth in a series of training courses on women’s ministry was held in Kunming. 60 women, core leaders in women’s ministry from 16 prefectures and cities, took part. An opening ceremony featured speakers from government as well as church leaders. The course aimed to improve knowledge of Christian doctrine, enhance ability to resist idolatry and heresy, and enable women to play a more positive role in society and in the church.

Shuangyashan, Heilongjiang, August 2. Christian university students took part in 3-days of summer camp activities—games, singing, drama, and revival meetings. Pastoral workers shared their reflections on Christian Life and related topics. Some students were unenthusiastic at first, coming only because their parents made them, but by the end they were filled with new inspiration to live out their faith, serve society, and witness to the gospel.

Fujian, August 2. 76 choir directors and members from churches around Fujian gathered for the 5th Church Music Training Course. The 10-day course covered topics such as Knowledge of Sacred Music, Worship & Liturgy, Art of Choral Singing and Conducting. Participants also took part in singing workshops, as shown here.
An Example of Healthy Church Management
—Mudanjiang Church

Lu Shaobin

The church is Christ’s body, God’s temple, and the home of the eternal God. The church needs the prayers and management skills of those who love the Lord. Before Jesus’ ascension, he repeatedly exhorted Peter to shepherd God’s flock well. From this we can see that management and shepherding of the church is absolutely vital.

In the midst of successive waves of church development at the end of the last century, good shepherding—pastoral care—and theories for improving church structure were hot topics in practical theology. Has the quest for church growth, caused neglect of or even bias against matters of church development? How do quantity and quality interact appropriately? In order to address these considerations, some scholars in the church have proposed a “healthy church” theory. What is a “healthy church?” Paul said that to be healthy a church must be cleansed by washing with water through the word, sanctified and made useful to the Lord, a church made glorious. A healthy church glorifies God and shows forth the central essence of Christianity. A church useful to God is a church that helps its pastors realize their potential. In this article the management of Mudanjiang Church serves as an example in reflecting on how churches in medium and small cities in China can become churches that express God’s purpose.

Seek a vision for the church and establish it

“Search for it as for hidden treasure” (Proverbs 2:4). We should search for God’s will, because “where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint” (Proverbs 29:18). Modern management guru Peter Drucker (The Practice of Management) emphasizes that any office or enterprise must first have a “vision.” This is essentially the secularization of part of our traditional sacred heritage and illustrates the fact there is much in church traditions that has enormous potential for church management today. Old Testament prophets demonstrated their calling in their interpretation of visions sent by God. In the New Testament vision centered around the Lord’s commands as received by the apostles. The words of prophets and apostles are important because their origin lies in the highest authority—God—and the prophets were validated by the history of Israel. The present church, however, tends to adopt a democratic team spirit based on the thinking of Luther where vision is concerned. The Great Commission of Matthew 28 suggests two main lines that are clear and unchanging with regard to the overall vision of the church, namely preaching and teaching. The focal point of church considerations is how to implement “management by objectives” (cf. Drucker: MBO) with this unshakable principle as prerequisite. This overall target needs to be broken down into smaller segments.

In the late 20th century, overseas churches began to stress “vision”: one example being Saddleback Church in the U.S., as described in Rick Warren’s The Purpose Driven Church. As a result, many overseas Chinese Churches gradually also began to emphasize that churches needed clear annual objectives. Measurable goals—Management by Objectives—make huge visions more workable.

When Mudanjiang Church began using the MBO form of management in the late 1990s, the staff prayers reflected their hope that the church would be totally transformed. To this end, the church first established pastoral groups, then together drafted a plan for the development of the church, thus...
Church Life

avoiding a situation where the aims of the church were simply the aims of one individual. Discussions resulted in a unanimous view that the primary working aim of the church would be the improvement of the “hardware,” or physical components of the church. The debate was whether to build a large central church, thus facilitating church management, or whether to create a series of smaller meeting places more conveniently located for believers. Through thinking through the issue at joint worship times in the church as well as incorporating the experience of overseas churches, the final decision was to emphasize a series of meeting points as a more people-centered direction for development. In the course of 15 years, 21 places of worship have been built or bought, and over 230 groups in the city have applied for approval of churches and meeting points. In the urban area, a Christian can find a church within a 15-minute walk. The practical fruits of this concept far outweigh those of building large churches to facilitate management. It also makes it more difficult for underground meeting points and other chaotic phenomena to flourish.

