

A Statement on the Global South Primates' Visit to China

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October 21-30, 2007 (Beijing, Xi'an, Nanjing & Shanghai)

Introduction

1. At the invitation of the Honourable Minister of the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA) of the People's Republic of China, Mr. Ye Xiaowen, the Primates of the Global South of the Anglican Communion visited the cities of Beijing, Xi'an, Nanjing and Shanghai from 21-30 October 2007. We wish to express to the government and the people of China our deepest appreciation for the very warm welcome and hospitality extended to us. This most historic visit is opportune as it affirms the ties already established through the efforts of the Minister and the esteemed officials of the Religious Affairs Administration. We are grateful to God for giving us this golden opportunity to deepen our mutual understanding and future cooperation.

Visit to China

2. Our visit to China has shown us the indomitable spirit of a 5,000-year civilization. We were fascinated by its colossal achievements, its rich cultural expressions and the values that have emerged from its history. We were also impressed by the splendour of the ancient imperial courts, the skillful handicrafts of the populace, the growth of the economy, the advanced technology and the vision demonstrated in the launching of China's first lunar probe Chang'e-1 on October 25, 2007. We thank God for these manifold gifts and bounteous blessings that He has poured out on China.

3. We saw the historical relics of early Christian missions in the 7th century (Nestorian fathers) and the 16th/17th century (Jesuit missionaries like Matteo Ricci). We rejoice in those opportunities for the sharing of the Christian faith in China, but even more so in legacy of Protestant missions that began two hundred years ago with Robert Morrison's arrival in Canton, China, on September 7, 1807. By the grace of God, the opportunities are even greater today.

4. This visit has enabled us to experience the level of cooperation that prevails between the State and the China Christian Council and the National Committee of the Three Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Churches in China (CCC/TSPM). We wholeheartedly commend the Chinese government for its openness and desire to extend sustainable support to the work of the church here. This was expressed in concrete terms by a very significant amendment to the Constitution of the Communist Party of China during the recent 17th National Party Congress. The amendment mentioned the word "religion" in the Constitution for the first time in the history of modern China, and resolves to strengthen the work for the full implementation of the policy of freedom of religion in China. This is a recognition of the increasing role that the church plays in the nation's economic and social development.(1) This process of opening up to the world, healthily reforming its institutions and re-affirming religious freedom, with the rules and regulations established, would certainly build up a harmonious, prosperous and stable society.

5. Our time here was one of learning from the useful experience of the Chinese church which emerged from a period of trial to that of a new life that is becoming a source of empowerment within Chinese society.

6. During our visit we had the privilege of meeting with Chinese church leaders. We worshipped in vibrant Chinese churches and visited theological institutions. This has given us a deeper insight into church life in China. The Church in China affirms itself as a post-denominational institution with Chinese characteristics. This is an area where the churches in the Global South and the Church in China can work together so that the apostolicity and catholicity of the Church may be upheld. The capacity of the Chinese Church to integrate traditional and contemporary spiritual experiences is impressive. This is possible due to the emphasis laid on training of lay and ordained ministers.

7. We are greatly impressed by the love of the Chinese Church for the Word of God, the respect for its authority on life and doctrine, and the miraculous achievement of the Amity Press in Nanjing, China, in the printing of more than 50 million bibles between 1987 and 2007, of which 16 percent are exported to other countries. The on-going efforts by the Church in China to distribute these bibles throughout this vast country and the many testimonies of the lives transformed by God's Word are awe-inspiring.

Global South Vision

8. We are greatly encouraged by the way the Church in China has established itself as a national institution based on the Three Self Principle (2) as the touchstone of emancipation from the sociopolitical constraints of the past. We appreciate the expressed intent of the church leadership in China to take responsibility for the theological, missional, structural and economic development of the Church. This is also what we seek to accomplish through the work of our Theological Education and Formation and Economic Empowerment tracks.

9. In particular, we commend the work of Theological Education and Formation Taskforce for the draft catechism that they have produced. Not only do we believe the Anglican Catechism in Outline (ACIO) will be a blessing to churches in the Anglican Communion, we also hope it will become an area of on-going theological collaboration with the Church in China.

10. In the same way, we are inspired by the way the nation and people of China have been transformed in the past thirty years through shared hard work and determined commitment to social and economic development. We in the Global South can learn from that and work towards economic self-empowerment, as we seek the welfare of our respective societies.

11. We share the same commitment with the Chinese Church to biblical ethics and morality as well as the call to live out the Gospel in serving the needy while faithfully proclaiming the Word of God. This is truly an authentic expression of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church of Jesus Christ living out its prophetic and priestly role in secular society.

12. Lastly, we thank the Minister for Religious Affairs, Mr. Ye Xiaowen, for accepting our invitation to visit the churches in the various countries represented in the Global South of the Anglican Communion, and we look forward eagerly to this visit. We also acknowledge the desire of the church leaders of the CCC/TSPM to visit us in order to deepen our friendship, mutual understanding and collaboration for the blessing of humanity to the glory of God.

“To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy – to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.” (Jude 24-25)

Most Rev Dr Peter J. Akinola (Nigeria)

Most Rev Dr Bernard Amos Malango (Central Africa)

Most Rev Dr John Chew Hiang Chea (South East Asia)

Most Rev Ian Ernest (Indian Ocean)

Most Rev Dr Mouneer Hanna Anis (Jerusalem and the Middle East)

Most Rev Emmanuel Musaba Kolini (Rwanda)

Most Rev Justice Ofei Akrofi (West Africa)

Most Rev Henry Luke Orombi (Uganda)

Most Rev Dr Fidèle Dirokpa (Congo)

Most Rev Francis K. J. Park (Korea)

Footnotes:

1. The Amendment to the CPC Constitution reads: “The Party strives to fully implement its basic principle for its work related to religious affairs, and rallies religious believers in making contributions to economic and social development.”

2. Self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating