

ISSUE 039



INTOUCH

a season of joy and hope

ST JOHN'S CATHEDRAL

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Read Online

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DEAN'S MESSAGE

Dear Friends,

Peace be with you!

As we navigate the changing seasons and the unpredictable weather patterns brought on by global warming, it serves as a reminder of how we must adapt to new realities. November typhoons, once a rarity in Hong Kong, now challenge us to remain resilient and united as a community.

I thank God for the 175th Anniversary celebration of St John's Cathedral on Sunday 15 September. We had a Thanksgiving Service celebrated and preached by Bishop Matthias Der, with Archbishop Andrew Chan giving the final blessing. The service was well attended by numerous congregation members as well as distinguished guests, and we all enjoyed the fantastic sacred music arrangements.

That same evening, we gathered for a Gala Dinner at Maxim's Palace in Hong Kong City Hall, where the sound of cheers filled the air during the joy-filled evening of delicious food and lovely fellowship. I am particularly thankful to Martin Matsui, the chairman of the 175th Anniversary organising committee; Grace Fung, the Head of the Flower Guild; Felix Yeung, our Director of Music; and all the dedicated sisters and brothers in Christ who contributed tirelessly and generously to the celebration activities.

On Saturday 26 October, we successfully hosted the Michaelmas Fair 2024. Despite the challenges posed by Typhoon Signal No. 3 from Trami, our spirit remained unshaken. Thanks to the swift actions of the Michaelmas Fair Committee, led by Patrick Fung, we quickly adapted our plans. I commend our resourceful volunteers who creatively moved their fundraising booths indoors right after the Opening Ceremony, which was honoured by Bishop Matthias and our Guest of Honour, Mrs Lynnette Tiong. Even amidst life's storms, we find that the grace and blessings of God carry us through.

Looking ahead, the Advent season and Christmas celebrations this year will return to the cherished traditions we enjoyed before the pandemic. We pray earnestly that God will bless us in our preparations for these important services celebrating the nativity of our Saviour and the various liturgies leading up to this major celebration. Dear readers, all of you are cordially invited to join us for ALL these services and liturgies starting from the First Sunday of Advent.

The theme of the Cathedral for the year 2025 will be 'Hospitality and a Welcoming Church'. Let's prepare ourselves during the Advent season to welcome all the new friends and visitors we will have in the upcoming year and beyond.

May God protect us and be with us even during typhoons in this rare season.

Love from Dean KK



各位朋友：

主內平安！

隨著氣候變化和全球暖化帶來的不穩定天氣，我們越來越深切感受到需要適應不斷轉變的環境。以往十一月的颱風在香港極為罕見，如今卻成為提醒我們的警鐘——作為一個社區，我們必須保持韌性並共同面對挑戰。

感謝上帝，讓我們得以於9月15日主日慶祝聖約翰座堂175周年紀念。當天，我們舉行了莊嚴的感恩崇拜，由謝子和主教主禮及講道，並由陳譚明大主教祝福。許多主內兄姊及貴賓均前來參加崇拜，一同享受精心安排的聖樂，投入這個充滿感恩和喜樂的時刻。

同一天晚上，我們在香港大會堂的美心皇宮舉行了一場盛大的晚宴。整個晚上洋溢著歡聲笑語，大家在享用美味佳餚的同時，也彼此交流、分享喜悅。我特別感謝175周年籌備委員會主席松本馨弟兄、插花組負責人馮淑恩姊妹、音樂總監楊欣諾弟兄，以及所有為這次慶祝活動付出努力和慷慨奉獻的弟兄姊妹。

接著，在10月26日（星期六），我們成功舉辦了2024年的聖約翰座堂賣物會。儘管當天受到三號颱風信號的影響，大家的精神依然堅定。在馮錫湧主席的帶領下，賣物會委員會迅速採取應對措施並調整計劃。我特別讚揚所有靈活應變的義工，他們在開幕禮後快速地將募款攤位轉移到室內，確保活動順利進行。當天開幕禮由謝子和主教和主禮嘉賓張何麗梅女士主持。即使面對生活中的風暴，我們依然感受到上帝的恩典與祝福，祂始終陪伴我們渡過難關。

今年的將臨期和聖誕期崇拜將回歸疫情前我們所珍視的傳統。我們誠心祈求上帝的祝福，幫助我們為這些慶祝救主誕生的重要崇拜和禮儀做好準備。親愛的讀者們，我誠邀您參與將臨期的所有崇拜和活動，讓我們一同分享主的愛與喜樂。

展望2025年，聖約翰座堂將以「好客迎主內」作主題。讓我們在將臨期中用心準備，迎接新的一年，以及未來將加入我們這個大家庭的新成員。

願上帝在這個特別的季節中保護我們，與我們同在。即使颱風來襲，祂的恩典也永不離棄我們。

座堂主任牧師
陳國強謹啟



A Celebration of Faith

HONOURING FR DES ON HIS GOLDEN JUBILEE

Text & Photos by /
NATASHA NGAN

On the night of Monday 2 December, we gathered at St John's Cathedral to honour Fr Des's Golden Jubilee, a remarkable milestone celebrating 50 years of dedicated service in the priesthood. The evening was filled with joy, reflection, and gratitude, as we recognised a life committed to God and the community.

Fr Des's journey into the priesthood began at a young age in Perth, Western Australia. Inspired by a priest in his local parish, he pursued his faith passionately despite not growing up in a church-going family. His early interests in sports showcased his competitive spirit, but the call to ministry always beckoned. After initially pursuing a career as a watchmaker, he remained devoted to social ministry, particularly during the turbulent Vietnam War, where he bravely refused conscription, standing firm in his convictions.

Throughout his 50 years of ministry, Fr Des has served in diverse settings—from bustling city parishes to rural congregations—always adapting and thriving. He has a unique ability to connect with people



from all walks of life, whether mingling with workers in local pubs or engaging with diplomats in consulates. His enthusiasm for helping others has left an indelible mark on the communities he has touched.

During the celebration, Bishop Matthias Der highlighted Fr Des's genuine love for people, noting how he uses social occasions not just for enjoyment but as opportunities for evangelism and pastoral care. His ability to listen and share God's love reflects the qualities of a good shepherd, always seeking to guide others towards faith. Bishop Matthias also emphasised the significance of Fr Des's enthusiasm, remarking, 'Not every priest can celebrate 50 years of priesthood, and it is a testament to the ministry that you have provided among us'.





Fr Des reflected on his experiences with humility and a lighthearted spirit. 'Fifty years ago, if you had told me I would be in Hong Kong making a speech like this, I would have responded, "I don't know!"' he remarked. He candidly acknowledged the challenges of ministry, noting, 'You have good parishes, you have bad parishes, and sadly you have grumpy people that you've got to deal with'. Yet, he emphasised that the greatest joys have come from serving the people of God and fostering community.

One memorable story he recounted involved a difficult time in Discovery Bay when the community was facing job losses due to the new airport's construction. 'I looked through the books in the study and saw a script for a musical called *The Witness*', he explained. This inspired a collaboration with various congregations to produce the musical, bringing the community together and providing a tool for evangelism.

Fr Des's ministry has not only been about joyful moments but also about walking alongside people in their grief. He reflected on the privilege of celebrating funerals and supporting families during their most challenging times. 'It's the greatest job in the world', he said, expressing his deep appreciation for the calling he has embraced.

Despite facing personal health challenges in recent years, Fr Des has maintained an unwavering faith and a joyful spirit. His resilience serves as a testament to his character, inspiring those around him. As Bishop Matthias stated on that memorable night, 'God has been faithful to you, and you have been faithful to God'.

The warmth of fellowship filled the room during the celebration. Fr Des's gift for building connections extends well beyond the church; he has nurtured relationships with various communities, including diplomats and social enterprises, showcasing his deep commitment to service. By the evening's end, we expressed our heartfelt gratitude for Fr Des's unwavering dedication over the past 50 years. His ministry has not only enriched countless lives but has also strengthened the very fabric of our community.

Fr Des, thank you for your exemplary service, infectious joy, and enduring faith. May you continue to inspire others in the years to come, and may your journey ahead be filled with good health and youthful exuberance. Here's to many more years of ministry and the joy that comes from serving God and his people.

Michaelmas Fair 2024

The Michaelmas Fair 2024 has once again been a resounding success! Despite some outdoor activities being suspended due to inclement weather, the spirit of the day remained vibrant as community members came together to celebrate.

Numerous parishioners and visitors enjoyed a variety of indoor attractions, including great bargains at various stalls, crafts, and delicious food that showcased local delights. The atmosphere was filled with laughter, highlighting the strong sense of community that defines our gatherings. The day was concluded with an exciting raffle draw, and we would like to congratulate all the winners! A heartfelt thank you goes to all our sponsors for their generous support.

We would also like to thank all the volunteers and participants who contributed their time and effort to make this event possible. Your dedication ensured that everyone had a wonderful experience, regardless of the weather. As we look back on the day, it is clear that the Michaelmas Fair continues to be a cherished occasion for our community, bringing people together in joy and celebration. We look forward to next year's fair, where we hope for even more sunshine and fun!





TEENS SMART

Healthy Teens Project 2024



Skill-training sessions for mentors and mentees



Job internship at St John's Cathedral Bookstore



Coffee workshop taught by visually impaired barista

Text by / RAY WONG & MORITZ LEUNG
Project Officer & Intern of LEC

Organised by St John's Cathedral Life Enrichment Centre (LEC) and funded by St John's Cathedral Endowment Fund, the Teens Smart-Healthy Teens Project is a two-year initiative aimed at promoting the physical, psychological, social, and spiritual health of teenagers. Teenagers are often exposed to electronic devices for chatting, gaming with friends, or watching video clips. Overexposure to the internet can lead to addiction, which may significantly affect their development. This project not only aims to prevent internet addiction and assist those in need but also broadens participants' skills, teaching them ways to lead healthier lives. To promote the healthy use of the internet among teenagers, the project offers a variety of activities, including awareness talks, internship programmes, healthy activities, and support groups.

