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Professor Chen Zemin speaking in Shanghai at the recent Symposium on Sacred Music. (See p. 18.)
Dear Reader,

A decade ago, the small mountain in the vicinity of the city of Harbin in the northeastern province of Heilongjiang was undeveloped. There was no water, no electricity, and no communications facilities. But as Xiao Ming writes in the first article in this June issue of ANS, after a decade of planning and fundraising, the land was purchased and a major highway now connects to the modern Mount of Olives Christian Education Center, a bold initiative by the Harbin CC/TSPM. A plaque on the impressive building reads in part: “Using this spiritual base as a beautiful Christian witness, the Harbin CC/TSPM will continue to promote theological education, to provide training for pastors, to foster educational exchanges, to develop spiritual formation, and to serve society.” Though not all churches in Harbin have the best facilities themselves, they cooperated in realizing their goal for the Center and the result is a testament to their dedication and foresight.

Not long ago, protests over the building of a Christian church in Confucius’ hometown of Qufu, Shandong province, were in the news. Wang Congyou reports on the church at the center of the controversy, the Protestant church in Jining, a major municipality in southwest Shandong that has jurisdiction over Qufu, as well as the ministry of the church there today. The Protestants there have been worshipping in a temporary, makeshift space that holds 7-800 worshippers. The new church will accommodate 3,000. Readers will notice that many of the local church members and leaders mentioned in the article are surnamed Kong—they are descendants of the great philosopher, whose family name they share.

The subject of Zhang Lili’s article is a recurring one in the pages of Tian Feng, the church magazine from which most of our articles are translated. In addition to physical, mental, and emotional well being, Zhang stresses the need, familiar to many churches the world over, to better understand the pressures of pastoral work and caring for large congregations, and to respond with caring concern for clergy and church workers. There are common underlying factors that exacerbate the situation as well. These include a lack of basic health care, low salaries, and lack of social guarantees such as pensions. The well-known lack of sufficient numbers of clergy, the soaring cost of living in urban areas and the drain on rural church finances caused by the flood of migrant labor to the cities all compound the problem. Some improvement is on the horizon: the State Administration for Religious Affairs is planning to bring all religious professionals into the social security system by 2012.

En Min ponders how Christians can face up to the natural disasters that seem to strike with such regularity in recent years, both in China and elsewhere. The author sees these events and the suffering they cause us as a part of nature and our relationship with it, not some punishment meted out by God. Writing about predictions and omens, En Min comments: “during days of struggle and strife, it is better to do the work of the Lord. For one who waits vigilantly for the true second coming of the Lord, omens, or the lack of them, are unimportant.”

A short piece on errors new Christians are prone to reminds us that many Christians in China are quite new to the faith and vulnerable to misunderstandings.

Several news articles round out this issue.

Warm thanks to our translators: Emily Dunn, Suzanne Rowe, Kurt Selles and Katie Spillane. Photos are courtesy of Tian Feng and the website of the CCC/TSPM: www.cccctspm.org.

JW
In the New Testament, the Mount of Olives, just outside of Jerusalem, is the site where Jesus ascended into heaven and where he promised to return at his Second Coming. About sixty miles from Harbin City, in Heilongjiang Province, there is another small beautiful mountain of about 1.3 million square meters with the name Mount of Olives. It is here on this mountain that the Harbin Christian Council and Three-Self Movement (CC/TSPM) in 2006 invested in and built the “Harbin Christian Education Center.” All of the names of the various facilities are taken from the Bible, with names such as “Mizbah Square,” “Mount of Olives Worship Center,” “Peniel Classroom Hall,” “Five Loaves and Two Fish Guest House,” “Tyrannus Room,” and so on. Successfully completed according to the original plans, the entire facility exhibits exceptional charm and exquisite decoration, blending natural beauty and Christian faith in an extraordinary way.

On one of the walls of the Mount of Olives Christian Education Center is a plaque with the moving words, “The Harbin Mount of Olives Christian Education Center is a demonstration of the faith of the 100,000 Christians in Harbin. Using this spiritual base as a beautiful Christian witness, the Harbin CC/TSPM will continue to promote theological education, to provide training for pastors, to foster educational exchanges, to develop spiritual formation, and to serve society.” This Center has been built through the abundant grace of God.

Poverty Is Not Christianity

Heilongjiang Province is not one of China’s most important provinces economically, but natural resources, such as minerals, grains, and lumber are abundant. The Reverend Lu Dezhi, president of the Harbin Provincial Bible School and chair of the Harbin City CC/TSPM, told me that raising funds for the education center took ten years. The enormous task of finding a suitable mountain, purchasing the land, building a road, and constructing the facilities were all accomplished by the grace of God. Raising such a huge sum of money to buy the mountain required huge courage and long-range vision. Ten years ago no one was interested in the barren hills of Huang Mountain where the Mount of Olives Education Center is now located. Because there was no water, no electricity, and no communication networks, initially many people were skeptical about the project. But not Reverend Lu and his fellow church workers who forged ahead with an optimistic approach in tackling these huge obstacles. Ten years ago who could have envisioned that a major highway would be built providing access to the Mount of Olives Education Center? Who could have predicted the value of the land of the Mount of Olives Center as it stands today? The completion of the Mount of Olives Education Center is a symbol of the spirit and faith of the Christians in the Harbin church.

The Reverend Lu also told me that even though many of the Harbin churches themselves do not have the best facilities, they worked together as Christians of one heart and one mind to bring the project to completion. Reverend Lu went on to say that in the Chinese Church there are some Christians who hold some backward or conservative views about poverty. They believe that the poorer one is the more spiritual one is; or, in other words, the poorer one is the better Christian one is. Moreover, they believe that evangelists and pastors should support the poor as a demonstration of humility and love, and other similar sentiments. In contrast to these views,
Reverend Lu holds an opposite view that “poverty is not Christianity.” By this statement, Reverend Lu is not referring to the popular “prosperity gospel,” but rather for the need of the church to shake off completely the idea of poverty and suffering and participate in the progress and harmony of contemporary society in order to be more appealing, to glorify God and to serve society.

