

May 2009

Chinese Church Leadership on First Official Visit to Scandinavia

For the first time an official delegation from the Three Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM)/China Christian Council (CCC) has visited Norway and Denmark. The invitation was made by the Church



of Norway Council on International and Ecumenical Affairs at the initiative of Areopagos and the Norwegian Mission Society (NMS). Fu Xianwei (photo), the chair person of the National Committee of the TSPM, was the leader of the delegation. Some of the topics that were discussed included the possibility of facilitating exchanges for theological students as well as an invitation to support the diaconal activities of the Chinese church. The TSPM has also invited a delegation from the Norwegian Church to a return visit in China in 2010.

(Photo: Amity News Service)

Dr Lam to Step Down as President of Lutheran Theological Seminary (LTS)

Dr Lam Tak Ho will be stepping down from the LTS presidency in June after having served in that position for 15 years. The new president will be Dr Simon Chow, Dean of Studies at LTS. LTS and Areopagos have over the years enjoyed close partnership with Dr Lam and LTS; together we have taken steps towards visualizing the two institutions on the mountain as «one campus». A joint Tao Fong Shan Institute for Spiritual Formation has been created, teachers from LTS are teaching in China on behalf of ISCS, the TFS library has moved to LTS, and Areopagos continues to fund the LTS «Reichelt Chair». Since LTS is a formal partner of Areopagos, Dr Lam has also for several years served as a member of the Areopagos Council.

Edinburgh 2010: A Celebration of Church Diversity

When delegates assemble to mark the centennial of the Edinburgh mission conference, they will constitute a truly international and ecumenical audience. According to a press release from the World Council of Churches (WCC), the spectrum will include Orthodox, Anglican, Lutheran, Reformed, Methodist, Baptist, Seven-Day Adventist, Roman Catholic, Evangelical, Pentecostal and Independent traditions.

- Although relatively small in terms of participants, the 2010 Edinburgh conference will be the most representative of world Christianity today, says Jacques Matthey, the director of the WCC programme on Unity, Mission, Evangelism and Spirituality. According to the press release, the organizers envision the conference as an opportunity for joint celebration of what God has done in the growth of the church over the last 100 years; repentance for all that has gone wrong in mission; and re-commitment to a new shared vision for the present and future of Gods mission in the world.

Important Council Meeting on the Horizon

On June 12-13, the Areopagos Council will hold its annual meeting in Copenhagen. It is the role of the Council to audit the annual report and accounts and to elect the board of Areopagos. This time the formal Council will be supplemented with chairs and co-chairs from the national committees and with the full Board for a joint session with focus on vision and future options for Areopagos. The extraordinary financial situation challenges all Areopagos stakeholders to join hands and minds in prayerful listening, searching for the best possible future. Preparatory hearings will be hosted by the national committees in both Norway and Denmark in the time leading up to the Council meeting

Ambassadors Visit TCG Nordica

TCG Nordica received a delegation of high profile visitors during the first week of May. On their own initiative, the ambassadors of Iceland, Denmark and Finland spent an afternoon getting to know the culture cafe's work, staff and volunteers. They also enquired about the possibility of TCG Nordica making arrangements for visiting Chinese artists in the loft area.

- I have unfortunately not been aware of this place until recently, but I hope we can cooperate in art and culture exchange in the future, said a very enthusiastic ambassador from Iceland, Gunnar Snorri Gunnerson.

(Photo: Du Ning)



Massive Grant for TCG Nordica

It is not only the ambassadors of Denmark, Iceland and Finland that look favourably upon the culture exchange: The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs recently granted NOK 200.000 for program activities at TCG Nordica, earmarked for cultural exchanges involving Norwegian participants. This represents an important and necessary boost as we aim to build upon the foundation, which has been laid over a number of years through the efforts of devoted idealists.

Areopagos is Again Making Money

In the past eight weeks most of the stock markets have risen sharply. Writes THE ECONOMIST: *Different economic indicators from different parts of the world have brightened. China's economy is picking up. Property markets in America and Britain are showing sign of life. Confidence is growing.* We believe the worst recession is behind us and that the economic downturn will bottom this year. However, the financial crisis has not been resolved. As of April 30 Areopagos' return on capital investments was up to about 2 % or NOK 4 million, following an upswing of 5, 2 % or NOK 12, 4 million in April. The prognoses for May are also good. By the end of April Areopagos' total assets under management amounted to NOK 280 million. Quoted shares accounted for 44 %.

Kunming Volunteers More or Less Ready to Sign Off

A year as volunteers at TCG Nordica is soon history for Veyni Arntsen and Rakel Haslund-Gjerrild (photo) as well as for joint Nordica/Mission Alliance volunteer Hanne Line Mathisen. And by all accounts it has proved to be a great year. So great, in fact, that Rakel and Hanne Line are both aiming at extending their stays in China, as



students, freelancers and volunteers. No doubt they will continue to associate with and help out at TCG Nordica whenever they are called for. Veyni, meanwhile, will return to Norway to study. But first she will spend the summer travelling around the world.

- Life opened itself up, and it was filled with courage, art and friendship", says Veyni about her year in China. She cites being able to push the boundaries of her own abilities was one particularly rewarding element to her stay her in Kunming.

New Umbrella Organization in Mekong under Construction

Six members of the Mekong Mission Forum (MMF) are in the process of creating an umbrella for their programs in Cambodia. The members include the Lutheran Church in Singapore, two Lutheran churches in Hong Kong, and mission agencies from Australia, Germany and probably also Denmark (Danmission). This is the first time that the MMF has given birth to such an ambitious joint endeavor. Areopagos is a member of the MMF, which recently had its annual meeting in Phnom Penh. Knud Jørgensen represented Areopagos. Our primary interest is in research and training courses related to Buddhism and in granting scholarships for coming teachers at theological institutions.

Tao Fong Shan Developing Closer Contacts with Finland and Sweden

ISCS and the TFS Christian Center have invited the Finish Evangelical Lutheran Mission (FELM) and the Church of Sweden to become partners. The contact with Church of Sweden goes back to the 1980s when the Church of Sweden for a brief period even funded TFS. The contact with FELM began some five years ago with Finnish scholars teaching at Chinese universities on behalf of ISCS. Presently, FELM has a scholar seconded to ISCS. The invitation to partnership was presented in recent meetings in Hong Kong with Dr Johan Hasselgren from the Church of Sweden and Rev Heikki Hilvo from FELM. Responses are expected in the early fall.

Danish Bishop Visits Tao Fong Shan

The bishop in Haderslev, Niels Henrik Arendt and his wife Birgitte have spent two weeks at TFS to get acquainted with the institution, its work and its context in Hong Kong. The couple spent time with all three units at TFS. Arendt also lectured at LTS and preached in Christ Temple. The stay was a scholarship from Areopagos to strengthen the ties between the Church of Denmark and Areopagos/TFS.

Alternative Summer Meeting in Denmark

As many of you would know, the traditional Areopagos summer meeting, which was scheduled for Denmark this year, has been cancelled. However, the East-Asia group in Denmark, led by Carl-Vilhelm Fogh-Hansen, has announced that they will arrange an alternative meeting point for Areopagos member, to be held on Saturday 29 August. The author Else Marie Kjerkegaard has been invited to share perspectives from her spiritual journey towards faith in Christ, a journey which has been characterized by an ongoing conversation between East and West, Buddha and Christ.