In the internship programme, 12 participants attended a series of training sessions on presentation skills, time management, financial management, social skills, and career planning. The training provided valuable opportunities for teenagers to gain a better understanding of society beyond school. Participants engaged in various internship organisations to gain work experience and better adapt to society. They assisted in different roles, including bookstore assistant, café assistant, teen activities assistant, and campsite assistant. Through these positions, they gained valuable insights into the organisation, improved their communication skills by practising customer service, and enhanced their problem-solving abilities by working independently. Almost all participants reported improvements in their communication skills and felt more willing to engage with different people. Throughout the internship programme, mentors accompanied participants in training sessions, providing guidance and suggestions. Mentors also shared their own work and life experiences, and the teenagers agreed that the encouragement and support from mentors helped boost their confidence.

In the healthy activities, participants had the opportunity to experience a diverse range of options, from calligraphy and yoga to volunteering and visiting Foodpanda. There was also a coffee workshop conducted by a visually impaired barista. These activities not only helped teenagers discover their interests beyond mobile phones but also spread a positive message to them. One of the main reasons teenagers often use their phones is boredom; they frequently find themselves lying in bed, pulling up the blanket, and getting lost in a sea of reels and posts. To mitigate this tendency, it is essential to engage in activities that spark personal interest, whether it's baking cookies or practising magic tricks. These activities represent an excellent choice for instigating positive changes in their lives. According to a survey conducted throughout the programme, over 80% of participants found these activities to be more meaningful than using their phones. This engagement can help teenagers reduce their internet usage due to boredom.

Stay close to the Life Enrichment Centre for updates



INSTAGRAM



FACEBOOK



WEBSITE

The second phase of this project will begin in January 2025. You are welcome to join all our programmes. Please follow our social media for further announcements.



Jodie Chung

"I decided to participate in this programme because I wanted to expand my knowledge and skills so that I could prepare myself to become a teacher in the future. I also wanted to step out of my comfort zone and meet new people.

Throughout this programme, I gained many valuable skills, such as teamwork, time management, and problem-solving abilities. Additionally, I experienced personal growth, enhancing my self-confidence and learning to adapt to various situations. Participating in this programme enriched my working skills and fostered lasting friendships and connections. The environment encouraged open-minded communication and the sharing of ideas, which was instrumental in our collective success. Looking back, I realise that the experiences I gained were not just about achieving specific outcomes, but also about the journey of growth and learning alongside others. Overall, this programme was a transformative experience that has positively influenced my personal and professional development."



Wanny Wan

"I have been attending St John's Cathedral Sunday School ever since I was three. I never knew about LEC until one day when my mum showed me a post about the Teens Smart—Healthy Teens Project. After scrolling through a few other interesting posts made by LEC, I decided to sign up for the project and give it a try.

After a few training sessions, it was finally time for me to start the internship. This experience marked the beginning of my discovery of a new interest in design. After creating the name tags, I was fortunate to be assigned to design additional items, such as posters and T-shirts.

My most memorable moment at LEC was on the last day of my internship. While I was still working on the computer, they suddenly asked me to follow them to an area where a cake with my name piped on it was waiting. They congratulated me on completing the programme. At that moment, I felt incredibly thankful and touched. Overall, from discovering a new interest to learning how to communicate and engage in conversations with others, I have gained a lot from this programme, thanks to the people at the LEC who created it and guided me throughout my experience."



Moritz Leung

"I am delighted to have joined the Internship Programme during my summer holiday. Initially, these sessions seemed unrelated to the internship; however, I quickly realised that their teachings can be applied at any time in my life.

A key point I learned during these sessions is that to improve, we should dedicate time to enhance ourselves. As students, we often procrastinate and leave our homework until the last minute. These urgent tasks keep us busy, causing us to spend all our time simply completing them. For example, learning a new language might seem non-urgent and unimportant, as it is unlikely to be beneficial in the short term. However, in the long run, it can be advantageous for travelling.

During the internship stage, I worked at the LEC. This was my first internship, and I am glad it was there. I took on various roles, including designing social media posts, video editing, and assisting in workshops. However, what I learned most wasn't about the tasks I completed, but rather how to communicate and interact with others. At my internship, I constantly interacted with people, sought guidance on my work, and got to know my colleagues. Unbeknownst to me, I actually became more talkative and engaged at work."



Ben Lee

"In July and August of this year, I had the privilege of participating in the Teens Smart—Healthy Teens Project organised by LEC. Initially, my purpose in joining this activity was to experience a real work environment while learning different skills to enrich myself. However, I soon discovered that what I learned during the activity far exceeded my initial expectations.

During the training, the facilitators used their own experiences to highlight key details to pay attention to while working. For example, when introducing products to clients, it's important to condense the content into three key points and convey it concisely and clearly within a limited timeframe. It's also important to be aware of your surroundings while working and to find tools that help express yourself more effectively. Apart from this, the programme not only provided work experience but also imparted valuable life lessons to the participants. Under the mentor's guidance, participants gradually understood what kind of life they wanted to have. I started to plan my life under their guidance and reconsider my future career path."