When he says, “poverty is not Christianity,” I realize that he means that “poverty,” the Christian faith, the development of the church, and the church’s sense of contemporary responsibility are all directly related. The church needs to understand “self-support” from a new perspective. The Chinese Church cannot serve contemporary society unless it is strong and prosperous. So, the progress and development of the church should keep pace with that of society. The church should seize the present opportunity and work energetically. Certainly to say “poverty is not Christianity” does not dismiss the plight of “the poor.” The good news of the gospel is still the good news of the gospel, because God has not changed. Reverend Lu’s understanding that “poverty is not Christianity” is an important concept for the development and progress of the church. This concept has theological foundations, the motivating power of faith, cultural implications, and characteristics of the present age.

The Opportunity of Continuing Education for Pastors

In the past the rapid and chaotic development of the Chinese Church completely tested the wisdom and ability of its pastors. The church’s crisis was not in numerical growth, but in the challenge of training enough pastors with adequate cultural, social, and administrative skills, as well as in the weakness of the entire organizational responsibility of the church. Reverend Lu told me that he is very committed to working to provide the pastors in Harbin with a system for life-long education. In his words, “Life-long education” comes from the idea of “life-long service.” Since “Opening and Reform” in the late 1970s, the rapid growth of the church has been plagued by an obvious lag in the training of pastors. Generally pastors receive four years of training, but many received less than four years, and some have only received a short period of training. Pastoral service, however, is life-long service. Many pastors who have served for a long time are no longer serving from the heart; their spiritual resources have dried up and they have lost their direction. Many other pastors have many years of rich pastoral experience, but they often feel that their education is inadequate and consequently have looked for opportunities for continuing their education or have studied on their own.

The mission and goal of the Mount of Olives Education Center is to promote “life-long” theological education. Theological education needs a suitable location—where it can develop its mission and establish a sense of responsibility. The church is the place where the faith of Christians is developed. In order to grow in their faith, Christians must experience the baptism of the Holy Spirit before they can be a lovely witness. The Mount of Olives worship facility has incorporated two biblical themes in its architecture. The outside of the facility evokes the symbol of “burning flames,” and the inside that of the ark of redemption. Both of these themes communicate the purpose of the Center: away from the din of everyday life in this natural setting the Holy Spirit is burning a new fire. This design represents “the theology of the Christian Church in Harbin in the modern context.” Reverend Lu believes that its location will enable the influence of Mount of Olives Education Center to radiate outwards in the area. For example, after two years of special training students with musical talent can be sent to a variety of higher institutions for extended musical training. Deaf and mute students are welcomed into a two-year education program, and, if they need it, are eligible for financial help.

Clasping Hands to Do Something Big

“Clasping hands to do something big” means that great things can be accomplished by many people working together, sharing their financial resources and wisdom. In times of difficulty and uncertainty, Reverend Lu says that “clasping hands to do something big” can reduce internal tensions in the church as well as ease financial limitations by spreading the cost among the churches. The tasks of training pastors, building professional pastoral teams, and “raising the level of competency” are important, but of even greater importance is the task of building cooperation and unity. Sharing one faith, one active Christian culture, one theological perspective and training can bring together and unite many.
church workers. Through bringing together the strengths of the churches from the various districts, the Center is able to provide the right conditions for training students with special talents for church work. For example, the Center is able to provide refresher courses and development for students with talent for using the internet, for learning foreign languages, for studying theology, for teaching the deaf and the mute, for working with the sick, for church administration, and so on. Church work teams must be established to serve the people in the church. Only in this way can a caring and cooperating work team become widely recognized, known by the people, supported by believers, and blessed by God.

According to Reverend Lu, some people have made an issue of the number of Christians in China, but statistical errors may exist, and some may be speculating about the number for their own purposes. This should remind us that we still have a long way to go in moving from “three-self to three-wells” in our task of running the church well [from self-government, self-support and self-propagation to a church that is well-governed or managed, well-supported, and well-propagated—ed.]. We must redouble our efforts and broaden our vision to make this goal a reality. Areas where the church still has a narrow vision must be opened up and reformed; places not connected to the larger mission of the church must be brought closer through training and development. Reverend Lu believes that the churches need to bring their administration up to a higher level, to increase pastoral skills, and to provide a platform for development, thereby naturally attracting Christians to normal church worship.

The churches of Harbin City have redoubled their efforts to establish a home for the elderly, to support village clinics, to organize Christians to help farmers bring in their fall harvest, and to financially help poor rural students to attend university. These kinds of service show the larger society that the church has an earnest desire to serve society and will naturally reflect well on the church’s place in society. In the construction and development of the Mount of Olives Education Center, the Harbin church provided labor and financial opportunities for local residents in the countryside. Today with China’s rapidly aging society, the church has an even greater opportunity to serve. With great enthusiasm, Reverend Lu told me that the churches and Christians of Harbin City are in the process of preparing to build a hospital.

Multiple Strategies for Church Revival in Harbin

The Harbin CC/TSPM’s relationship with the churches in its districts is that of “leader” rather than “ruler.” Rather than having a “single voice church,” decisions are made by vote following extensive discussions among church leaders and district church representatives; there is a high level of democratic participation. The CC/TSPM officials do not maintain separate organizations, in order to reduce shared expenditures. The church itself needs to remold its image to become a beautiful witness for God. Reverend Lu sees the CC/TSPM as a service institution and not a bureaucratic institution; the administrators of the church are God’s servants, not those who “rule with a heavy hand.”

In order to foster organizational development, the CC/TSPM needs to work hard to accomplish the following five goals. First, enliven thinking: church pastors need to be able to think through issues theologically; firmly establish patriotism and the “Three-Self” perspective; enrich the “Three-Self” idea; foster forward-looking church practice. Second, the church needs new ideas that help it develop and fit with the contemporary needs of society; evangelists need to boost their knowledge and approach while at the same time paying attention to developing practical skills. Third, the church needs a flexible approach that stresses training pastors in the use of practical methods that can help develop the church. Fourth, intellectual pursuits in the church must be broad and deep; pastors need to be educated pastors, with an emphasis on professionalization and lifelong theological, cultural, and practical learning, as well as the capacity to oppose outside interference. Fifth, and finally, interpersonal relationships in the church and more broadly need to be harmonious and sympathetic. All five of these goals are a part of the development of the church’s pastoral teams. For these servants of the Lord, personality, charisma, work team development, and vigorous church culture are all very important.

Together these goals offer a glimpse of the future prospects of Harbin churches.