In addition, while the overall objective does not change, it is extremely important to establish interim objectives, with a hierarchy of objectives established annually—this is especially important for the church’s smallest churches or meeting points. To complement the “soft power” of personnel and program to the “hard power” of facilities, senior pastors and deacons should set an annual plan for the churches’ central work, which can then be reported at year’s end: from programs in ministry, to budget and account reconciliation, summaries and reflections, enabling a clear and distinct picture of the pastoral ministry of the clergy and allowing the lay deacons to fulfil their tasks.

Plan, organize, manage

Mudanjiang city church employs a model of ministry based on a responsibility system of ministers and elders; that is, a four-tier organizational system of believers including fellowships, a council of deacons, clergy, and the City Christian Council and Three-Self Organization. Church workers rotate every two years, with the aim that every minister should gain ministerial experience in different types of churches. This not only emphasizes balance in such positions, but also enriches and complements to the greatest possible extent the pastoral resources of the church. In the traditions of Western denominations, ministers can choose to move on after four years or make adjustments after five years; both follow regulations drafted for specific situations.

Research shows that the “honeymoon period” for ministers and their congregations is two years; this is the time when conflict is at a minimum. Of course the shortcoming of such a structure is that it lacks the stability needed for church development plans. In reality, the health of some new and developing churches is in direct ratio to the length of service of ministers. A two-year rotation avoids short-term actions and leads to better planning, both with regard to details and to the overall picture. To defuse this tension, Mudanjiang Church settled on an integrated plan overall, with individual church plans brought into plans for the wider city church. This furthered integrated planning on the macro level while promoting the uniqueness of individual churches on the micro level. The one theme of the larger city church is founded on the varying sub-themes of the individual churches. The objective is to enable every church worker to have a clear understanding of the specific content of the work and areas of ministry and his or her role in it.

Of course, in order that church plans don’t just become a formality; The Purpose Driven Church gives ten very practical methods for implementing objectives that any local church can implement. At the same time, corresponding monitoring mechanisms can be set up to guarantee the operation and implementation of the plan. This then brings us to the third topic—Effectiveness.
Results or assessments

“And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more’” (Matthew 25:20). “Talents” here are representative of a pastor’s performance. In every occupation in society, performance is the most important measure of an enterprise’s health. Though performance in the church differs from that in secular enterprises, yet Luther thought that believers ought to monitor church leadership, authorize their appointment and require accountability. Of course we want to avoid a “Babylonian captivity” of ministers, like that which resulted in the loss of the spirit of prophecy. There needs to be balance in the development of the system. Measures of performance include:

• The number of believers who attended Sunday services in the meeting points for which the church is responsible. Data is kept for the whole year, because good preaching attracts more people.

• The number of people who are baptized each year. Although this number does not verify the health of the church, the growth or decline of numbers of believers is a relevant indicator.

• The impact of the church on society, which is based on the frequency and quality of service to society and concern for society. If the church doesn’t have a good name, it doesn’t receive the approval of society, and as such loses the potential for development.

• The training the church offers to deacons, fellowship groups, and every level of believer. Pastoral care is not just based on preaching from the pulpit, but on continued teaching and guidance in areas of immediate relevance. Ongoing implementation, discussion, and reflection are especially important for the effectiveness of such aims.

• The frequency of pastoral visits. The best way to bring pastors and believers closer together is to establish a rule that each month a certain number of pastoral visits must be made. This also demonstrates the importance of believers in the church.