In loving
MEMORY OF

THE REVD
CANON IAN LAM

1948 - 2024

Text by / THE DEAN

I was heartbroken to hear of the passing of our beloved teacher, the Revd Canon Ian Lam. His mother church, the HKSKH Church of the Good Shepherd in To Kwa Wan, is also my home parish. Fr Ian was a chaplain at St John's from 1975 to 1978. I first met Fr Ian in 2004 while preparing for my ordination training at Ming Hua Theological College. Although I was nervous, he quickly put me at ease during our meeting.

During my nine-month internship at St Mary's Church, Fr Ian always made time on Sunday mornings to chat with me, helping me adjust to my new role. I vividly remember asking him for final words of wisdom as I finished my studies. He simply said, 'A clergy needs to have common sense'. In a world where this is often lacking, his words remain a guiding light for us.

Though Fr Ian has returned to the Lord, his presence will always resonate with us. We will strive to honour his teachings and make good use of the 'common sense' he valued so highly. May Fr Ian rest in the Lord's loving embrace and enjoy the resurrected life in his glory.



Photo from HKSKH St Stephen's Church



THE VERY REVD
ROBERT WILLIS

1947 - 2024

Text by / NATASHA NGAN

As we reflect on the rich tapestry of our community at St John's Cathedral, we are reminded of the profound impact that the Very Revd Robert Willis, Dean Emeritus of Canterbury Cathedral, has had on our congregation. Over the years, Dean Robert visited our cathedral multiple times, each occasion leaving an indelible mark on our parishioners and our shared spiritual journey.

His whimsical morning devotions in the 'Garden Congregation' during the pandemic provided comfort and hope during a challenging time, reminding us of the power of faith. We celebrate his remarkable legacy of compassion and service. As we remember Dean Robert, we hold his spirit close, knowing he will continue to inspire us at St John's Cathedral.

Let us keep his family in our thoughts and prayers during this time of grief. May perpetual light shine upon him, and may angels guide him home.



Remembrance Sunday



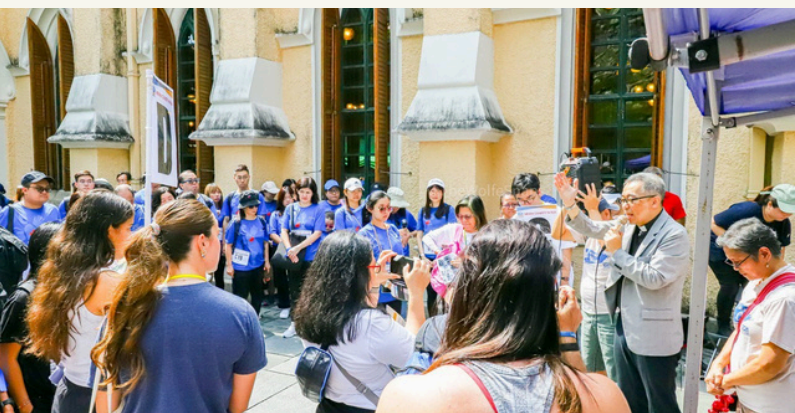
'They shall grow not old
as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them,
nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun
and in the morning
We will remember them'





MFMW Charity Walk 2024

A Resounding Success!



Text by / JOHANNIE TONG
Community Relations
Officer of MFMW

We are delighted to share that the MFMW Charity Walk, held on Sunday 13 October, was a remarkable success! This year, the event attracted over 350 enthusiastic participants who gathered at the historic St John's Cathedral at 11am. The atmosphere was filled with excitement and anticipation as the Dean offered a heart-felt blessing to commence the walk. His words resonated with the spirit of community and compassion that defines our mission, setting a positive tone for the day ahead.



Participants embarked on their journey in organised batches, with half of the group walking towards the scenic Victoria Peak, a popular destination known for its breathtaking views of Hong Kong. The other half concluded their route at the Hong Kong Zoological and Botanical Gardens, a serene environment that provided a perfect backdrop for reflection and camaraderie. This dual-route approach not only catered to different preferences but also allowed participants to experience the beauty of Hong Kong while supporting a noble cause.

The closing ceremony took place from 1pm to 2pm in the Li Hall of St John's Cathedral. Approximately 150 attendees including representatives from our sponsors and members of the Advisory Board gathered to celebrate the day's achievements. The ceremony began with welcoming remarks from Cynthia Tellez, General Manager of the Mission For Migrant Workers. Her speech highlighted the importance of community involvement and the impact of collective efforts in supporting migrant domestic workers.



Following her remarks, attendees were treated to captivating cultural performances that showcased the rich diversity of our community. These performances not only entertained but also served as a reminder of the vibrant cultures that migrant workers bring to Hong Kong. The event culminated in the presentation of awards to our sponsors and fundraising individuals and teams, recognising their invaluable contributions to the cause.

We were honoured to have Swire Properties as our Bronze Sponsor this year. Ms May Lam-Kobayashi, Deputy Director of Public Affairs at Swire Properties, accepted the award on behalf of her organisation. In her inspiring message, she emphasised the importance of supporting migrant domestic workers, who play a vital role in local households. Her words underscored the need for continued advocacy and support for this often-overlooked segment of our community.

In addition to the walk, we set up booths offering free wellness services to over 280 migrant domestic workers. Thanks to our service sponsors, many of whom are long-term partners, we provided a range of services including free yoga sessions, basic health checks, engaging games, gifts, and massages for pain relief. These wellness initiatives were designed to promote physical and mental well-being, recognising the challenges faced by migrant workers in their daily lives.

