Chinese Protestant leaders visit to headquarters precedes official visit to China next year

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4 Oct 2011, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States...Ansel Oliver/ANN

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The visit of representatives of the China Christian Council and the Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee precedes the visit of the denomination's president to China next year.

Adventist Church President Ted N. C. Wilson and a small delegation from the church's headquarters is scheduled to visit China during March and April to strengthen relations with Adventist believers in China.

Leaders from the council previously visited the Adventist Church's headquarters in July of 2010.

"We are grateful to have contact and visit Adventist believers in China through the official organization, the China Christian Council," Wilson told Chinese officials during a protocol lunch yesterday. He thanked the leaders for helping to facilitate the visit.

The China Christian Council is a post-denominational organization of Protestants in China. There are some 23 million Protestant Christians in China, said Reverend Shen Xuebin, chairman of Shanghai Committee of Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Church.

"Christians are a minority in China. Most people in China are atheists," Shen said.

Adventist believers in China fall under the China Christian Council and are recognized as a special group for their worship services on Saturday. It's estimated that there are some 400,000 Adventist believers in China.

In the past few years, Adventist believers in China have built several large churches in agreement with authorities.

Next year's trip would be Wilson's first visit to China. His predecessor, Jan Paulsen, visited China in 2009.