



# St John's Cathedral 聖公會聖約翰座堂

Anglican Diocese of Hong Kong Island  
Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui

## Message of Hope:

### Friendship – a light that shines in the darkness

10th September 2020

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I'm Will Newman, a Chaplain at St John's Cathedral Hong Kong, here with a fresh message of hope in these difficult and troubling times.

Here in Hong Kong although the number of new infections from the virus has dropped, many restrictions are still in place and only very gradually being relaxed. Tomorrow (11th September 2020) the limit of two people gathering in public will go up to four, and four people may sit together at a table in a restaurant. Our churches are not yet open again for public worship. Schools are still online, and that's stressful for students, teachers and parents. Many people have seen their incomes shrink as the economy contracts. People are still suffering and dying from the virus. And it seems we've almost given up planning ahead, because our plans are always uncertain and provisional; and no-one knows when this will end, or whether there will be worse to come over the winter. Meanwhile the political situation continues to trouble many people – as it does in many other countries too.

What is it that can sustain us through these difficult times? Where is hope to be found? I find hope in meetings with friends, online or in person. One of the consequences of the restrictions and lockdowns for me has been the flourishing of online friendships, reviving friendships with some people I haven't been in close touch with for a while, and finding and creating new friendships.

I've never really thought of this before, but Jesus was good at making friends. Reading the words he spoke to the disciples and to many others he met, recorded in the gospels, you can often almost hear the love and tenderness in his voice, and his desire to make a personal connection that would encourage and strengthen others to face and overcome their troubles.

One story I'm thinking of is the story of the madman who lived among the tombs, self-harming, tearing off his clothes, and screaming when people came near. Until Jesus comes, and says to him 'What's your name?' It's the first thing we ask when we meet someone, isn't it. It's how we start a friendship. This must have been the first time for years that anyone treated the madman as a normal human being, not like a wild beast. And the story ends with the madman no longer mad, but sitting and chatting with Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. In reaching out the hand of friendship Jesus saves his life.

Friendship warms our hearts and soothes our minds. Whatever the troubles of the world around us, friendship is an expression of the human spirit at its best, giving out and receiving in love. It is a light that shines in the darkness.