This year, we were thrilled to see increased participation from various communities, including the Swire Community Ambassadors and employees from Bank of America, Zurich Insurance, CN Group, and Innovations. Their involvement not only enriched the event but also demonstrated a strong commitment to corporate social responsibility. We also received tremendous support from students and volunteers from the Chinese International School, Hong Kong International School, Malvern College, the SJC Life Enrichment Centre, and the SJC Among Us volunteer team. Their enthusiasm and dedication were instrumental in ensuring the smooth execution of the event.

The commitment and generosity of the public have significantly contributed to the event's success and have brought us closer to achieving our mission. Together, we are promoting diversity and inclusion while raising essential funds to continue our support for migrant domestic workers in need. The funds raised during this event will go directly towards programmes that provide legal assistance, health services, and educational opportunities for migrant workers, helping to empower them and improve their quality of life.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all participants, sponsors, and volunteers for their invaluable support in making this event a success. Your commitment to this cause is a testament to the strength of our community. We look forward to seeing you at our future events as we continue this important journey together, fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment for all. Together, we can make a difference!

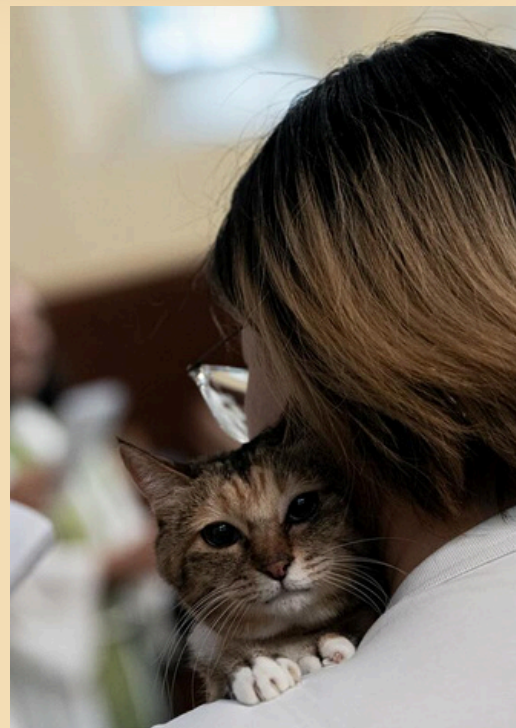




Blessing of Animals



'All things bright and beautiful,
All creatures great and small.
All things wise and wonderful.
The Lord God made them all.'



Celebrating St John's Cathedral

175 Years of Grace and Community

Text by / NATASHA NGAN
Service photos by / LUCIEN CHAN & CONRAD YU

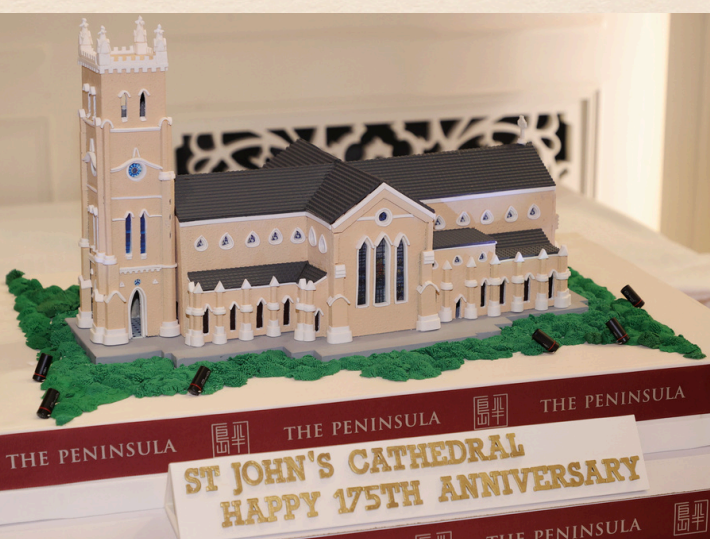
On Sunday 15 September, St John's Cathedral marked its 175th Anniversary with a day filled with gratitude, worship, and fellowship. The celebrations began with a beautiful Thanksgiving Eucharist, presided over and preached by Bishop Matthias Der. The congregation, including parishioners and distinguished guests, gathered to give thanks for the Cathedral's rich history and its unwavering mission to serve the community. The service was further enriched by inspiring music that lifted everyone's hearts in praise and thanksgiving.

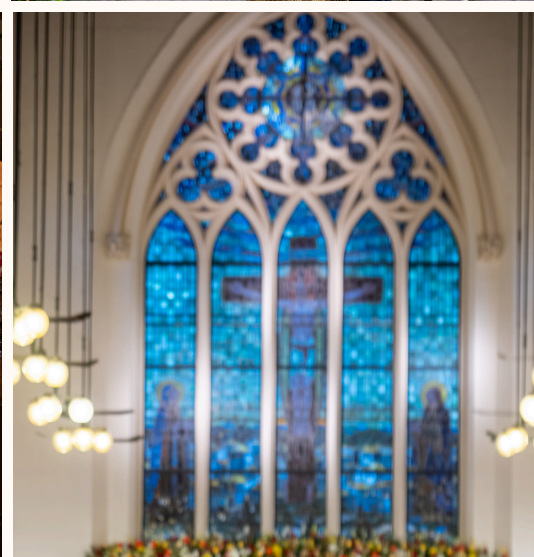
We would also like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to Ms Grace Fung, the Head of the Flower Guild, and her team for their beautiful floral arrangements, which added a special touch to the celebration.