Translated from TianFeng No. 375, March 2011 by Kurt Selles
When speaking of Shandong province, many people are familiar with Qufu and Zoucheng because they are the hometowns of the great Chinese scholars Confucius and Mencius. Many people also know of Weishan Lake, because it was the location for the 1956 wartime film *Railway Guerrillas*. All of these places are among the twelve counties (and county-level cities) that come under the jurisdiction of Jining, a major municipality in southwest Shandong. This area is home to 448 Protestant churches and over 130,000 Protestants. Holding to Christ’s teachings of love and holding forth his saving grace, they blend into this historically rich place with their spirit of love, service, and tolerance. They all have their own ways of being a good witness for the Lord.

**Leading the flock step by step**

The development of the churches in Jining is related to their basic structure. Every week there are around a dozen worship gatherings using a variety of liturgical forms. Church members’ understanding of the truth is built up not only through their pastors’ messages from the pulpit but also through age-specific ministries and fellowship groups. The Huangjia Street Church, which is also home to the municipal CC/TSPM, is noted for its focus on ministering to the elderly. It started up a literacy class with the original goal of enabling Christians who had little formal education to read the Bible. Taught by retired teachers, it has now been running for fifteen years. Each course lasts for three years, so this year marks the end of the fifth course. Many elderly Christians who used to be illiterate can now read the Bible! The literacy class occupies three half-days per week. Students not only learn how to read and get to know each other, but have also formed a fellowship for the elderly. The church’s Reverend Kong says: “Before, some elderly people had troubled relations with family members and they tended to think negatively. Their literacy studies and the experience of group life has not only improved their education but has also given them a new lease of life and a positive attitude, and encouraged them to be good witnesses to the Lord before their families.”

**Christians have a duty to serve society**

Jining churches agree upon the value of social service because it was taught by Christ, and is a fitting role for the church in society. In addition to attending to the needs of those around them in the course of everyday life, each Chinese New Year the church allocates a particular sum from offerings to help vulnerable social groups (such as elderly people who are on their own, widows and their children, and migrant workers). Since 2005 it has given financial aid to the disabled and students in need, and visited those facing hardship at Chinese New Year. Every year this brings warmth to locals who are experiencing financial difficulty, and allows them to see in the New Year in comfort and happiness. In times of crisis the church also extends a helping hand.
to compatriots in disaster zones. In 2008, it donated almost 700,000 yuan in response to the disastrous cold snap in southern China and the earthquake in Wenchuan County, Sichuan province.

In addition to all of this, the church teaches its members that they must bear witness to their faith. Accordingly, brothers and sisters not only offer up money to the church, but are also eager to help others in the community, and have a reputation for doing charitable work. A married couple, Brother Jia Mingxing and Sister Du, started a business manufacturing water treatment machinery many years ago. Since its inception they have maintained their commercial reputation and given back to society in line with their goals of “observing discipline and keeping the law” and “honouring God and benefiting the people.” After years of growth, it has become a parent company to five subsidiaries, and a mid-sized enterprise employing over five hundred workers. They pay their taxes honestly, voluntarily arrange social security for their workers, and never fall behind in paying wages. When the community has a need, they contribute money and goods; when individuals are in need, they step in and help out, enabling elementary and middle-school students who are experiencing financial difficulty to go to school. Of the students they have assisted, so far around a dozen have gone on to graduate from university or obtain masters’ degrees. Their contributions as Christian entrepreneurs have also been recognized by the broader community; Brother Jia has been listed as one of Jining’s “Outstanding Entrepreneurs” multiple times, is currently the Vice-Chair of the city’s Industry and Commerce Association, and has been elected as a committee member of the Jining Municipal Political Consultative Conference. When I asked them how they had managed to develop such a successful business in just ten years, Sister Du said “Through God’s wisdom. The book of Proverbs says that ‘The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.’ When we work at revering him, he sends us wisdom.”

Sister Yang Guoqing is one of the church’s core volunteers. She also heads up a business and has been named as one of Shandong province’s Outstanding Entrepreneurs and a “woman to watch.” When her company was first set up, she announced that one-tenth of its profits would be donated to the community as per the tithe required by the Bible. When she heard that the elderly residents of a nursing home in Zhongce Town of Sishui County were having trouble bathing because no baths had been installed in the initial stages of the home’s construction, she put up the money for a bathing pool; when the municipal Women’s Federation was going to Jin township to help out at a shelter for abandoned children, she made a donation; when the Shandong Foundation for Justice and Courage was established she donated an all-terrain vehicle to assist the workers in promoting healthy social trends and upholding the right.

Four years ago, the church drew on the experience of churches in the south and established a Christian Industry and Commerce Fellowship so as to cultivate the faith of Christian businessmen and women, to encourage them to operate honestly and compete fairly, and to build a platform for pooling resources and serving society. Surely, God will use this sort of fellowship to enable the church in Jining to better serve the local community.

The Qufu congregation worships in a temporary building until the new church is completed.
Church growth necessitates rebuilding of church in Qufu

The churches in the twelve counties (and county-level cities) of Jining are of various sizes, and face various financial circumstances. Some churches have four or five preachers, while others are unable to afford even living expenses for one full-time pastor. In response to this, the Jining Municipal CC / TSPM has begun to try and centralize the allocation of seminary graduates and their payment, so as to enable churches in difficulty to retain pastors. The head office of the municipal CC / TSPM is working to provide comprehensive help and support to those counties experiencing difficulty in building churches, so that Christians can praise and worship God in a more spacious setting.

The first church in Qufu was built at the Western Pass, which is within one kilometer of the old Ming-dynasty city walls. It was a quadrangular construction four hundred meters long from north to south, and one hundred meters wide from east to west. According to Elder Kong Qingsheng from the Qufu church, it was built around 1915. A few of its old sitting rooms have now been converted into residences. During the Cultural Revolution, the church was occupied by the Western Pass Production Brigade and was turned into a cake factory. Church activities resumed in 1986. At that time there were no church buildings in the municipal area, just four informal meeting places and around two hundred Christians in the surrounding countryside. Since the reopening of churches, the number of meeting places has grown from these four places to twenty-five legal churches today, but Qufu city still lacked a place for formal Christian worship. After authorization was formally obtained in 1990, the Protestants in Qufu first met in someone’s home. They moved in the year 2000 to a cement prefabrication plant, and again in 2001 to the conference room of the Qufu Western Pass Winery; in 2004, they rented the Qufu movie theatre for their gatherings.

