Let all the world in every corner sing!
Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

Peace be with you!

Hot summer comes. Sunny days and rainy days interweave. A time of seasonal change. A time for counting the endless blessings from our Heavenly Father.

The past few months were a time for welcoming new blood into the family of St John’s Cathedral. Adults, children and babies were baptized, confirmed and received into our faith community in June and July respectively. The second series of ‘Faith Begins’ courses of 2022 resumed from Wednesday 31st August. We pray earnestly for all those who are starting the journey of Christian faithful lives.

The COVID-19 pandemic is still a long-term and inevitable issue for our Cathedral ministries. Many a time I have heard my chaplains asking when we could have tea or coffee after Sunday services. Many a time we struggled in planning our gatherings in which food and beverages were still not an option. We spent time discussing how we could encourage more congregation members to attend face-to-face Holy Communion instead of sitting in front of laptops or TV sets. Amidst all the challenges, we found our YouTube broadcasts attracting people to take part in our online services, from the UK, Canada, the Philippines and other parts of the world.

We are now in the green ordinary season of our liturgical calendar. Things may seem ordinary, but we continue to be confronted with extraordinary problems these days, whether it's safeguarding the well-being and rights of individuals in public venues or escalating political tensions between countries. Yet, each day the grace of God is great enough for us to give thanks to him simply because of our ordinary life in the Cathedral. Every little thing is a gift from the Triune God.

As St Paul says, ‘Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!’ (2 Corinthians 9.15). Let’s always have a thankful heart and give thanks to him in matters small and large.

Lovingly yours,
Dean KK
Let all the world in every corner sing!

Let all the world in every corner sing, My God and King!

Let all the world in every corner sing, My God and King!

By Felix Yeung

Charles Frederick Augustus Sangster arrived in Hong Kong in 1860 and became our first Organist and Choirmaster at the recommendation of the renowned composer and professor of music at Oxford, Sir Frederick Gore Ouseley. In his 35 years of service at St John’s, he did not only oversee the installation of our first pipe organ (built by Bryceson and Son in London), but also produced the compilation of anthems that were probably sung at St John’s, titled _S. John’s Cathedral, Hongkong – Anthem Book_, in 1892. The volume contains the lyrics of 122 anthems, of which some are still in our current repertoire. To name a few, Almighty and everlasting God by Gibbons, O thou that tell’st good tidings to Zion from Handel’s Messiah, and Mendelssohn’s _How lovely are the\ldots_ are the messengers.

After Sangster, subsequent organists were actively involved in the music-making at the diocesan level, as well as in the wider civic circle of Hong Kong. Denman Fuller, third Organist and Choirmaster of St John’s, was commissioned to compose the University Anthem for the opening of the University of Hong Kong, with the lyrics written by the then-Governor, Sir Cecil Clementi. The Cathedral Choir was also invited to perform at the official opening ceremony of the University in March 1912. By the time of our fourth Organist and Choirmaster, Frederick Mason, the Cathedral Choir began to sing at the Remembrance Day ceremony at the Cenotaph. This tradition was kept until before the handover. Lindsay Lafford, our fifth Organist and Choirmaster, also introduced choral communion settings to our Holy Communion services.

In the post-WWII era, Mrs Cecilia Kwok became Organist and Choirmistress in 1954, succeeding Donald Fraser. Under Kwok’s leadership, the Cathedral Choir expanded and divided into the 9am service choir and 11am service choir. A list of services for Holy Week in 1958 gives us a glimpse of the amount of music that was required back then: St Mark Passion on Good Friday, then a Sung Eucharist, Festal Mattins and Festal Evensong on Easter Day, and ‘An Easter Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols’ on Low Sunday! What a musical treat!

This brief account of our musical development over the past 170 years reflects how we strike a balance between ‘parish’ and ‘cathedral’ music. According to English clergyman and music scholar Edmund Fellowes in the preface of his _English Cathedral Music_, ‘…two elaborate types of composition, the “service” and the anthem, which are the outstanding features of cathedral usage in contrast to that of parish churches, which is ordinarily of a simpler and more congregational character.’ Here ‘service music’ refers to the collection of choral settings of the recurring texts in Holy Eucharist (e.g. Agnus Dei), Morning Prayer (e.g. _Te Deum_) and Evening Prayer (e.g. _Magnificat_ and _Nunc Dimittis_). And our current music lists do show a variety of ‘service music’, Stanford’s and Howells’s canticles, often heard at Choral Mattins and Choral Evensong; occasional polyphonic masses by Renaissance masters like Palestrina, Victoria and Byrd on high holy days, with the rare treat of rich orchestral sound filling the church with works like Faure’s _Requiem_ on All Souls’ Day and Igor Stravinsky’s _Mass_ at Midnight Mass. To celebrate our 170th anniversary, we commissioned a congregational communion setting _St John’s Mass_ by local composer Ernest Hui. We also continue to explore anthems from the traditional Anglican repertoire, ranging from Renaissance masters to contemporary composers. Our most recent recording _Faith in the City_ is a good testimony of our rich musical tradition, old and new. And our ‘flagship’ choral services continue to attract myriads of worshippers, in particular our Advent and Christmas services, as well as our dramatic Holy Week liturgies.

As we saw this organic development of our musical style from a ‘parish’ to a more sophisticated ‘cathedral’ setting, music at St John’s does offer a very different worship experience to other parishes in Hong Kong. And perhaps, we are one of the very few places that offer full cathedral music in the Far East. We thank God for his infinite goodness bestowed upon us, especially with this beautiful gift of music. May we, with choirs of angels and with all the heavenly host, proclaim his glory and join their unending song of praise.

An earlier photo of the Cathedral Choir with some familiar faces (front row from left):
- Peter Yue (Cathedral Organist 1991-2020)
- The Most Revd Andrew Chan (Dean 2005-2012, Archbishop of Principe in MSGKH since 2007)
- The Revd Hugh Philpsson (Choir Chaplain 1997-2018)
- Raymond Fu (Choirmaster 1979-2015)
- Kenneth Lee (Assistant Choirmaster 1998-2009)
Polly was baptized and confirmed at St Stephen’s, and started doing voluntary work there. Outside church, she qualified as a professional social worker, which added to the demand for her help. The Vicar of St Stephen’s asked her to provide counselling and pastoral care, which Polly did gladly. But it also led to her undertaking administrative work for the church. ‘I think God was preparing me,’ Polly says.

During the five years she spent working at St Stephen’s, Polly studied at Ming Hua Theological College and was prepared for ordination. As it happened, Ming Hua was seeking an experienced church administrator, and Polly was asked if she would undertake duties there.

Polly’s extensive experience and her willingness to serve led her to Macau, where she was invited to help set up a new church. ‘With God’s mercy and love, I spent three years there. It was exhausting!’ It was time to move on and again Polly asked God, ‘What’s your plan for me?’

The answer was Australia and further study. Polly started work on a Master’s degree in Administrative Leadership at the University of New England in Armidale, New South Wales. While there, she worshipped at the Anglican cathedral in Armidale, St Peter’s. Remembering how she had first been drawn to church, she started inviting her fellow students to join her at services and bible study. ‘The cathedral was very excited to attract international students’, she recalls.

God had further plans for Polly. After completing her Master’s, she was recalled to Macau, to work in a new mission area established by St Paul’s Church. That work was difficult but valuable, so when the call came for her to return to Australia, Polly was hesitant.

St Peter’s Armidale had received an endowment to establish a new ministry, and the Dean invited Polly to become a pastoral worker with the many overseas students at the university. ‘To be honest, I didn’t want to go. I wanted to stay in Macau,’ she says.

But Polly obeyed the call. The two years she was originally invited to spend in her new role turned into twelve and she clearly made a huge success of her outreach to large numbers of students from around 90 different countries. ‘As well as bringing students to church, we wanted to provide practical support. We helped with language tuition, invited students to meals with families in the congregation, proofread their assignments, organised transport, and simply offered friendship to people who were far from home.’

During her time in Armidale, Polly was finally ordained deacon, long after her theological studies at Ming Hua. And this led her indirectly to St John’s, through another of those chances that have characterised her life in the church.

Wanting to spend more time with her nonagenarian mother, Polly returned to Hong Kong in 2020. ‘I wondered if it was time to retire but I knew that God would show me the way.’ Anglicanism is a broad church. Bishop Matthias was also content for Polly to remain in the permanent diaconate, which is how she wants to continue her service to the church. After talking to Dean KK, Polly was welcomed to St John’s as an honorary chaplain on 19th May.

After starting her new ministry by assisting and preaching at the Cantonese and Mandarin services, and helping Fr Amos with the Friday Bible Study, Polly is already undertaking duties in the English services. Retirement isn’t part of God’s plan for her just yet.
St John’s stalwarts Wendy and David Nesbitt have returned to Canada after 43 years in Hong Kong. In Touch caught up with Wendy before they left.

Even after so long, Wendy retains vivid memories of her first night in Hong Kong. She arrived with husband David and their three children, aged between 18 months and five years, on 23rd August 1979, one of the hottest days in a particularly hot summer. They were met at the door of their new home in Deepwater Bay by a smiling helper, whose greeting made the stresses of the long journey from Winnipeg, in deepest Canada, melt away: ‘Oh come in ma’am, you must be tired out, the children’s beds are ready … and here’s a gin and tonic’.

David had fallen in love with Hong Kong on a business trip but Wendy had never before been here before the family moved here. He painted a wonderful picture of Hong Kong and he was absolutely right,’ she says. She settled in very quickly and, a teacher by profession, was soon teaching in a camp for Vietnamese refugees.

The family’s Hong Kong life was interrupted in the early 80s, when a big promotion for David took them back to Canada. Wendy was reluctant to return home so soon. ‘I went kicking and screaming,’ as she puts it.