Of course, there are other standards for “results” in the church. The methods used by the Mudanjiang Church are nothing new, but simply measure the ordinary work of the church, resulting in church workers having a more professional spirit, and furthermore enabling them to take the work their calling entails and break it down into manageable parts in order to better carry it out.

Translated by Suzanne Rowe from Tian Feng No. 366, June 2010

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
Beginning in the 1960s the traditional church became aware of the huge assault on it by the “Charismatic Movement,” an assault that continues to this day. Today the number of charismatic believers surpasses those of the Methodist Church, and, at some 400 million worldwide, exceeds the membership of every denomination. In the history of the Christian Church, this growth represents an unprecedented miracle. But the traditional church continues to be plagued with the question of how to view the “charismatic” issue. The following discussion attempts to briefly outline the origin of the Charismatic Movement, its impact on the Chinese Church, and finally to offer suggestions for how the traditional church should respond to this movement.

Origin and Growth

By tracing the origin of the Charismatic Movement, we can see that charismatic movements have not only occurred in the church but have also arisen as a social phenomenon in other religions. The rise of the modern Charismatic Movement is similar in some ways to the Bacchanalia movement in ancient Greece. Bacchanalia was the name given to the state of religious ecstasy (achieved sometimes through the use of alcohol) that allowed members of Greek society to express dissent with rigidly traditional Greek society and religion, both of which frequently tended to suppress human emotion.

In Christianity, some people see the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost in Acts 2 as the earliest manifestation of the Charismatic Movement. But a crucial difference between what happened at Pentecost and the modern Charismatic Movement is that preaching about Christ—Christ crucified—was at the very heart of the Apostle’s service, while “charisma” or “spiritual gifts” are at the core of the Charismatic Movement.

Montanism in the early church [Montanism, a sectarian movement in the early period of the church founded by Montanus from Phrygia in Asia Minor along with two women named Prisca and Maximilla in 170 A.D., emphasized being filled with the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues (glossolalia), and speaking prophecy, among other mystical experiences] can be viewed as an early forerunner of today’s Charismatic Movement. Since the time when Montanism first appeared, charismatic movements and phenomena have intermittently emerged throughout the church’s history, often at times when mysticism has been prominent in the life of the church. But the true impact of the charismatic movement on the mainstream church has come in the twentieth century through the “three waves” of the Charismatic Movement:

- the “First Wave” refers to the “Pentecostal Movement” that began in 1901;
- The “Second Wave” refers to a revival of the Charismatic Movement that took place in the late 1950s and early 1960s;
- and the “Third Wave” refers to the beginning of the “Vineyard Movement,” which is also known as the “signs and wonders movement,” or “power evangelism movement,” that surfaced in the 1980s.

The Third Wave of the Charismatic Movement exhibits some differences with the earlier two waves. While the earlier two phases both emphasized the spiritual charisma of personal experience, the third phase of the Charismatic Movement places strong emphasis on evangelistic revivals and preaching about spiritual charisma or gifts. Those promoting the Third Wave of the charismatic movement include C. Peter Wagner (who originally coined the term “Third Wave” and founded Global Harvest Ministries), Reinhard Boonke (founder of Christ for All Nations), and Benny Hinn (founder of Benny Hinn Ministries).
and others belonging to the Third Wave have pushed the Charismatic Movement toward maturity through developing theology and evangelism, and enhancing the vitality of the church. Also worth mentioning in connection with the Third Wave phase of the Charismatic Movement are contemporary American churches, such as Forerunner Christian Church and the Agape Renewal Center, which among others, have blended modern psychology and up-to-date pastoral care techniques to shift the Charismatic Movement in new directions.

After correcting some theological errors, this current phase of the Charismatic Movement has returned to seek its vision in traditional theology, a move that has brought the mainstream church and the churches of the Charismatic Movement closer together after years of tension. Some have referred to this new period as the “Fourth Wave” of the Charismatic Movement.

Traits of the Charismatic Movement

While the traditional church in general emphasizes the integrity of biblical doctrines, the church universal, and relatively conservative and rational belief, the Charismatic Movement, on the other hand, strongly emphasizes the emotions: individual experience, the emotional-side of worship, personal freedom, being filled with the Holy Spirit, signs and wonders, speaking in tongues, prophecy, and praise and worship, among other things. We can summarize the distinctive traits of the Charismatic Movement in terms of the following categories:

Speaking in Tongues. The different languages spoken by the Apostles in Acts 2 can be understood as a special gift given by God (speaking in foreign languages). Charismatics believe that speaking in tongues is a sign of being filled by the Holy Spirit and has a supernatural efficacy. Thus, in personal prayer, in worship gatherings, in prayer meetings, and even Sunday services, a great deal of the time will be spent speaking in tongues: either in prayer or for healing and casting out demons.

Prophecy (also referred to as a “word of knowledge”). Charismatics believe that having been “moved” by the Spirit they have a special power to know the future clearly. By using the gift of speaking in tongues and the gifts of the Spirit, they believe that they can “search all things” and thus know things that have not yet taken place.

“Signs and wonders,” healing the sick and casting out demons. Charismatics believe that many illnesses and psychological problems are the work of Satan or the curse of sin. But through prayer and testifying, they believe that illnesses can be healed and demons cast out, not to mention being able to resolve practical problems.

Praise and Worship. Praise and worship is not limited to the Charismatic Movement, but it is frequently the way that many charismatic churches worship. Using a variety of contemporary musical styles, many charismatics sing simple praise songs and choruses over and over, often accompanied by guitar and drums or other contemporary instruments, with the purpose of achieving emotional release in worship. Included with this musical style of worship are charged words and phrases that seek to draw worship participants emotionally and physically completely into the worship experience. This kind of worship experience especially appeals to the tastes of contemporary young people.

The Charismatic Movement has proved most attractive to those who have been influenced by the post-modern worldview that includes such aspects as anti-traditionalism, advocacy of personal freedom, exaltation of the emotional and devaluation of the rational, and relativism. The Charismatic Movement breaks through the various conservative trends prevalent in the traditional church and in society and provides the oppressed spirits of contemporary people space in which to express their emotions. People today live under enormous pressures that include social and economic competition and the high-speed pace of life. In a world where they are already emotionally vulnerable, people are caught up in an attempt to reach the unobtainable. People today have hearts that are restless and empty. They live in an emotional vacuum on the verge of exhaustion and unable to find direction. What they are really looking for is finding emotional satisfaction and the hope for success. The Charismatic Movement
takes advantage of these post-modern weaknesses and failings and claims that wealth and material success can be easily obtained through the “Spirit.” Because the Charismatic Movement has risen out of the needs of the present age, it speaks to the needs of many people today. Thus, it is also clear that the Charismatic Movement is a product of the times and that it is about something more than faith.

The Challenge of the “Charismatic Movement” to the traditional church and how the traditional church should respond to it.

People in the “Charismatic Movement” claim that they have experienced a spiritual revival (for some this may be a kind of some emotional awakening, and for others a consciousness that God has endowed them with some secret power). Claiming that this is the work and power of the Holy Spirit, these believers demand that those in the traditional churches must have a similar experience in receiving the benefits of the “Spirit.” Because they are dissatisfied with the traditional church, which they view as unrelentingly stagnant and boring, members of the Charismatic Movement are often impatient to reform or revive the traditional church, and consequently are frequently at loggerheads with it about change. Because they lack respect for the traditional church and its traditional doctrines, advocate personal freedom, and parade themselves as having the presence of the Holy Spirit and being the true church, members of the Charismatic Movement often create internal divisions within traditional churches or split from them. While the traditional church blames the Charismatic Movement as the main culprit for church schisms, those in the “Charismatic Movement” are frustrated with the traditional church’s conservatism and its criticism about the movement. This mutual animosity between the traditional church and those in the Charismatic Movement only serves to deepen the divide between the two sides.