The festivities continued in the evening with a Thanksgiving Gala Dinner, where the community came together once more to share in the joy of this momentous occasion. The evening was filled with laughter, fellowship, and delicious food. A highlight of the dinner was the stunning anniversary cake, generously sponsored by one of our parishioners. Shaped like the Cathedral, it served as a perfect tribute to our rich heritage and symbolised the unity and love of our community.

This 175th anniversary celebration was a testament to the spirit of unity, gratitude, and love that defines St John's Cathedral. As we look to the future, may we continue to grow together in faith, service, and fellowship, carrying forward the mission that has guided us for 175 years.

Here's to the next chapter of our journey—may God continue to bless and guide us all!









A PRIEST AMONG US

Fr Robert's 41-Year Journey of Love and Compassion

Text by / NATASHA NGAN

Fr Robert's journey into the priesthood is a testament to the profound impact of faith, community, and compassion. Born in Liverpool to a mixed religious background, he found his calling amidst the melodies of choral music during his teenage years. Although he had drifted from church attendance, a single evening of choral even-song reignited his connection to faith, leading him to become a dedicated server at his local parish.

At just 17, Fr Robert felt a pull towards the priesthood. Despite the challenges of pursuing his A-levels, he embarked on a transformative journey that included two years of service with the homeless in London. This experience not only deepened his faith but also shaped his understanding of compassion and community service.

Fr Robert's early ministry was marked by a significant chapter during the AIDS epidemic in the late 1980s. Serving as chaplain for one of the first AIDS units in Manchester, he witnessed the struggles and triumphs of those affected by the disease. His ministry became a beacon of hope during a time of fear and misunderstanding, as he provided comfort and support to those who felt ostracised and alone.

One of Fr Robert's most unforgettable experiences occurred early in his ministry when he visited a young man diagnosed with AIDS. The young man, only 25 years old, was gravely ill and confined to an isolation unit due to complications from the disease. As Fr Robert entered the room, dressed in protective gear that made him feel like a 'spaceman', he was struck by the profound love and connection in the room. The young man's only companion was his grandmother in ordinary clothes, who chose to stay by his side despite the risks involved.



Fr Robert recalls the poignant scene: the young man was terrified and near death, yet his grandmother held his hand, providing a sense of comfort and human connection that transcended the sterile environment. This image of unwavering love moved Fr Robert deeply. It served as a powerful reminder that, in moments of despair, the simple act of being present can be more meaningful than any words of comfort.

Overwhelmed by the stark contrast between his protective attire and the genuine compassion of the grandmother, Fr Robert removed his protective gear, keeping only his mask on. He wanted to bring a sense of humanity to the situation, to show that he was there not just as a priest but as a fellow human being. He administered the last rites with a heart full of vulnerability, recognising that true ministry often lies in the willingness to share in another's pain and to simply be present.

This experience profoundly shaped Fr Robert's understanding of his role as a priest—highlighting that vulnerability and empathy are essential to ministry. It reinforced his belief that being a priest means being human first, acknowledging the pain of others, and offering companionship in their darkest moments.

As he celebrates 41 years in the priesthood, Fr Robert reflects on the countless souls he has encountered. He expresses immense gratitude for the privilege of being a priest, emphasising that it is the relationships formed and the shared humanity that truly define his ministry. He encourages aspiring priests to offer their authentic selves to God, embracing both strengths and imperfections.

Fr Robert's journey is a beautiful reminder of the power of love, compassion, and community. His story, especially the unforgettable moment with the young man and his grandmother, inspires not only fellow priests but also anyone seeking to make a difference in the world. As we celebrate his remarkable 41 years of priesthood, we honour his unwavering commitment to being a guiding light for those in need, embodying the essence of what it means to serve.





SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA:

St John's Cathedral Pilgrimage to Turkey 2024



Text by / THE REV. DR. WILL NEWMAN

In the last week of September, 31 adventurous members and friends of St John's Cathedral gathered in Turkey for a pilgrimage to the Seven Churches of Asia from the Book of Revelation. When Revelation was written almost 2,000 years ago, 'Asia' was a province of the Roman Empire, located in what is now the Aegean coastal region of western Turkey.

Church buildings did not exist in the 1st century. The small Christian communities in these cities met in each other's homes. Our journey was to visit the sites of the seven churches, to step into the pages of the Book of Revelation, and to encounter the world of the early Christians to whom that strange and astonishing book is addressed.

Our pilgrimage was enriched by Sonat, our wonderful Turkish tour guide, and the Revd James Buxton, the Anglican chaplain in Izmir (ancient Smyrna). With good humour and his extensive knowledge of the region, James led us in a bible study at each of the seven sites, exploring the challenging and pithy sermons addressed to each of the seven churches.