In the year 2000, the government allocated two mu (around one-third of an acre) to the church, and agreed to build a temporary meeting site at the current address. “In 1996, we went from door-to-door registering people and we counted 7500 Christians,” says Elder Kong Qingsheng, who was the chairman of the Qufu CC / TSPM at the time. The current Chairperson of the Qufu CC / TSPM, lecturer and Associate Pastor Feng Zongjie, says “we haven’t calculated the number of Christians now as precisely as we did last time, but there would probably be around 15,000.” Through the assistance and coordination of the municipal CC / TSPM and support from government departments at all levels, the foundation stone of the Qufu Holy Trinity Protestant Church was finally laid on 27 July 2010 in a village on the outskirts of the city. The only church in the municipality of Qufu was to be rebuilt! The new church is located where the city meets the country, far away from the center of town, but having a fixed place to worship God is a great joy for the brothers and sisters here. Concerning the shortfall in funding for the building, they say that the brothers and sisters at the Jining church will contribute all that they can to its construction, and they ask God to prepare the way for his children.

The rebuilding of a church in the hometown of Confucius, such an iconic figure in Chinese culture, provoked a strong reaction from Internet users. Some objected to the building of a Christian church near the Confucius Temple, thinking that it was disrespectful of Confucian culture. In fact, the site of the new church is much further away from Confucius Temple than the old one. Moreover, Confucian culture is not a religion, and it is quite common for one city to contain a variety of architectural styles. Concerning this, Reverend Kong Xiangling, a 75th-generation descendant of Confucius and Vice-Chair of the Jining CC / TSPM, says: “The building of the Qufu Holy Trinity Church sees a church which was originally less than a kilometre away from the main hall of the Confucius Temple being rebuilt out in the suburbs. It is the heartfelt desire of Christians who have spent years waiting and praying, and is also a tangible demonstration of the CCP’s policy of freedom of religious belief. In fact, Confucius also believed in the existence of God, and there are many areas of commonality between Confucian and Christian cultures. The ‘filial piety’ that Confucius advocated is consistent with the biblical commandment to respect your parents; where Confucius regarded harmony as precious, the Christian faith similarly emphasizes...”
harmony with God, other people, and nature. I am convinced that if Confucius was alive today, even he wouldn’t oppose the building of a church in Qufu.”

Elder Kong Qingsheng, a 73rd-generation descendant of Confucius and the first Chairman of the Qufu CC / TSPM, says that Christians have been looking forward to this church, and it has also attracted attention from the locals. On the day of the foundation stone laying ceremony, some non-Christians joined in the cultural performance of their own accord. They think it will be good to have a church here, and have asked whether they can hold weddings inside it. According to my own understanding, the Chinese Christianity that has gone the Three-Self Patriotic way over the last sixty years is not exactly like Western culture, and even less does it represent Western culture. From the experience of the Chinese Church over the last sixty years, we see that it is not only about a faith that transcends time and space, but is moreover a religious cause undertaken by Chinese Christians themselves. History indicates that it is entirely proper and feasible for it to work alongside the rest of society under the banner of patriotism towards the construction of a harmonious society.

Reverend Gao Ming, Chair of the Jining CC / TSPM, says that this church is not just a Christian church but also a place of cultural exchange between China and the West. Before the church was reopened, they met with Bishop K.H. Ting (Ding Guangxun) in Nanjing. Bishop Ting said that the Qufu church was very important, and that it would show people what the Chinese Church was doing. He also suggested that it be named Holy Trinity Church. Today, the design of the Holy Trinity Church reflects its place as a center of cultural exchange between China and the West.

Not long after the foundation stone was laid, the first Nishan Forum on World Civilizations was held in Nishan, which is in Jining, Shandong. This had been proposed and carried forward by Xu Jialu, a former Vice-Chair of the National People’s Congress Standing Committee and Chairman of the Nishan Forum Committee, and opened up dialogue between Confucian and Christian cultures. Xu says “Sustaining dialogue between different civilizations and promoting understanding and trust between all nations and peoples is the best way to resolve all sorts of problems which are facing humanity.”

Seen in this light, by helping churches at the grassroots the Jining CC / TSPM is not only doing its job and increasing the cohesion of these churches, but by doing so is joining in the broad dialogue and exchange between Chinese and Western cultures. I am sure that the building of the Qufu church and the development of the Jining church will contribute to the project of Theological Reconstruction currently being undertaken by the Chinese Church, to Sino-Western cultural exchange, and to the Sinification of Christ’s gospel.

Translated from Tian Feng No. 375, March 2011 by Emily Dunn

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
Healthy shepherds are good for the flock

Zhang Lili

I used to be thankful whenever I read an obituary for a church worker in the church monthly magazine *Tian Feng* because they were generally written for older people who had lived a long and full life. These days, however, the health of younger clergy and church workers is a cause for concern—there are deaths among the middle-aged and even the youth. Recently a number of my colleagues in church work have succumbed and so I cannot help but consider the issue of health among clergy and church workers.

Just as a coin has two sides, the health of clergy and church workers can be considered from two points of view. The first is from God’s perspective—not a bad approach. This says that Christian workers, as God’s servants, come under God’s protection, so health shouldn’t be a problem; even if health issues do arise, this is all a part of God’s good plan. The flip side of the coin is from the perspective of an onlooker. This says that church workers are also people, living in a sin-filled world, eating and drinking, and so sickness is quite normal. This approach is objectively factual and also reasonable. What’s more, as an “insider,” a fellow church worker, I must consider this issue. It seems to me that our church today “wastes” a great many clergy and church workers. There are very few workers, the load is too heavy, and this poses a challenge for the health of clergy and other church workers. As the body of our Lord, we must concern ourselves with this issue.

The church must be concerned for the health of clergy and church workers

In rural areas, especially places that are not too well developed economically, many churches do not yet offer basic health insurance systems for clergy and church workers, let alone regular health checks. On top of that, church workers have meagre incomes. Most pastors just “muddle along” and will not see a doctor unless it is urgent. If a clergy person or other church worker develops a major health problem, either (1) they exhaust the church resources, which, in the case of churches without a solid financial foundation may result in disputes and splits; or (2) the clergy or church worker relies on his/her own family to shoulder the burden of medical expenses. For those families with heavy economic burdens, this can be a fearsome disaster. I heard of a couple, both junior high school teachers, who gave up their jobs to serve God when they became Christians. In the end, though, when the husband got sick, their joint income was insufficient, and so they risked leaving their ministry positions in order to go into business and earn money to pay for treatment.