It wasn’t long, however, before David was offered another position in Hong Kong, and the family’s life here began in earnest. Wendy started teaching again – she now has a successful tutoring business and still gives piano lessons. Wendy started teaching again – she now has a successful tutoring business and still gives piano lessons.

Their eldest child, Laurie, a very lively and popular member of the St John’s family, sadly contracted viral encephalitis when she was just 15 months old. She pulled through – Wendy touchingly refers to Laurie as ‘our miracle kid’ – but was left with special educational needs.

The ESF was able to meet those needs for a long time, when Laurie was a student at Bradbury School and then King George V. Wendy is especially grateful for the care and support provided by Bob Brown, Bradbury’s first principal. But when the time came for her to leave school, the family had a dilemma.

‘This was nearly 30 years ago. Everything was in Chinese, there was nothing in English,’ Wendy recalls. ‘What to do for Laurie was a huge decision.’ It seemed as though there were no options in Hong Kong, and Wendy and David didn’t want to send their daughter to live with relatives in Canada. So they decided to create their own options.

The then governor, Chris Patten, had mentioned special needs education in a speech and David decided to write to him about the possibility of establishing a training facility for young adults who didn’t speak Chinese. To the Nesbitts’ surprise, the governor replied within a week and invited David to a meeting. By chance, Chris Patten’s daughters were at Island School with the Nesbitt boys, and David was taken aback when the governor’s first words to him were, ‘You’re not Jonathan Nesbitt’s father …?’

Patten asked Ian Strachan, then Director of Social Welfare, to help and he came up with a room in a school on Rose Street near Kai Tak Airport. ‘That room was very grubby,’ Wendy recalls. ‘We really had to scrub it clean.’

That grubby room was to be the start of something big. David and Wendy had found three or four other students to join Laurie, and they hired a teacher. ‘It just kind of grew,’ says Wendy. ‘We were open to anyone who was stuck at home and had issues that kept them away from work or training.’ They took more space, hired more teachers and started grouping the kids and young adults into appropriate classes.

Fast forward a quarter of a century, and the single room near Kai Tak has become the Nesbitt Centre (‘It wasn’t our idea to call it that!’ says Wendy) covering the entire ground floor of the old hospital that is now the Community Complex in Sai Ying Pun High Street. There are 15 staff supporting around 45 students, and the centre is able to provide a highly personalised service to meet individual needs.

Wendy and David soon realised that the people they were trying to help needed not just training but opportunities to put that training into practice. ‘All special needs people have skills,’ insists Wendy. Many of their students are capable of working, so the centre started to organise job placements with a range of employers.

For students not yet ready to work outside, the teachers at the centre started the Craftables programme, where trainees make coasters, trays and candles. These craft items are sold at pop-up shops and the students receive the proceeds from sales. Social Welfare provided two flats in Chai Wan that are now used as a day centre for Nest trainees. The centre has also established a bakery in Sheung Wan, to supply cakes and pastries for all three cafes. And, of course, provide excellent employment opportunities for the students.

Wendy is very modest when she looks back at all that has been achieved. ‘We’ve been very fortunate,’ she says. ‘Never in a million years did I expect this to happen.’

It has happened and it’s made an incredible difference to the lives of many in Hong Kong. Now Wendy and David are ready to move on. Their sons are married with their own families – James is in Singapore and Jonathan in Tokyo – and by the time this issue of In Touch is published, Wendy, David and Laurie should be starting a new chapter in Vancouver.

‘Winnipeg’s in a wonderful part of the country,’ says Wendy, ‘and we love going to our summer cottage on the lake. But after so long in Hong Kong, the winters are just too cold.’ So Vancouver it is. Inevitably, there are some misgivings. ‘I’m going to miss my wonderful helper,’ Wendy says. ‘After 43 years, I’ll have to start cooking again!’

By Andrew Ashley

Wendy singing as a member of the Cathedral Choir at the Blessing Hong Kong Service on 30th June 2019.
Since his retirement in January 2021, life seems to be busier than ever for Archbishop Emeritus Dr Paul Kwong.

After passing the spiritual baton to Archbishop Andrew Chan at the start of last year, he has taken up the post of Interim Principal at Ming Hua Theological College following the retirement of Professor Gareth Jones, who will remain a member of the faculty and will advise Archbishop Andrew on theological education.

The Most Reverend Paul Kwong, a fourth-generation Anglican, who was elected archbishop by the Electoral College of the Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui in February 2007 and re-elected in June 2013, is relishing this fresh opportunity in academia.

‘My case shows it is never too late to start new things!’ the Most Reverend Paul Kwong says.

As Interim Principal, he plans to share his passion for promoting, both overseas and locally, the high-quality academic programmes on offer at Ming Hua.

‘We have several excellent academic offerings, and despite the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, our Global Classroom platform allows many students to study online while oversees. Some of our faculty are also based in other countries and regions, a situation that brings an international feel to the college,’ he says.