So we travelled, worshipped, prayed, laughed, learnt, and shared together. We ate wonderful Turkish food, watched beautiful sunsets over the sea, and swam in naturally hot volcanic waters. We visited magnificent Greek, Roman, and Byzantine archaeological sites. We walked down ancient shopping streets, entered temples to Greek gods and Roman emperors, and imagined ourselves surrounded by the hustle and bustle of these cities of the Roman Empire. Other sites were quieter, their streets and buildings lying largely undisturbed under the soil, waiting to give up their treasures.

In Pergamum, a cable car took us up to the Acropolis, the citadel high above the ancient city, renowned for its immense wealth. Here we saw the site of the Altar of Jupiter, shaped like an enormous white marble throne, as big as a house, big enough to enthrone Jupiter, or Zeus, King of the Gods. Was this 'Satan's throne', mentioned in the letter to the church in Pergamum?

In Ephesus, we trod the same stones that St Paul walked on, and sat in the shade of the trees in the agora, the market place where he sold tents; we also visited the theatre where he caused a riot among the silversmiths and craftsmen of the city (Acts 19).

The short letters framed as messages from Jesus to each of the seven churches all follow a set pattern. John writes 'I know...' I know your works, I know where you are living, I know your afflictions. For each church, there follow for each church words of praise, for holding fast to the gospel, for their good works, or resisting false teaching; but—there's always a but—then comes criticism, and John doesn't hold back. Only one of the seven churches escapes criticism.

Each letter shows how well the author of Revelation knew these seven churches. Perhaps the most well-known is the letter to the church in Laodicea. The author writes these words from Jesus: 'I know your works; you are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were either cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, I am about to spit you out of my mouth. For you say, "I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing." You do not realise that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.'

James told us that in Roman times, water from cool streams and hot volcanic springs was carried to Laodicea from the mountains by aqueducts and pipes. But by the time it reached the city, the hot water had cooled, and the cool water was no longer cold, so it was lukewarm, like the Christians. Laodicea was famous for its wealth, and for thinking itself to be self-sufficient. In AD60, a huge earthquake occurred.



Rome offered help to rebuild the city, but Laodicea spurned imperial assistance, claiming they could rebuild by themselves. They thought, 'I am rich, I need nothing.' But from Christ's point of view, they were the opposite: they were spiritually poor and wretched. Thus, the words of each letter come alive in the context of their time and location.

After the criticism in each letter comes a warning to repent, but also words of encouragement. Even to the Laodiceans, Christ says, 'Behold, I

stand at the door and knock; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in and eat with you. And to the one who conquers, I will give a place on my throne.' What higher honour could there possibly be?

At the end of a week based in Izmir and travelling out to the Seven Churches, we were warmly welcomed by James and the congregation (and Cleopatra, the church cat!) at the lovely church of St John the Evangelist for their Sunday morning Eucharist.



The next day, most of the group flew on to Istanbul, where we spent another 3 days sightseeing. The highlight was our visit to Hagia Sophia, now a mosque, but for almost a thousand years until 1453, it was the greatest church in Christendom. We walked up the winding steps to the gallery to see the beautiful mosaics of Christ—partly damaged, yet still as colourful and inspiring as when they were created.

Another memorable moment was the evening when our hotel opened up the top-floor bar for us, put on a tape of Turkish music, and before long, we were all up and dancing!

On our last afternoon, we enjoyed a cruise in the sunshine, taking a boat up the Bosphorus, the narrow channel that joins the Black Sea with the Mediterranean, and separates Europe from Asia. At one point, there are only 600 yards between the two continents, providing us Hong Kong visitors with a fresh perspective on 'East meets West'.

Would we go again? We would!

WHERE STORIES COME ALIVE

The Spirit of LEC *Playback Theatre*



Text by / NATASHA NGAN
Photos by / ALAN HU, AARON LUK & LEC STAFF

In a vibrant celebration of creativity and community, the 2024 Once Theatre Playback Theatre Youth Project captivated audiences with its unique blend of improvisational performance and heartfelt storytelling. This year's production not only showcased the remarkable talents of the performers but also illuminated the profound power of shared experiences, resonating deeply with the theme of peace.

Involving over 50 individuals—performers, volunteers, and LEC staff—this production became a rich tapestry of humanity. The Teens Playback Project allows audiences to share personal stories, which the performers bring to life in real time. In honour of the 175th anniversary of St John's Cathedral and in alignment with the theme 'Peace that the World Cannot Give', Once Theatre engaged us in a journey of reflection and connection. The accompanying creative arts workshops fostered self-understanding and provided young people with an essential outlet for expression, alleviating stress, and building confidence.

As the performance unfolded, the background music—featuring raw instruments like maracas—added a layer of tranquillity to the experience. Being inside the cathedral, a true home for the parishioners, made the event even more special. The combination of evocative music and the sacred setting transformed the gathering into an intimate community experience.