Reflecting on the division between the traditional church and the Charismatic Movement, Dr. Joseph Tong has said the following: “When we carefully analyze the problems in the traditional church, we cannot place all of the blame for its divisions completely on the Charismatic Movement. Perhaps the most we can say is that it has been the fuse setting off an explosion. At the very least, the Charismatic Movement should force us to look at the nature of the whole Gospel and realize that emotions and intellect both have a guiding role in faith and truth. The yearnings of the Charismatic Movement may not be completely correct, but from what the movement is seeking we are able to discover weaknesses in the traditional church.”

Considering the opposition of the Charismatic Movement and as part of the process of getting along with it, we in the traditional church should reflect on our own situation: Have the traditions of the two-thousand-year-old traditional church become redundant, blinded, and arrogant? Should the received doctrines of the traditional church be updated to meet the needs of our rapidly-changing present-day society? We need to ask ourselves: are the things that we consider “holy” in accordance with the teachings of scripture? Have we blurred the distinction and boundaries between faith and ideas? Do the traditional ways of thinking, of doing evangelism, of doing pastoral care, of church administration, of worshipping, and of preaching meet the needs of the new generation in the church?

Because people’s religious needs are so important, we need to let the Christian church develop into a kind of Christianity that both transcends worldly affairs and yet cares for worldly affairs, that is both able to maintain the truth and yet also to be in dialogue with the present age. By exercising genuine faith, we in the traditional church need to use our strengths and to work at overcoming our weaknesses so that we can create a harmonious church with Chinese characteristics that is able to integrate different ideas and yet preserve the foundation of Christian truth. We need a larger vision in order to meet the needs of our rapidly changing world, one that can also hold together groups with different traditions. We need to work even harder to nurture the spiritual affections of those in the traditional church and allow emotions and intellect to play a role in the foundation and life of the church, thus enabling believers to offer devout and honest worship to our Almighty God.
Making Space for the Lord  
—The practice of silent solitude

Lian Dajie

Luke 10:38-42

The hectic pace of modern life is a widely recognized phenomenon. In fact, there is nothing wrong with being “busy,” but excessive work wastes vitality, resulting in spiritual and emotional exhaustion. Under this kind of stress, it is easy to misplace one’s sense of value. When life gets too busy, it is very easy for Christians to forego the time to draw closer to God. What is to be done? How can we resist the busyness of our hectic lives?

“Busy” but not “frantic” – Jesus’ example

Jesus was a very busy man, with many tasks to complete: each day: always teaching his disciples, spreading the gospel of the heavenly kingdom to the people, healing the sick, casting out demons, answering questions from both friends and foes. He was constantly on the road, travelling by land or by sea always giving his best to those who were in trouble or dispossessed. Jesus withstood a heavy workload, sometimes even skipping meals (Mark 3:20, 6:31). Be that as it may, Jesus did not neglect the rhythms of life; he was only busy, not frantic; his life was not disordered. God’s plan was always before him, and when the time was at hand (John 12:23, 13:1, 17:1, also John 2:4, 7:6), he gladly followed God’s will in doing all things. So what was his secret? This is surely the wonderful result of intentional silence and rest (see Mark 6:31). In spite of his crowded schedule, the Lord always managed to set aside time to pray in the wilderness alone (Mark 1:35); he had a stable prayer life (Luke 3:21, 6:12, 9:18, 28, 29); and a habit of going into the mountains to pray (see Luke 22:39, “as usual”). Jesus followed a discipline of silent solitude.

The best part

We also know, from Luke chapter 10, that Jesus pointed to “calm in the midst of busyness.” Jesus answered Martha: “Martha, Martha….you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her” (10:41-42). Let us firstly clarify several points:

Continued from page 16

At the present time society is undergoing massive change. Along with these social developments has come an explosion of information that reveals human weakness; with the increase of material wealth, emotional attachments have lost out to the market, leaving people’s hearts empty and lonelier than ever. Under the influence of post-modernism, contemporary people feel the need to let go of things and are quick to abandon traditional ways. Movements such as the Charismatic Movement have emerged that have certainly had an impact on the Chinese Church. Our top priority should be to figure out how to deal with this crisis, despite the fact that we are already in the middle of the storm. In establishing and developing the Chinese Church, we need to get down on our knees and humbly ask the Lord for guidance. At the same time, as we diligently seek to develop the church, we also need to be better grounded in the truth and yet have open minds in serving. Only by doing these things will we really be able to shepherd the church in this rapidly changing era.