At the same time, the Most Reverend Paul Kwong wishes to reach out to other theological colleges in Hong Kong and establish stronger partnerships. ‘We can learn from each other and gain from each other’s strengths. No theological college can ever provide every aspect of training needed for spiritual and intellectual growth, but together we can offer a much more enriched education,’ he adds.

Of course, the Most Reverend Paul Kwong is no stranger to Ming Hua: he has taught classes in the past and has served as college chaplain and chair of school council.

‘I am humbled and very grateful to have another opportunity to be a part of Ming Hua Theological College and its excellent students, faculty and staff,’ he says.

‘The search is underway for a Principal and so in the meantime, I am looking forward to helping Ming Hua develop theological education in Hong Kong and serving God and the Church through my new role,’ he says.

Moreover, in addition to the accredited bachelor’s, postgraduate and doctoral programmes, he is keen to establish more diploma-level courses for a more rounded curriculum.

‘All Christians are called to worship and serve God regardless of where they come from or who they are. My aim is to encourage Christians to study and train in areas such as Biblical languages, liturgy, pastoral education, and so forth. All of these areas will better equip them for their spiritual and social life, and help them gain a deeper understanding of their faith,’ he adds.

After all, the study of theology is an essential part of the Christian life, says our former Archbishop. ‘Ming Hua courses are aimed at both lay people, as part of the general idea of continuing education, and also those seeking a vocational route towards ordination,’ he adds.
The project consisted of a competition that featured two rounds. In the first round, up to forty individuals and pairs of entrants submitted a two-minute video on ‘The Risks of Cannabis Use’. The second round was a speaking contest; shortlisted contestants were invited to give a five to seven-minute speech in front of a live audience on the topic of ‘Why Risk your Fullest Potential’.

With the grace of God, the final round of the contest was held successfully at the Harold Smyth Room at St John’s Cathedral on 9th July, despite a postponement due to the hoisting of typhoon signal No. 8. Seventeen individuals making up thirteen teams enrolled in the final round. In the presence of an audience consisting of judges, parents, staff of St John’s Cathedral Life Enrichment Centre (LEC) and fellow contestants, each team delivered moving speeches that illuminated the importance of abstaining from substance abuse. The selection of the winning teams was not an easy feat, but ultimately three teams were selected by a panel of judges to win the final awards of prevention awareness.

Contestants coming from different schools were also given a chance to connect with the wider community. Although the opportunities for interaction with one another were limited, listening to other’s speeches, and witnessing the different modes of delivery enabled students to recognise one another’s strengths and to learn from them.

The intention was to use this visual aid to garner attention and promote comprehension, especially among members of the audience who were new to the concept.

Saffiya, first runner-up, is proud of her speaking skills. She has a lovely voice and projected it powerfully, and the ability to enunciate clearly, pronounce complicated scientific terminology, as well as deliver a speech with confidence. Saffiya remarked that these were not all innate qualities. Instead, they were products of weeks of repeated practice and fine-tuning. Her hard work certainly paid off. She delivered a speech beyond the competency of somebody her age. As well, she felt that the contest might serve as another opportunity to bolster her growing sense of confidence.

Brandon and Ashton thought it was a pity that they didn’t have many opportunities to meet each other in the past year because of the suspension of school. The contest thus served as a welcome opportunity to meet up and cultivate their friendship. Their winning performance provided further evidence of their excellent synergy. That said, both of them were comparatively more confident about their performance in the first round of the competition. They remarked on how much fun they had preparing for and editing the video submission. This was one of the more unexpected aspects of the competition - who would have imagined a public speaking engagement could be enhanced by video-editing skills? COVID-19 may have complicated the logistics of some events, but it also promoted an exploration of creative possibilities, through which an individual’s potential is unleashed to a greater extent.

Connecting to the family and community

Each contestant was invited to bring one family member to the day of the contest. Parents listened with pride to their children’s speeches. Many also filmed these performances. To them, it was a blessing to be invited to come, to support their children, recognise their hard work, and witness how much they had matured along the way. To speak with such charisma on the stage was a touching moment to behold for many parents. This was not just a special day for the winners, but also their parents. Saffiya’s dad explained that he had only ever seen her practice at home, and it was usually Saffiya’s mother who would accompany her to similar public events. This was the first time he had sat and watched his daughter. With a newfound appreciation of his daughter’s speaking ability, he was beyond proud.

When asked what other topics the winners might be interested in sharing in the future, they suggested social issues like climate change, and personal issues like mental well-being. Perhaps a seed was sown through the preparation leading up to the TEENs Talk Speaking Contest, in that contestants have now become more aware of the world they live in and the importance of preserving their well-being. This ties in beautifully with St John’s Cathedral Life Enrichment Centre’s vision of inspiring youths to recognise their potential and pursue a personally meaningful life.
Mission For Migrant Workers

Our Service, Our Promise: Celebrating Solidarity & Care amidst and beyond the Pandemic

By Cynthia Abdon-Tellez

What started out as the Mission for Filipino Migrant Workers (MFMW) in 1980 was embraced by St John’s Cathedral under the Deanship of Stephen Sidebotham, who also served as its first Board chairperson. For this, we at the MFMW are forever grateful for his generosity and strong commitment to reach out and support those on the margins of Hong Kong society. We celebrate his life and ministry.

