

The China Christian Council and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.): Towards a Common Understanding of Partnership

“See, I am making all things new” (Rev. 21:5)

We, representatives of the China Christian Council and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) met in Louisville March 1922, 2000, to celebrate relationships that we have with one another within the worldwide body of Christ. We prayed and worshiped together, we discussed the work of our churches together, we reviewed our cooperation over the twenty years and we planned for the future. We can say with the apostle Paul that “a wide door for effective work has been opened” for us.

We give thanks to God for the fellowship we share in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. During the course of this consultation we have been able to review the ties that unite us and explore the partnership that we share in building up the body of Christ. We are amazed by the rapid growth and development of the Chinese Church, which testifies to the tremendous work of evangelism being done by Chinese Christians. We realize that we have a long-term commitment to one another. The psalmist writes, “How very good and pleasant it is when sisters and brothers live together in unity”(Psalm 133:1). We live out this unity in our commitment to God’s mission.

Present at our consultation were a diverse group of Presbyterians, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) offices and related organizations: Chinese-Americans, Korean-Americans and Anglo-Americans, the Medical Benevolence Foundation, the Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship, the Outreach Foundation and China Connection. The China Christian Council delegation included representatives from the national staff, the Amity Foundation, Provincial Christian Councils, Chinese theological students in America and institutions of theological education in China.

Representatives of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) have reaffirmed their statements regarding relationships with Christian Communities in China made in 1983 (“Relations Between the Christian Communities in China and the United States”) and 1988 (“The China Program Policy Statement”). We hope to build upon and develop the understanding expressed in those statements.

Representatives of the China Christian Council give thanks for their partnership with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) as part of the church ecumenical.

On the basis of our discussion we say these things together:

(1) Our relationships are based on openness and mutual respect. We embrace the growing cooperation between the China Christian Council and the Amity Foundation and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in a wide range of areas including:

- Bible printing and distribution in China, which has now reached over 23 million copies

- The Amity Teachers Program
- The building up of the Church in our contexts
- Health work and disaster relief through the Amity Foundation;
- Theological education and exchanges
- Leadership development in our churches
- Study tours to promote mutual understanding
- Peacemaking and reconciliation between the Chinese and American peoples
- Cooperation in ecumenical sharing

In the years ahead we will work for more face-to-face contact and improved coordination of projects, making use of new means of electronic communication. We will also endeavor to give the work and witness of China Christian Council and the Amity Foundation more visibility in the U.S.A.

(2) We affirm the Three-Self principle as appropriated and deepened by the Chinese Church. The development of relationships between our churches is based upon self-government, self-support and self-propagation in the Chinese Christian community. We respect the priorities of the Amity Foundation and the China Christian Council, which include:

- Support for Amity projects in education, health work, disaster relief, social service and rural development
- The printing and distribution of the Bible
- Building up rural churches and leadership development
- Theological education and the development of a Chinese theology
- Study opportunities overseas for new church leaders

(3) We commit ourselves and our churches to full consultation and dialogue on all issues and concerns affecting our peoples and churches in the spirit of mutual respect. We need more opportunities for learning from one another and greater sensitivity to the issues that divide our people and our churches. We need to give much more attention to education in our churches so as to overcome the misunderstandings about one another that continue among our peoples.

(4) We endeavor to deepen understanding and friendship between our peoples and churches within the context of a globalized economy and cultural plurality. Globalization promises greater unity for the peoples of the world, but at the same time it threatens the sustainability of the earth and cultural diversity, and it marginalizes and excludes the poor and weak in our societies. We live in an increasingly pluralistic world with different cultural, historical, political and economic understandings. This plurality pushes us to accept and to value the cultural diversity of Christianity in our different contexts.

(5) We celebrate emerging people-to-people exchanges, and look forward to the forging of deeper and most extensive exchanges especially among young people in China and the U.S.A. We must create more opportunities for meetings among our young people and prepare a new generation of leaders who understand each other's language, culture and society.

The details and implementation for the program areas mentioned above will have to be worked out through a careful process of consultation between the staff of our two churches.

As our consultation ends, we realize that we must prepare to risk something new in our encounter with one another. We have not already reached the goal of full partnership, but we press on to make it our own, because Jesus Christ has made us his own in the mission of the worldwide body of Christ.

22 March 2000