In a word, in most churches, particularly in rural areas where there is often inadequate health insurance, the issue of clergy and church workers’ health has already gone from being a niggling, lurking worry to become a very real concern. If the church can’t improve the system in the near future, I’m afraid that great losses won’t just be borne by one or two pastors in poor health, but will be an even greater hardship for the many believers who make up the body of the church. The most severe damage will be done to God’s name, which will become suspect and subject to insult. I earnestly hope that those God has sent to govern the church will have great wisdom in this regard.

Apart from health insurance, the way the church body cares for and supports one another is very important. I know an elderly evangelist, zealous in God’s service, who developed diabetes two years ago. He has since been healed by God and is healthy again. Apart from God’s direct intervention, there was another noteworthy point in this whole process—the meticulous care of the Christian brothers and sisters of the church. I can bear witness to this. Paul taught Timothy that, “The elders who direct...
the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching” (1 Tim. 5:17). If, as Paul says, clergy and church workers should receive double honor in the course of their normal work, then when they are unwell and weak, surely they are even more worthy of loving care. This is their indisputable due. Clergy and church workers today, however, do not often teach these truths for fear of provoking unnecessary misunderstandings. Actually, they should not think this way, for our faith tells us that whether individuals or churches, we will be blessed when we obey God’s truth.

Pastors should care for one another

Even today I clearly remember the care I experienced following a minor operation to remove a cyst inside my eyelid. From a medical perspective, this was minor surgery, yet in order to prevent infection, I had to wear a piece of gauze over my eye afterwards. The result was that many colleagues whom I knew well, as well as others who were really just acquaintances, came to my home to visit and care for me. Although this was just a small thing, I was moved. Some urged me to take good care, others asked how I was—all were just very small expressions of care, but love was communicated. Such expressions of care provide tremendous support and encouragement to a sick person. The reverse is also true: if a church worker is ill and colleagues are indifferent to or ignorant of the situation, this can sometimes be the final straw. They are not able to bear such perceived ridicule and attack.

I once read an article on the Internet that stated, “Jockeying for position, pressurizing and attacking one another is often seen among church workers in rural areas; the traditional Chinese relationship between colleagues neatly expressed as ‘sharing, helping, mentoring’ is rarely seen these days.” Of course this judgement may not be quite right, but at least it illustrates from a different perspective the fact that there should be mutual help, understanding, tolerance, and care among colleagues. I once had an unexpected opportunity to visit another church and serve there for a while. Unfortunately there was conflict between two workers in this church (an elder and an evangelist). I learned that a sister in the church had called the evangelist to ask, “Are you better now?” Thinking this rather strange, the evangelist replied, “I don’t have any health problems.” Further questioning revealed that the elder had said to this sister: “Because So-and-so did not listen to what I said, and even contradicted me, God has caused her to have stomach aches…. ” One doesn’t know whether to laugh or cry, but regardless, careful consideration of the background to this type of situation reveals the state of the relationship between those church workers, and is a very real cause for concern.

As I read the Bible these last few days, I noticed Paul’s words to Timothy: “Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses” (1 Timothy 5:23). I don’t know why, but these few words made tears trickle down my cheeks. When Paul wrote this letter, the perilous difficulties he endured were far from what ordinary people would ever experience; moreover he suffered serious eye irritations at the time. Yet he was preoccupied with concerns for the health of one younger than him in the gospel—Timothy. He urged him specifically: “Don’t just drink water as usual, drink a little wine.” The words sound gentle, but they were written earnestly; we glimpse here the warm family ties between Paul and his co-worker, and he sets us a good model to follow for relationships between co-workers.

Church workers should pay attention to their own health

The saying goes, “better to prevent fire than to fight it.” As far as the health of clergy and church workers is concerned, prevention is better than cure. Clergy and other church workers should take care of their own health.

A good number of church workers are busy rushing about, busy with all sorts of service because there are so many believers, so much work to do, and so many souls who have not yet believed. They take no vacations and they are often worried about many
things. They don’t realize that after a long period of stress and busyness, their bodies can no longer cope with the burden — this is why we sometimes hear news of pastors fainting in the pulpit. This kind of “loyalty unto death” is admirable, yet in Hosea God criticizes the people of Ephraim saying that they are “a flat cake not turned over” (Hosea 7:8). The people of Ephraim had taken a one-sided view of truth; their thinking was extreme. They were like a pancake that has not been turned: one side comes out burnt while the other stays raw. To love God is a good thing, but we must not reply on our own mental and physical strength; we must find a balance between enthusiasm and devotion. The famous Evangelical preacher, John Stott, in his book, I Believe in Preaching makes a point from his own experience in which he has a set daily “Quiet Time,” making sure he has time alone to draw near to God.

Church pastors must learn to rest and keep watch. The debate about the Sabbath day has been going on for a long time, but there is but one true meaning. That is that people who trust in God should understand how to retreat into God, not relying on their own strength, but simply on God’s provision. Sadly many church workers today forget these words: “In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength” (Isaiah 30:15). Of course, “repentance and rest” does not mean that we do nothing, but that, in trusting God, we keep watch over the church.

Clergy and church workers need to trust and look to God. The promise is recorded in the Bible: “No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it” (1 Corinthians 10:13). This is a sure promise, yet even so it is often overlooked by clergy and church workers. As a result, they struggle with insomnia because of obstructions to their work or heavy burdens in life. Actually, it is at these times that we are being refined to entrust our burdens to God and to look to the One who is from beginning to end, the one in whom we trust.

Church workers should be full of joy and hope. Long ago, Scripture taught us: “A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones” (Proverbs 17:22). Joy is a special quality that emanates from within, which cannot be imposed and which others cannot take away. Both trivia and heavy burdens today often rob us of joy and hope—yet even at these times, as we face all kinds of trials, the Bible teaches that we should consider it all “pure joy” (see James 1:2-4). We should always be joyful because this is God’s will for us in Christ Jesus. Of course this is not to say that we never experience unhappiness—even our Lord Jesus was unhappy at times (see Mathew 26:38 and John 11:35), but we should know that even in the pain and tragedies of life, we still have reason for joy, because we have the hope of belonging to the Kingdom of God. John once blessed Gaius, who cared for brothers who were travelling through his area, saying, “I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well” (3 John 2). When a person’s soul is getting along well, his spirit is joyful; what is more important than this?