This year, on 5th June, we, now called the Mission for Migrant Workers (MFMW), celebrated our 41 years of working alongside migrant workers and the community of Hong Kong. To celebrate, we organised an online celebration featuring our partners and supporters with their messages, cultural performances from migrants and support groups, as well as highlights of the activities we conducted in the past year.

Also in the pipeline of the anniversary celebration are the following activities: a Charity Raffles Draw in July; a Charity Walk in November; ‘Happy Homes’ recognition ceremony (wherein migrant domestic workers, or MDWs, nominate their employers for recognition because the workers feel they treated well and made them feel being part of the family); and our Skills and Personal Wellbeing trainings. We all hope to hold them successfully amidst the challenges brought forth by the COVID-19 situation in Hong Kong.

Committing, continuing our service
For many years, the MFMW has assisted migrant domestic workers in need through a variety of services: case and legal guidance, shelter and food assistance, education and training, and outreach services all over Hong Kong. The MFMW also works on social advocacy, raising awareness and encouraging partnership and cooperation among the migrant community and Hong Kong society. This clearly was manifested through various initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic, which exposed the continuing marginalisation of MDWs.

During the worst period of the pandemic the MFMW came together with its partners, donors, and volunteers to assist and support migrant workers. Together with our partners, such as the Bethune House Migrant Women’s Refuge (BHH), the Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants (APMM), and the Asian Migrants Coordinating Body (AMCB), the MFMW was able to set up a COVID-19 Emergency Relief Response.

From 20th February to 17th April this year, with the generous donations of funds, food, medicine, vitamins, masks, hand sanitisers and RAT tests, and with the help of many volunteers, we accomplished the following:

• delivered over 4,000 Care Packs containing food, antigen test kits, medicine, Vitamin C, masks, etc., primarily to MDWs and later on to other migrants and people in need;
• referred almost a hundred MDWs to government-run and civil society-run emergency temporary shelters for isolation after testing positive for COVID-19. We did this as a pre-step before the MDWs’ cases could be passed on to the proper health authorities;
• provided assistance to over 5,300 MDWs who either: (i) tested positive for COVID-19 while in between jobs; (ii) needed some form of emergency assistance while pursuing labour or immigration cases; or (iii) were at the airport before their flights, or got stranded when their flights were cancelled;
• directly assisted almost 50 MDWs whose contracts were terminated after testing positive for COVID-19.

We also continued coordinating with the MDW Coalition composed of different NGOs concerned with migrants, and the Coalition of Service Providers for Ethnic Minorities that provide direct welfare services to them. We at the MFMW wish to thank our partners, donors, and volunteers for all the kind efforts in gathering donations of any kind, fundraising for us, and being involved in delivering the service. The mobilisation of donors and volunteers has been an inspiring sight to see. We hope together and we continue to cope together. The solidarity and care during this pandemic makes us in the MFMW optimistic for the future. We hope all our efforts during the past 41 years will translate to more recognition and respect towards the MDW community. We also hope that our experience during this pandemic will translate into an ever-widening partnership in mission in working together alongside migrant workers between the MFMW and the community of Hong Kong.

Together we can make an impact. Together we can make a change for the better.

On 5th June 2022, the Mission For Migrant Workers (MFMW) celebrated its 41st anniversary, via an online event. The MFMW community came together to look back on the successes of yesterday and the challenges of today. As an outreach post of St John’s Cathedral, the MFMW provides services to migrants anytime, anywhere. This joyous event was taken as an opportunity to both highlight the work of the MFMW and to draw attention to the needs of the migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong.

With various speakers, cultural performances and celebratory messages, the afternoon went by quickly. After an opening video and some amazing music from Filipino band Himigconcert, the Revd Canon Dwight dela Torre, chaplain for the Mission for Migrant Workers, held an opening prayer to start off the event.

For the opening speech the general manager of the MFMW, Cynthia Abdon-Tellez, took the virtual floor. She reflected on the past year and the challenges the COVID-19 pandemic imposed on the migrant community and the MFMW, especially during the fifth wave. She also expressed gratitude for all the supporters of the MFMW.

During the event, multiple beneficiaries talked about how the MFMW has been able to help them during the fifth wave of COVID-19, in case guidance and with training sessions. The MFMW also celebrated its 41st anniversary for you and for me, and the entire human race.'
More than Retreat

Collection of thoughts from participants of Cursillo HK4 Weekend

Thirty-two members from St John’s Cathedral and other HKSKH parishes spent the first weekend in June on Cheung Chau Island together. It was the fourth Cursillo Weekend Programme held in Hong Kong. Since 2018 when a group of Anglicans from Australia kick-started the Cursillo movement in our city, more than 50 Christians, lay and ordained, have been gifted to live and spread the gospel. Let’s listen to the sharing of their experience at HK4.

