

June 14, 2019

Dear Moderator Susan Durber,

Dear Director Odair Mateus,

Dear Distinguished guests

First of all, I would like to extend the most sincere welcome to all of you for coming from afar. This is the third time that China Christian Council is hosting a WCC meeting in China. The first one was CCIA meeting in 2012 and the second was the Executive Committee meeting in 2016. We feel greatly honored for having such an opportunity. In the past a few months, our colleagues have been working closely with the staff of Faith & Order Commission to prepare for today's meeting.

The WCC is the only international church organization that China Christian Council takes part as a member. The involvement of the Church in China in the modern ecumenical movement can be traced back to the first World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh 1910. A few renowned Chinese Christian leaders spoke on the conference as representatives from the Younger Churches with the hope that more trust and space to be provided by the mission partners from western mission boards and one day the Church in China might become the

Church of China. In 1948, delegates from four churches in China attended the first assembly in Amsterdam, witnessing the establishment of the WCC. Dr. T.C. Zhao was elected as one of the chairs of the Assembly. Later due to some historical reasons, the Church in China ceased the relationship with the WCC for several decades. However, the Church in China has always regarded itself as a part of the ecumenical community. In 1980s, our predecessors in China Christian Council started dialogues with the WCC leadership, and eventually in 1991 CCC was granted the membership of the WCC.

It is to our great delight that we have this opportunity of hosting the Faith and Order Commission meeting, not only because of the bond with the WCC for decades, but also because of the belief that the explorations on the nature of the church done by this commission is inspiring and illuminating to our pursuit of the church unity in China. It's also to our expectation that the experience and lessons drawn by the church in China over the decades in the pursuit of unity may supplement the traditions and become blessings to the ecumenical church. Since 1949 after the founding of the People's Republic of China, the church in China started its trial of unity within this social and cultural framework. In 1958, the union worship was started as a very important step towards unity. This year is the 70th anniversary

of the establishment of the People's Republic of China. Basically there are no denominational churches in China, however we respect diverse characteristics of different confessions and liturgies and encourage Christians to bear with one another in love, to make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

(Ephesians 2: 2-3)

The Church in China has achieved outstanding accomplishments in the past forty years since reopening. According to the statistics, there are over 38 million Protestants with an increase of 400,000 every year. There are about 60,000 congregations, 14,000 ordained clergies (including pastors, associate pastors, elders), 22,000 full-time preachers, 200,000 lay leaders. In order to satisfy needs of Christians, China Christian Council has published 84 million copies of Bible. In addition to the Mandarin Bible, the Bible has also been translated into another 13 ethnic minority languages. The media department of CCC&TSPM has as well published a great number of books and journals through various channels. In order to reach more young adults, attempts have been taken to make avail of Internet and social networks.

With the intention to train more qualified ministers, we have set up

22 seminaries across China with a total number of over 3,700 enrolled students. In the past five years, 6,300 students graduated from those seminaries. Besides, local churches have set up training centers and classes of different types.

In recent years, diakonia and charity work has been priority on our agenda. In 2003, the social service department was set up. In the last 5 years, over 27 million RMB Yuan (4 million USD) was allocated for more than 200 social service projects. 260,000 people have benefited from those projects including health care, nursing homes, poverty alleviation, disaster relief, etc..

The Church in China has been faced with multiple challenges despite its fast development. For instance, the research and study on ecclesiology awaits improvement. Nevertheless, in recent years, a good number of young theologians have continuously working in this area and have provided great ideas for the strategic development of the church. At the end of last year, when the 10th National Assembly of Chinese Christians was convened, delegates discussed extensively on the church regulations, in which the understanding of ecclesiology was an important part. We believe that the Faith & Order Commission meeting being held in Nanjing will help us to further

understand the latest research results and trend of the study of ecclesiology, which would be a great inspiration and supplement to improve our study and research in this regard. Contextual theology is one of the major concerns of the church in China. We hope that through ongoing conversations, consultations and practices, we shall be able to have clearer self-articulation of the faith enrooted in Chinese culture. We also wish to have continuous dialogues with ecumenical churches with an open attitude, for dialogues make us recognize the richness of diversity, but also help us to walk together towards the common vision through mutual understanding.

Last but not least, I would like to express the most sincere welcome to you and best wishes to the success of the meeting.