Clergy and church workers are the shepherds of the church. If the shepherds are broad-minded and unprejudiced, the development of the church will be more open; if the shepherds are lively, the church will be even livelier; if the shepherd’s health is good then he will be able to better lead the flock towards healthy growth and abundant life. My hope is that God will be gracious, enabling church members to love those who pastor them even more, and enabling clergy and church workers themselves to look after their own health even as they care for and protect believers. May God grant them increasing wisdom, success in all their efforts, and may the churches they shepherd flourish more and more.

Translated from Tian Feng No. 375, March 2011 by Suzanne Rowe
How are we to face natural disasters?

All around us, people are raising questions like these—

*Given the increasing frequency of natural disasters in recent years, could 2012 really be the end of the world?*

*If God is all-loving, why doesn’t God prevent rampant natural disasters?*

*Are earthquakes, famines, and plagues God’s punishment for mankind?*

*How should we, as Christians, face frequent natural disasters?*

On the afternoon of March 11, 2011 an earthquake measuring 9.0 magnitude on the Richter scale struck the Tohoku region of northern Miyagi Prefecture, causing a radioactive leak that led to worldwide panic, rattling the nerves of citizens in every country. The many images being broadcast on the news bore a striking resemblance to the movie Sinking of Japan (adapted from the novel of the same name): massive shifts in the Japan Trench followed by frequent earthquakes, small islands sinking in the middle of the night, high-speed collapses, disruption of urban traffic, successive volcanic eruptions, and the sight of those lucky enough to survive facing the heartbreaking devastation of their homeland.

When natural disasters strike, people always seek to find the source of their suffering and the meaning behind it. Why do natural disasters occur? Natural disasters are natural phenomena, not acts of God. In fact, the history of humankind may be said to be an account of humanity’s refusal to surrender to hardship. Natural disasters are not acts of God, but rather the result of human disruptions of universal balance. Deforestation leads to erosion, which leads to flooding. Natural phenomena occur as part of the balance of the natural world itself. Because humanity is dependent on the natural world for its survival, natural phenomena are also representative of the relationship between humans and nature. When sin and death enter into this world, suffering stalks humankind all the world over. Not a living soul can escape suffering: “We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now…” (Romans 8:22). The Old Testament Book of Job states: “But human beings are born to trouble just as sparks fly upward” (Job 5:7). In the course of a lifetime, there is no certain relationship between each act of sin or disbelief and punishment meted out by God. As long as you live on this earth, you will encounter suffering and unfavorable circumstances no matter who you are. Whether we are Christians or not, we must face all kinds of suffering—be it the result of our own actions or part of the natural or social environment. Because we live in an imperfect world, if we must overcome the relationship between difficulty and sin, it is because “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,” (Romans 3:23); suffering is a lack of good fortune.

Many people do not think about the source of grace in their lives. But when disaster strikes, they seek an entity towards which they can vent and direct their anger. The cries against “Heaven” are especially bitter, as portrayed by Xu Fanban’s performance as a woman driven to distraction in the film The Tangshan Earthquake [In 1976 a magnitude 7.8 quake in the city of Tangshan, Hebei province killed over 240,000 people—ed.]. Of course, many Christians do not
blame God. But it is difficult to avoid having doubts in one’s heart. Why would our Heavenly Father not look after and protect his children? The roots of these notions lie in the belief that “there is nothing God cannot do and God will see to everything.” But the reality is that what we hear from the pulpit, in sermons or in testimony “emphasizes the good and downplays the negative.” The full truth revealed by the Bible is not fully explained to Christians. Yes, it is true that we have experienced God’s supernatural powers of healing and salvation, but these were extraordinary acts of grace. More often, we see the beauty and power of God in natural law—which is also an act of grace. Methods adopted to avoid harm are based upon an understanding of benefit and harm, upon a categorical value system. However, the standards for judging harm and benefit are often human standards. If we approach the matter from a spiritual Christian perspective, it is possible that our value systems will change. This is why the prophets of the Old Testament were able to exclaim, “that I benefit from my suffering!” through their sighs. God is all-loving, but the expression of God’s love towards the beauty of his creation is not something we can all understand all the time. God is mighty, but the reach of his power does not always extend towards the outstretched fingers of humanity at any given time. Humankind is continuously admonished by natural disasters; in the face of the almighty Creator, humanity must first deeply understand the egotistical nature of the false belief that “Humankind can conquer nature.”

First, we must live fearlessly in our faith, believing that God rules the world. When floods are roiling, the Lord is King! When the earthquake in Japan caused the nuclear leakage, many Chinese people began a mad scramble to buy salt, hoping that this would guarantee their safety. Naturally, the protection provided by rationality is important. But irrational behavioral responses only reveal the spiritual pallor and helplessness of a highly developed modern society. Psychologists say that the fear of natural disasters is more terrible than the disasters themselves. Faith is the key to maintaining confidence between God and those who believe in him. The practice of spiritual faith is the important testament that allows us to stand firm during the raging storms of life. The British scholar Rev. Dr. Alister McGrath has said: “What we face is not a God who is limited, weak and ignorant of death. He knows and understands us. Therefore, we may have confidence to come before the throne of grace” (Hebrews 4:16).

Second, natural disasters also serve as clear wake up calls. People who busily churn away at worldly affairs, muddleheaded with the debauchery of human existence, are violently awoken by this slamming of the brakes. Christians thus find an opportunity to reflect on their own lives and to experience the enjoyment of unexpected grace in the rain and sun each day. Facing days of misfortune, one can count the days, ponder life’s fragility and transience, reflect on the meaning of life, and even look beyond to eternity. However, as a Christian one must also begin early the spiritual preparations necessary to meet our God. The greater meaning of suffering lies in God’s desire for us to learn strength and endurance, as the Bible says: “God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction” (Genesis 41:52).