Sharon Law: ‘It was my second time to join Cursillo and my honour to be a Proctor to serve in HK4. It was a very fruitful 4-day trip, since we brainstormed many different topics and shared ideas with each other. We had a chance to participate in all discussions. These sessions were such a good time to reflect on our relationship with God and experience his love.

Besides, we met different people on the trip and enjoyed our fellowship through different activities. We worshipped together, exercised together and had fun together.

This was absolutely a wonderful experience and a special retreat. So, please don’t miss the opportunity next time! Join us if you can. De Colores.’

Jacky Yiu: ‘I was blessed to receive the invitation by Fanny to join Cursillo HK4 during the weekend 2nd-5th June. At first, I had some vague ideas of what the programme was, and thought it would be some sort of retreat camp. But it turned out to be more than that.

It was a great opportunity to get together as a community, especially since the pandemic began, when face-to-face interaction was hugely affected. As introduced by Will, the whole Cursillo weekend was about basic Christian living: praying, worshipping, learning and living together as a community of Christ. We did not know everyone at the beginning, but gradually as we interacted, we understood each other better.

We were also honoured to have Bishop Matthias and other “Cursillistas” (those who participated in previous Cursillo weekends) with us at the closing service. Towards the end of the service, we were all presented with a cross when the Bishop said, “Christ is counting on you”. What a huge burden! I was glad that it did not end there, because we all in turn responded, “And I on him.” This was a timely reminder to all of us: are we only counting on ourselves, or do we share our burden with Christ, who has conquered the world?’

Wendy Lee: ‘I felt so blessed to be able to participate in Cursillo HK4. I would like to thank the organising team for making this happen. I was glad that I could have in-depth talks with my brothers and sisters in the Cursillo. The Cursillo also gave me the opportunity to reflect on the blessings of God in my spiritual life. I pray that the Cursillo will continue to bless more brothers and sisters in future.’

Diana King: ‘I attended the fourth HK Cursillo in answer to God’s call to serve. During the three-day weekend, I felt the presence of God throughout our talks, discussions, singing and worship. The Cursillo experience inspired me to move my faith from the head to the heart, as it encouraged a greater commitment to Christ and the living out of faith in everyday life. With a thankful heart I wish to continue my spiritual journey, ready to share the light of Christ with those around me.’

Polly Wong: ‘I was very much overwhelmed by working together as a community for Cursillo HK4. Though we were exhausted from the tight schedule over a long weekend in Cheung Chau, I saw our team members and participants melding together after experiencing the Holy Spirit’s works, through singing, sharing and discussing and caring.

I was so delighted to be given a chance to share my favourite topic on “Leadership: Owning the Vision”. I was not only given opportunity to speak, but also to lead a reflection: The most important thing to emphasise is that Christian leaders do not necessarily have outstanding natural leadership qualities. A leader is not necessarily the person “up front”, in the limelight. We just need to let God lead.’

TY Wong: ‘What is Cursillo? I have to be away for three days, sharing with friends or strangers. How will I cope? I was asked thrice before I said “yes”. When I arrived at the Salesian Retreat House, I immediately embraced its quiet and secluded surroundings. I appreciated the serenity and peaceful ambience in the chapel, where I could share a private moment with God. I immersed myself in group discussions, shared the journey of faith and the challenges we face. It was the start of a budding friendship and fellowship. Take a step forward and you may be surprised by the grace and the blessing that awaits you.’

Steve Hackman: ‘The experience of the HK4 Cursillo Weekend was a wonderful opportunity to reflect on my Christian faith and how it relates, not only to myself, but to others around me. By engaging with Cursillo as a pilgrimage I was able to better understand that my walk with God is a journey and that I’m not alone. The weekend was also a wonderful time of meeting new friends as we explored how to express our Christian faith in today’s world.’
A Look Back in Time

The year 1952 marks the Platinum Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II’s reign. She ascended the throne following the death of her father, George VI, on 6th February. In Touch travels back in time thanks to past copies of the St John’s Review to gain a sense of St John’s seventy years ago.

January
The year started dolefully. The Revd Alaric Rose (1909–1985), Dean at St John’s from 1941 to 1952, began his regular column with a downbeat message. ‘We are apt sometimes to get into the doldrums here in Hong Kong’, he wrote. ‘It would be a superficial reading of the situation to suppose that the moving sentiments are merely nationalistic or conventional. In the clashes between Christianity and nationalism, nationalism has shown itself to be the stronger religion,’ thundered the writer, initialed P.R.D.

The sense of gloom was not helped by fiery articles such as the one titled ‘The Agony of a Post-Christian World’, which talked about nationalism and communism as a new secular religion. ‘In the clashes between Christianity and nationalism, nationalism has shown itself to be the stronger religion,’ thundered the writer, initialed P.R.D.

March
This downcast mood continued into March following the death of George VI. There are few specific mentions of the new queen but several sombre references to the late king’s funeral.

