

Remarks at Chongmenwen Christian Church in Beijing

1989-02-26

Pastor Kan and Pastor Shi and Pastor Yin, thank you, and thank this congregation for your generosity. You have met Barbara, but I want you to meet the Secretary of State of the United States. He and Barbara and I are members of the same church in Houston, Texas, in the United States. Jim Baker here, our Secretary of State.

It is a special pleasure for Barbara and me to return to this special place of worship. We have so many fond memories of our time in Beijing and the warmth of its citizens and the hospitality shown to us; the enduring friendships we made; and, yes, the place in history that those days represented. Perhaps our most quiet and personal memory is about this church. The building is different, but the church itself is the same; the spirit is the same. Our family has always felt that church is the place to seek guidance and seek strength and peace. And when you are away from home, you realize how much that means. This church, in a sense, was our home away from home. It's a little different, though. Today we came up with 20 motorcars in a motorcade, and I used to come to church on my bicycle, my Flying Pigeon. [Laughter] But it doesn't matter how you come to church; the important thing is that the feeling is the same, the feeling of being in the spirit of Jesus Christ. And, yes, our daughter, Dorothy, now the mother of two children, was baptized in this church; and that gives us a special feeling of identity and warmth.

Today the relationship between China and the United States is good. We are launching satellites together. The students of both countries study at each other's great universities. And Chinese and Americans enjoy the cultural treasures of both nations. We compete against each other on the athletic field and in the economic arena, but we compete as friends.

Much is different since Barbara and I journeyed to Beijing so many years ago, but some things have not changed, for example, what this church has represented over the years: that sense of community, family, and faith that binds us together as friends and neighbors. And in this accelerating world, that bond is a precious bond. Sometimes our problems can seem bigger than life itself, intractable and fearsome. But I am convinced that with each other, with our faith in God, we can meet any challenge, and we will.

Thank you for welcoming us back, and God bless each and every one of you. And now Barbara and I would like to make a small presentation to this church that means so much to us. This is a bigger Bible -- [laughter] -- but it comes to you with our heartfelt thanks and our love.

Note: The President spoke at 8:30 a.m. during morning prayer services. In his opening remarks, he referred to the Reverends Kan Xueqing, Shi Zesheng, and Yin Jiceng.