At the same time, when Christians face disaster, we should learn to do so together with all people—breathing together, sharing a common destiny and overcoming suffering together. Paul’s teachings on the matter are clear: “who consoles us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction with the consolation with which we ourselves are consoled by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are abundant for us, so also our consolation is abundant through Christ” (2 Corinthians 1:4-5). When humanity faces disaster, it does not seem that Christians stand on higher ground to take Heaven’s seat of judgment. Nor do they weep and wail out of a sense of self-righteousness, for “In all their distress, it was … his presence that saved them” (see Isaiah 63:9).

Once again, for those who are humble, each disaster can serve as a reminder that when life’s twists and turns bring the unexpected “all things work together for good” and that natural disasters present us with opportunity and the occasion for spiritual growth. However, we need not seek religious explanations for the mystery of natural disasters, however right they seem to us. For example,
because some people will try to calculate which
day of which month will be “doomsday” or “the
coming of the Lord,” others will decide that there
is no need for farming, finding employment, going
to work—one can simply await one’s time to go to
heaven while praying and singing hymns. There is no
need to resort to sensationalism. In the history of
the church, such characters and stories are not hard
to come by. In fact, Bible teachings do not call on
us to become speculators. Even predictions of the
second coming of the Lord, incited by the frequent
natural disasters in today’s world, are no reason to
shirk the responsibilities to this world. Many years
ago a servant of the Lord said: “If Jesus were to come
tomorrow, today it is still my duty to plant these
saplings!” Moreover, when we adopt the perspective
that “a thousand years are like a single day” no one can
actually know the difference in time that may exist
between omens and the actual occurrence of events.
So, during days of struggle and strife, it is better to do
the work of the Lord. For one who waits vigilantly for
the true second coming of the Lord, omens, or the
lack of them, are unimportant.

Translated from Tian Feng No. 376,
April 2011 by Katie Spillane

“In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world” (John 16:33).
Because new believers have just cast off the fetters of worldliness and believe in Christ, their faith is not very stable. They are rather immature in faith terms, like children might be, they easily fall into certain kinds of mistakes:

**Swallowing Scripture whole, without fully understanding.**

The Bible is the Word of God. Its truths are both simple and profound. The Bible’s sixty-six books are a precious gift of Good News given to humankind by our Heavenly Father, the creator of the universe. Its books were written by more than forty people, human beings with a wide diversity of intelligence, sensitivity, disposition, and feeling. Through the power of the Holy Spirit and its divinely inspired words, the Bible guides us to seek and know God and to receive the true path of eternal life.

We should read the Bible with an attitude of reverence, respect, and humility, savoring it with our hearts and, illuminated by the Holy Spirit, be awakened to its deeper truths [the Chinese word for “awakened” includes the meaning of “heart” and “self.”] and want to “…welcome the message very eagerly and examine the scriptures everyday to see whether these things are so” (see Acts 17:11).

For this reason, when reading the Bible, we need to fervently and patiently seek God’s guidance and the Holy Spirit’s illumination (see 2 Corinthians 3:6) to find the meaning, not just the words. A hasty “swallowing” produces adverse results, out of context and self-righteous.

**To starve oneself for fear of choking: easy prey for the difficulties of faith.**

When we decide to bear our cross and follow Jesus and become Christians, Satan is furious, because Satan is an opponent of God and those who believe in God (see Zechariah 3:1). Satan continuously tries his utmost to destroy believers’ faith and breed in them pride, doubt, laxness, contention, and fear, and through these radical means encourages factionalism and tries to make believers cast off their faith. “…Satan has demanded to sift all of you like wheat…” (Luke 22:31).

Satan either uses lies (see John 8:44) or tries to tempt new believers (see 2 Corinthians 11:3) or leave them defenseless (see Hebrews 1:11-12, 2:7). Sometimes Satan “prowls around like a roaring lion,” (1 Peter 5:8) or disguises himself as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14) so that people are left defenseless.

So, new believers still vulnerable in the faith, lose the battle under Satan’s carrot and stick approach. Their faith begins to weaken, and in seeking the path of truth, they begin to “sound the drum of retreat.” Their original beautiful and incomparable faith begins to wane and weaken. Like a child who is just learning to swim and, swallowing too much water, becomes afraid and thus loses the freedom to go in the ocean. This kind of “fearful faith” can be victoriously overcome through fervent prayer and mutual fellowship.

**Expecting instant answers to prayer.**

Some new believers think that since God is omnipotent, just pray and you’ll get results. This...
kind of “instant results prayer” attitude relies upon one’s self, not God’s power and plan. Some new believers treat God as if they are going to a Buddhist temple to burn incense and seek merit. If they don’t attain their goal, they blame God for being unfaithful. This kind of praying for instant results is intolerable.

First, your prayer cannot be a presumptuous demand (see Job 35:15). You must consider if your prayer is in keeping with God’s will, because “…if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.” (1 John 5:14). If your prayer is within God’s will you must still see if it is within God’s standard of timing, because we “wait for the Lord” (Psalm 27:14). “Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show mercy to you. For the Lord is a God of justice, blessed are all those who wait for him” (Isaiah 30:18).

Martin Luther said, “All who call on God in true faith, earnestly from the heart, will certainly be heard, and will receive what they have asked and desired.” God’s thoughts transcend humankind’s thoughts (see Isaiah 55:9). God has God’s own good intentions.

We cannot overstep God’s authority. We should not place our will above God’s will. Moreover, we are God’s creation and unable to overpower God’s will. God’s power and timing are absolutely not under our control. Would it have been acceptable for people in Old Testament times to have prayed that Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, be born?

Some people say prayer is their faith. This is crazy! Do you mean you can control God? Are you more mysterious than God? Of course God hears those prayers that are honest and come from our heart. But we must be careful and patiently wait for God’s reply. We must be careful with “rational” and “timeless” prayers. These must be in accordance with God’s will and time. Even when our prayers are instantly in accordance with God’s will, we must still wait patiently for God’s response. To pray in expectation of a response is obviously a mistake.

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Thank You!
A Symposium on Sacred Music Composition was held under the auspices of the CCC/TSPM at the Xinyuan Hotel in Shanghai from March 24-26, 2011 to promote the composition of sacred music, and encourage those who have the gift of music to use it in the service of Chinese Christianity. Forty church musicians from around the country attended the symposium; special invitations went to senior church musicians, whose advice and guidance for the gathering was respectfully solicited. TSPM Chairperson Elder Fu Xianwei, and Secretary General of that organization, Rev. Xu Xiaohong were also present.