‘Overshadowing all our services since the night of the solemn news of the death of the late King George VI was the Memorial Service’ begins the March issue. The correspondent, who had clearly irritated Dean Rose, insisted that birth control was ‘utterly contrary to the will of God and without doubt grievously sinful’, a point of theology that the Dean swiftly dismisses.

In such a jittery atmosphere perhaps it is not surprising that each issue of the Review tended to carry advertisements for barbiturates, i.e. sedatives, distributed by the British chemical firm Imperial Chemical (Pharmaceutical) Limited.

April
No doubt the downcast mood was given a hefty stir every month in the Review when it was announced who was leaving, for good, and who was going on leave, temporarily. Heartfelt goodbyes were penned for the likes of Miss Esther Gray who was retiring back to Oxford after a career in the Education Department. An alto in the St John’s choir before and after the war, she was noted for her ‘cheerful self’ during internment.

Also in April, Dean Rose was getting very hot under his dog-collar about a letter from a Roman Catholic priest published in the South China Morning Post criticising the Hong Kong Family Planning Association. The correspondent, who had clearly irritated Dean Rose, insisted that birth control was ‘utterly contrary to the will of God and without doubt grievously sinful’, a point of theology that the Dean swiftly dismisses.

May
The big news was that Dean Rose was resigning after ‘much reflection and deliberation’ and would be taking up a position at ‘the University’. He felt it was time for ‘new blood’, noting that after fourteen years at the Cathedral, he might have grown ‘stale’. He said the St John’s community must have confidence in God that a new Dean would be found soon.

Meanwhile, the Revd M. D. Goulder (1927–2010), one of the chaplains at the Cathedral, and later a Biblical scholar of renown at the University of Birmingham, was relinquishing the editor’s position of the Review and Mr M. B. Hanley of No. 4, Shouson Hill would be taking over. Mr Hanley seized this opportunity to proclaim the purpose of the publication, that it was essentially ‘an extension of the pulpit’, which is why the publication was filled with sermons and sermonising, which Mr Hanley felt was appropriate in these days of ‘intense ideological warfare’.

December
Fortunately for all, 1952 perked up by the end of the year when a new Dean was selected: Revd Frederick Stephen Temple (1916–2000). According to Bishop R.O. Hall, the new Dean was a ‘typical Anglican priest’, the son of an army officer, schooled at Rugby and Balliol, followed by ‘war services’ and then theology at Westcott House, Cambridge. Apparently, Revd Temple had a soft spot for canary yellow jumpers and would fill a room with his ‘deep and infectious laugh’, which must have been very welcome in gloomy 1952. However, he and his wife, Joan, were to suffer a great tragedy during their Hong Kong days, but that’s a story for another day.

By Michael Gibb

The Revd D. M. Gouldier (far left) stands outside the Cathedral with the servers.

The Revd Frederick Stephen Temple was selected as Dean of St John’s in 1952.
The pause that transforms: why the Sabbath matters

By John Tanner

Ever since I learned the Ten Commandments in Sunday School, I’ve been aware of the concept of the Sabbath. But I’ve never really given the Sabbath much thought until recently.

To me (and I dare say to most Christians), the Sabbath basically means not having to go to work on Sundays. And yet so many of us do work on Sundays, whether it’s at our place of employment or at home, either catching up on work we’re behind in, or getting a head start on the work we need to do in the coming week. Or maybe we just need the extra money.

But when we think about it, the Sabbath must be important – otherwise, why would God specifically include it in his list of ten commandments?

So perhaps it’s wise to step back a moment and reflect on just why we are commanded to observe the Sabbath in the first place.

A crucial bridge

A good starting point is the text itself (Exodus 20.8-11):

‘Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. For six days you shall labour and do all your work. But the seventh day you shall labour and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it.’

Notice how this commandment goes out of its way to not only declare the Sabbath holy but also provides fairly specific instructions on how to observe it and to whom it applies. Verse 11 is a call-back to Genesis, which tells us that God spent six days creating the world and then rested on the seventh day.

So, why does God command us to do the same?

Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann proposes an answer in his recent book Sabbath As Resistance: Saying No To The Culture Of Now. The overall theme of the book is that the Sabbath isn’t just honouring the fact that God took a day off after spending six days creating the world. The Sabbath is in fact offering an alternative to economic systems that demands ceaseless work and endless production and consumption.

Brueggemann makes this case by riffing on Patrick Miller’s book The Ten Commandments, which observes that the Fourth Commandment is actually a crucial bridge between the first three commandments and the following six.

Put simply, the first three commandments establish the identity and uniqueness of God, his sovereignty over all other gods and his authority over his people Israel. The last six commandments focus on how God’s people Israel are expected to treat their neighbours.

The Sabbath, Brueggemann writes, proposes an economic system in which Commandments Six through Ten can be obeyed.

The clue is in the First Commandment (Exodus 20.2-3): ‘I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me.’

