



MINUTE FOR MISSION

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Bringing Good Tidings—Women in Ministry in China

Since the reopening of churches in the 1980s, we have witnessed an unprecedented growth in China's Christian community. Together with this development, women's ministry is flourishing with vigor and vitality. For the past twenty years, women's work in the church can be described as follows:

Growing in number. As more and more believers are added to the church in China, the majority of new members are women.

According to tentative statistics, it is estimated that women constitute 70 percent of church members. In some areas the percentage is even higher.

More women in church vocations. With the increase in the number of women church members there is also an increase in women candidates being recommended by local churches to study in theological seminaries. In 1980, the China Christian Council ordained its first two women pastors. Today there are 378 women in pastoral ministry, representing 24 percent of all pastors in China.

Participation in the church. Women are the backbone of local congregations. They carry out as much as 70 to 75 percent of the ongoing work of the church.



Sunday morning service in Hudong Church, Shanghai.

Getting organized. Meeting in November 1993, the China Christian Council established a Commission on Women's Ministry. This is the first time in the history of the Chinese church to have a national women's organization.

Women as church leaders. With more women in full-time church vocations and even more in lay leadership, there are also more women in important positions on the national, provincial, and local church councils. They take the lead in organizing prayer meetings, women's Bible classes, World Day of Prayer events, and women's choirs. They are not only the participants, but also the prime movers of these organizations.

History is being made in the construction of a Chinese church. Women's place in the church today is unprecedented. We are very proud of this, but even more grateful. However, at the same time we are facing many challenges:

1. We need to develop theology and hermeneutics from women's perspective in the process of constructing Chinese theological thinking.
2. We need to place more women in decision-making positions in the church.

Experiences in the church have taught us that when the church becomes more inclusive—giving both men and women equal space to develop their gifts and potentials—it is in a better position to manifest the richness of Christ. The degree of women's participation in decision-making will be an important signpost of this richness.

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