Elder Fu Xianwei, and several of the senior musicians, including Prof. Ma Geshun, Prof. Chen Zemin, Rev. Shi Qigui, Rev. Dr. Cao Shengjie, and Rev. Lin Shengben, all spoke to the group.

Elder Fu Xianwei first expressed his gratitude to the senior church musicians for their unceasing contributions to sacred music in the Chinese Church. He noted that the CCC/TSPM had always regarded sacred music as important, supporting and encouraging its development. He went on to say that sacred music composers have their work cut out for them in keeping up with the needs of today’s churches, given the rapid pace of development. He hoped each one present could bring the fruits of the Three-Self principles and Theological Reconstruction into their work of hymn composition, providing spiritual aid to greater numbers of believers.

Prof. Ma Geshun, Prof. Chen Zemin, and Rev. Shi Qigui shared their personal experience, as well as commenting on existing issues and outlining future directions for Chinese sacred music composition. Following their comments, the Director of the Sacred Music Commission, the Rev. Luo Liguang, along with Deputy Director Shen Guangwei, spoke on a variety of topics including “The Current State and Challenges of Sacred Music Composition” and “Contextualization of Sacred Music Composition.”

The Chinese Protestant Church has been blessed with outstanding musical talent. Prof. Ma graduated from the Music Department of Central University in 1937 and from the Westminster Choir College in 1949; he was made a Fellow of that institution in 1981. He is a leading figure in choral conducting and music education in China, having taught many of the younger generation of Chinese conductors during his Professorship at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. Now retired, he is perhaps best known for his composition “The Anointed.”

Prof. Chen Zemin, retired vice-president of Nanjing Union Theological College, is an outstanding elder statesman of the church as well as a talented musician, having taught in the Department of Chinese Instruments at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music in the early 1980s. Rev. Shi Qigui, retired senior pastor of Mu’en Church in Shanghai, never studied music formally, but has become one of the most prolific composers of modern Chinese music.
New Church Inaugurated in Mianzhu

On May 29, 2011, a solemn service of worship was held to inaugurate the newly completed Mianzhu Church. The backstory to this joyous event begins with a massive earthquake.

On May 12, 2008, an earthquake of magnitude 8.5 on the Richter scale with its epicenter in Wenchuan county, Sichuan struck Sichuan and Gansu provinces. It was China’s deadliest quake since the Tangshan earthquake in 1976. Official July 2008 statistics report 69,197 confirmed dead, including 68,636 in Sichuan province; 374,176 injured; 18,222 listed as missing and about 4.8 million people left homeless. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2008_Sichuan_earthquake)

One of the hardest hit areas was the county-level city of Mianzhu. Schools and public buildings were reduced to rubble and over 90% of houses were either destroyed or rendered unsafe. The local Protestant church, built in 1923, also suffered extensive damage and could no longer be used. While joining in relief efforts, Christians began to worship under a tarpaulin beside the old church. The pastor, the Rev. Gu Yumei, a young woman in her 20s, hurried back from her graduate studies in Nanjing Union Theological Seminary to encourage and work beside her people, a congregation of about 180, as they joined in relief efforts for those around them. Amazingly, by the time the church was able to relocate to a new temporary church building in January 2009 provided through support from some Hong Kong churches, the number of worshippers had grown to 1000.

The new Mianzhu Church was built with donations from China and overseas. The church, lit by a glass dome overhead, holds about 1600 people.

On May 29, 2011, clergy, pastoral staff, and friends from across China and overseas attended the service. Congratulatory telegrams were received from many others. The new church, the first church to be rebuilt in the quake-hit area, stands as a testament to God’s grace and the unremitting hard work and constant faith of every clergy and church worker, every brother and sister of the Mianzhu congregation.
(Xinhua) China’s religious community on Friday rejected a U.S. commission report accusing China of religious freedom violations, saying its “finger-pointing” practice and “irresponsible remarks” are not in conformity with a religious spirit.

The section with regard to China included in the report is “strongly subjective, full of prejudices, and not true to reality”, according to a written consensus released after a joint meeting of the secretary-generals from China’s five major religious groups—Buddhists, Taoists, Islam, Catholics and Protestants.

In an annual report on religious freedom released on April 28, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, an independent, bipartisan U.S. federal government commission, attacked China, saying it found violations of religious freedom in the country.

“What has been described about China in the report is entirely different from what we have observed and experienced,” the consensus said.

“Members of the U.S. commission had exchanges with us previously. However, the views in the report are totally different from what they said to us face-to-face in China.”

“The practice of saying one thing to a man’s face and another behind his back is perplexing,” it noted.

“China is a country under the rule of law and its citizens fully enjoy the freedom of religious beliefs. The development of various religions in China is now better than ever,” it said.

“Religious people in China have not been suppressed nor been restricted from normal religious activities,” it added.

Religion has a positive image in China and what religious people have done has been recognized and widely respected, according to the consensus.

However, a handful of organizations and individuals, under the guise of religions, have committed crimes, disrupted social order, and undermined ethnic unity, in their attempt to split the motherland and threaten state security, it added.

“Evil cults that are against society and humanity are a desecration to religion. Separatist activities under the disguise of religions have nothing to do with religious freedom,” it said.

The Chinese government has dealt with evil cults and cracked down on separatist forces according to law, and such actions are in line with the aspiration of the Chinese religious community, it read.

“We are willing to conduct further exchanges on issues of common concern with people from the religious community in the United States on the basis of equality, friendship and mutual respect,” the consensus added.


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sacred music. In 2003 the CCC/TSPM published a two-volume collection of his compositions with a foreword by Prof. Ma.

Many prominent church musicians present, including Prof. Chen and Rev. Shi, as well as Rev. Dr. Cao Shengjie, past president of the China Christian Council (2002-2008), contributed work to The New Hymnal 赞美诗 (新编) published by the CCC/TSPM in 1983 and to the New Hymnal Supplement 赞美诗 (新编) published in 2010. (See the June 2010 issue of ANS for an article by Rev. Dr. Cao on her experiences as senior editor of the Supplement.)

Participants came away from the symposium with a deeper understanding of the challenges ahead for Chinese church music. At the same time, they were inspired by what they heard and invigorated for the task of bringing sacred music composition to a new stage.

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