The specific reference to Egypt and slavery is intentional. Remember that God said this right after he freed the Israelites from 400 years of slavery in Egypt. As slaves, they had to work every day without rest to meet the relentless and never-ending quotas of the Pharaoh. God is reminding Israel not only who He is, but also of the system from which he just delivered them. In that context, the Fourth Commandment is telling the Israelites to reject the Pharaoh’s system.

Brueggemann explains that the reason for this can be found in the remaining commandments – don’t murder, don’t steal, don’t commit adultery, don’t covet, etc. (Exodus 20.12-17). All of these commandments essentially instruct us to treat our neighbours with love and respect – and it’s hard to do that in an economic system that demands never-ending production, consumption and growth, and thrives by exploiting (and encouraging) greed, envy and fear.

God is not a workaholic

For example, a system of endless work induces constant anxiety for everyone. The workers worry about quotas, deadlines and making enough money to put food on the table. The business owners worry about meeting their growth targets and grabbing more market share from rivals in a zero-sum competition with no finish line. Everyone is so anxious about keeping their heads above water in this system that they have no time or bandwidth to focus on their neighbour’s needs, let alone focus on God.

In a system like this, there are no neighbours – there are only competitors and threats. Pick a cliché: it’s dog eat dog, every man for himself, etc.

The Sabbath says ‘no’ to all of this. Even God took a day off after building creation. He didn’t spend the seventh day constantly checking on Creation to make sure it was working properly. God is not an anxious workaholic, and he doesn’t want us to be either.

Tellingly, Jesus makes this very point in Matthew’s gospel – he invites us out of that system of anxiety by telling us not to worry about what we will eat, drink and wear tomorrow (Matthew 6:25-34). God will provide all we need as long as we trust him and follow where he leads us.

Once we do that, then we are able to focus on serving the poor, the sick, the marginalised, the oppressed, and all whom God calls us to help without the distraction of anxiety and stress that comes from living in any exploitative and unjust economic system of endless production and consumption.

Brueggemann writes: ‘Sabbath is an occasion for reimagining all social life away from coercion and competition to compassionate solidarity … Sabbath is not simply the pause that refreshes. It is the pause that transforms.’

Listening to God in the silence

The Sabbath is essentially intended as a circuit-breaker of sorts to ensure that God – and not our job (or lack thereof) – is at the centre of our lives. Just as God spoke to Elijah in the silence following the fire, earthquake and wind, the Sabbath provides a quiet space in our busy work week to help us refocus our attention on God.

The late theologian Eugene Peterson puts it this way: ‘Sabbath is that uncluttered time and space in which we can distance ourselves from our own activities enough to see what God is doing.’

Indeed, Peterson adds, ‘Sabbath is not primarily about us, or how it benefits us; it is about God, and how God forms us.’

In other words, Sabbath is an opportunity to stop what we’re doing, step away from our hectic lives and listen in the resulting silence to what God might have to say, or where God might direct our attention. The Sabbath also reminds us that God should be our central focus all the other six days of the week in whatever we do.

It’s all too easy for our work to consume our lives, especially in a busy and expensive city like Hong Kong. The Sabbath shows us that it doesn’t have to be that way.
### Major Services at St John’s & Daughter Churches

#### St John’s Cathedral
4-8 Garden Road, Central, Hong Kong
Tel: 2523 4157
URL: www.stjohnscathedral.org.hk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>14 SEP</td>
<td>Holy Cross Day</td>
<td>7.30pm</td>
<td>Sung Eucharist</td>
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<tr>
<td>18 SEP</td>
<td>Dedication Festival</td>
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<tr>
<td>09 OCT</td>
<td>Harvest Thanksgiving</td>
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<td>Worship for All</td>
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<td>25 OCT</td>
<td>Anniversary of the Inauguration of the</td>
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<td>Province of HKSKH</td>
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<tr>
<td>30 OCT</td>
<td>All Saints’ Sunday</td>
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<td>02 NOV</td>
<td>All Souls’ Day</td>
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<td>13 NOV</td>
<td>Remembrance Sunday</td>
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<td>5.00pm</td>
<td>Remembrance Service</td>
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<td>20 NOV</td>
<td>Christ the King</td>
<td>9.00am</td>
<td>Sung Eucharist</td>
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<td>5.00pm</td>
<td>Sung Eucharist with Baptism and Confirmation</td>
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#### Discovery Bay Church
SKH Wei Lun Primary School
Lantau
Tel: 2987 4210
URL: www.discoverybaychurch.org.hk

Every Sunday
10.00am Sung Eucharist

#### Emmanuel Church
Bethanie Chapel
139 Pok Fu Lam Road, Pok Fu Lam
Tel: 2523 4157
URL: www.emmanuel.org.hk

Every Sunday
10.15am Sung Eucharist

#### St Stephen’s Chapel
St Stephen’s College
22 Tung Tau Wan Road, Stanley
Tel: 2813 0408
URL: www.ststephen.org.hk

Every Sunday
10.00am Sung Eucharist

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The Cathedral is closely monitoring the pandemic situation. Please visit our websites for the latest updates about service arrangements.
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