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ANS September 2010  Page 17
Enhancing spiritual practice

Jesus did not deny the value of Martha’s work:
The Lord did not say that there was anything wrong with Martha’s service, nor did he say that cooking and cleaning should not be done. He pointed out that Martha seemed to be doing too much! She was letting her chores overwhelm her thinking, and she was confused enough to have missed the best part of Jesus’ visit, which was to listen to his teaching in peace.

The Lord did not reprimand Martha: The reading might have insinuated that Martha never listened to Jesus’ teaching, but in fact that may not be true. Verse 39 of the text reads, “She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet listening to what he said.” If the word “also” were added to the text, then the most natural explanation would be that Mary, like Martha, sat at Jesus’ feet, listening to his teachings. Then Martha began to worry about the chores and could not sit still, she got up to scurry around, missing out on Jesus’ teaching. Mary remained focused, continuing to listen to the Lord.

Jesus used the occasion to stress the importance of intentional peace in the midst of busy activities. That is why Jesus praised Mary, saying that she had already chosen the best part and it would not be taken away from her.

From Jesus’ teaching, by preaching and by example, we can establish a paradigm or model of an ideal Christian life, with “time for work and time for rest” or “time for action and time for silence.” Christians should follow the Lord’s example, to make more inner and outer space for God while busy with work and service. Modern urban living means that a busy lifestyle is unavoidable; we do not have to negate the value of work, but we do need to avoid the trap of overwork, so that we will not be caught unaware and fail to live each day according to God’s will. Let us be busy modern Christians, living an ordered life, able to be active and able to be still.

Three steps toward a busy but ordered life

Resist the temptation to “overwork” for the world

Approaching the issue negatively, we have to avoid toiling non-stop for the world. Jesus said, “Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions” (Luke 12:15). According to the Lord’s teaching, we are not to build the value of our lives on worldly wealth, yet too often we are so busy working we become frantic and lose balance, because our aim is to accumulate riches. How can we change? One fellow believer has said that we need to pay attention to the direction and meaning of life: (1) do not seek material success; (2) do not be too concerned about your reputation: if others are busy and you are not, do not feel bad, (3) do not seek to show how great you are by being “busy”; (4) do appreciate the position God has bestowed on you, and don’t rush to do what others say is “meaningful”; (5) do not over-emphasize immediate results; value life-long learning.

Affirm the value of silent solitude

We need to further affirm the value of silent solitude. This will make it easier for us to practice becoming calm. God reminds us, “Be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10). “In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it” (Isaiah 30:15), “but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint” (Isaiah 40:31). Unfortunately we do not really accept these truths, but instead act contrary to God’s will. The result, of course, is that we find ourselves exceedingly fatigued and lack true experience of a deeper relationship with the Lord. The writer believes that we must utterly change our sense of value (not just on the cognitive level), be courageous enough to go against the tide, and receive strength through calm and quiet.

There is another reason, aside from the interfering nature of busy urban living, that modern Christians lack a practice of calm and quiet: we understand prayer in overly functional terms. We come before the Lord to pray because we want this or that, and our prayers have no life in them. Prayer should be a chance to converse with God, and nothing else. If

ANS September 2010  Page 18
functionality exceeds life in prayer, it will undermine the heart, which should be open and yearning for God.

We are influenced by the values of current society, constantly seeking efficiency and results in what we do, and this has an impact on the way we pray. In his *Contemplation in a World of Action*, Thomas Merton sounded his dismay about this type of overly functional prayer, and called upon Christians to return to life itself, to experience the presence of God, and ultimately to come to a new realization about Christ and oneself.

**Resolve to “make space”**

When we do not build our life values on the things of this world, when we reaffirm that silent solitude is an important factor in opening up ourselves to God, the next step is to resolve for ourselves to create the space in our busy everyday lives to be with God. Of course, growth in life and deepening of spirituality are gifts from God, but our practice and preparation are necessary if we aim to receive them.

We admit that a busy life makes it difficult to calm ourselves, but we need to see past the obvious and realize that it is precisely because we are busy that we have the vitality to renew the tradition of calm and quiet! The key is whether we are resolved to do so or not. The Lord Jesus was not overwhelmed by his extremely busy life, he did not lose his direction or rhythm in life. Great spiritual leaders throughout history have also been able to find their way to be close to God; how did they achieve this? Did they have 30 hours per day? Of course not! It is because they were resolved to practice silent solitude.

The practice of silence and solitude

**Set aside a place and a time**

This means we should have a set, familiar environment where we can draw closer to God. If the place makes us feel safe, it will encourage us to enter into a lively spiritual atmosphere.

Free up a period of time for spiritual cultivation, for being alone with God: morning, noon or evening; at home, in the office or some other quiet place.

Practice a custom of silence: from time to time (for example once each month or once every season), resolve to overcome all obstacles and spend half a day, a day, or even longer periods, at a familiar monastery, retreat house, rural area or mountainside. Be completely silent, draw closer to nature and draw closer to God.

**Quiet solitude wherever we are**

We can make space to meet God wherever we are, creating a personal temple or a wilderness of the heart. Even our daily commute, if it’s not too crowded or noisy, may serve the purpose. Walking meditation, meditation while waiting for our many meetings or conferences to begin: a habit of spiritual cultivation is key. No matter where we are, we can pray, reflect, meditate on the scriptures, center our thoughts on the Lord, sing songs of praise or read a spiritual book. Let us remember that God is in the midst of the busy city waiting for us to draw closer to him. As long as we are willing to make time for him, we will definitely encounter the Lord!

The Ancients were right: “Much work is involved to achieve sanctification, but the world is too busy. If one can take time out from his busy life, one will be closer to God and be blessed.” Modern pastors also tell us this about the space to meet face to face with the Lord in solitude: “If you do not seek it, do not expect God to find it for you.”

*Translated by Cinde Lee from Tian Feng No. 366, June 2010*
Council of Taiwan Churches Delegation Visits CCC/TSPM

On September 13 2010, a delegation from the Council of Taiwan Churches led by Rev. Kui Jianhua, former bishop of the Taiwan Methodist Church and current bishop, Rev. Lin Changzeng, arrived in Shanghai with an eight-member delegation to visit the national CCC/TSPM. The two sides held cordial exchanges on theological education, social service, and publications.

Edler Fu Xianwei, Chair of the TSPM, extended a warm welcome to the group on behalf of the national CCC/TSPM, saying, “We have had various exchanges over the last two years, with excellent results, that have increased our mutual understanding and deepened our friendship. I am confident that our future exchanges and cooperation will continue this process.”

The Rev. Gao Feng, President of the CCC, gave the group a brief introduction to the major programs conducted by the six departments of the CCC/TSPM. Mentioning that the TSPM celebrated its 60th anniversary this year, he also provided information on developments during these 60 years, introducing the state of pastoral work in the mainland churches today through examples of the restoration of churches, reopening and establishment of seminaries and Bible schools, and Bible publication and distribution.

Bishop Lin Changzeng expressed the group’s gratitude to the CCC/TSPM and their hope to further mutual cooperation and sharing of resources for work such as training and so on.

Secretary General of the TSPM, Rev. Xu Xiaohong and Associate Secretary General of the CCC, Rev. Bao Jiayuan, with interim head of the social service department, Mr. Wang Baocheng, also introduced work in publication, distribution, training, and social service ministries by the CCC/TSPM.