This year marked Once Theatre's third production for LEC, representing a significant shift from traditional performance to deeper community engagement. In addition to the playback performance, the youth organised an art exhibition, transforming their ideas of peace into expressive artwork. The playbackers embraced their roles with renewed purpose, recognising that the process and connections formed were as vital as the final presentation. Their journey began in June, involving five months of intensive training in expressive arts and personal growth workshops, where many faced challenges, especially those new to performance. Through collaboration and support, they learned to listen and navigate conflicts, fostering a cohesive group dynamic. As over 180 audiences gathered at the second performance, the excitement transformed the performance into an unforgettable experience.

After the show, many of the youth reflected on their growth, with one humorously noting a '360-degree change' in confidence and perspective, prompting laughter from the audience. Alex Nguyen, one of the youth performers, shared, 'Everything about this project holds very important memories for my life. I remember that on the day of the performance, there was a typhoon, and I was really worried that the performance would be cancelled because of it. So I prayed for the first time: "If the performance can continue, I will join the Youth Ministry, Among Us". I am grateful that God listened to my prayer and allowed me to meet the playbackers of the Once Theatre'. This sentiment underscored the lasting impact of the Teens Playback Project.

Vanice Chan, the supervisor of LEC, expressed her gratitude, stating, 'It's more than a show; it's life influencing life'. She thanked all the sponsors and supporters, as well as the youth participants, particularly her colleagues Michelle and Rooney, emphasising that the project's success was the result of a collective effort.

The Dean highlighted the significance of 'Shalom', reinforcing that true understanding requires active listening—a theme that resonated throughout the evening. Notably, Ms Barbara Chan, the well-known actress in Hong Kong, attended to support the youth. She shared her journey from church drama to acting, expressing how much the teens reminded her of her younger self and how moved she was by the performance.

The presence of Archbishop Andrew Chan and Bishop Matthias Der further underscored the community spirit of the event. Audience feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with many noting that the unique format encouraged deeper listening—to themselves and to others. Key takeaways included phrases like 'To listen is to love', highlighting the show's profound impact.

As I left the cathedral, I carried with me not just the echoes of the performances but a renewed sense of hope and connection. The 2024 Once Theatre Playback Theatre Youth Project beautifully illustrated that peace is found not only in grand gestures but also in quiet moments of understanding and empathy. Through storytelling, we can nurture our community, foster healing, and create a world where the spirit of peace thrives within us all.



The True Christmas Among Us

Text & design by/
WIEAN AU, JEREMY HSU & JASON WONG

Christmas is just around the corner, are you **ready** for all the **joy** and festivities? Have you put up your **Christmas tree**, gotten all **the presents** for your **friends and family**, and confirmed plans for a **wonderful** Christmas dinner?

Now... before we get all **hyped up** about making sure everything is spot on, let us take a step back and think about what **Christmas** might truly mean. Is it just about celebration and fun?

With the ultimate gift list, a **special tree ornament**, or a nice cup of hot cocoa still in your hand, close your eyes and picture the year **1941**—the very same Christmas day when some people in Hong Kong were likely **less excited** than you are, but were struggling to hold dear to their hearts the **celebration** of the birth of our Saviour, Jesus Christ—a day that turned out not exactly ‘jolly and holly’ for them at all.

Christmas in 1941 brought **great terror** to those seeking refuge at **St Stephen's College** in Stanley, where a Red Cross hospital, the last British standout, and locals were stationed during **World War II**. A merciless massacre broke out when the Japanese **slaughtered** many of the wounded soldiers, teachers, and medical professionals residing in the college, leaving not blessings but **condemnation** for those who survived.

Matters did not stop there, as St Stephen's then turned into an internment camp. Eyes still closed? Can you feel the **anxiety**, the **loss of hope**, or perhaps pick up a faint **scent of fear**? The site had been ransacked and stripped down to bare bones. Medical supplies and basic daily necessities began to run out.

Rather than simmer in despair, the detainees each took up a small part with a **wish** to make the most undesirable, a little more bearable. Medical officers negotiated with the Japanese army for more **supplies**, teachers set up **classes** for children, entertainers performed **plays** to lighten the ambiance, and, of course, priests gave **sermons** and held services.

Christmas did not end in one day for the little community at St Stephen's College, but expanded into a whole season of **kindness and resilience**, for they had little idea then how long the days were going to be.

So, was 1941 a bit far away? Or maybe that was just an **isolated incident**? Do you recall what you were doing on the morning of **Boxing Day, 2004**? Were you buried in early **unboxing** under the Christmas tree, or suffering from a terrible **hangover**?

While we were probably busy being pleasantly distracted by our Christmas agendas, an undersea megathrust earthquake with a magnitude of 9.2 to 9.3 Mw, unprecedented in Indonesia, broke out on the west coast of northern Sumatra. Apart from instantly **shattering** nearby cities, the earthquake kicked up a **massive tsunami** with waves up to 30 meters in height, which **struck 14 countries**, killing at least some 230,000 people, and affecting millions of others. The earthquake and tsunami were reported to be the '**deadliest natural disaster in recorded history**'. Asian countries, including Hong Kong, quickly reacted and sent help and supplies to the rescue.

Peace and stability, or that **hot cup of cocoa** in your hand, are not **promised gifts** of Christmas. If you remember, Jesus himself was not born exactly under ideal circumstances. He was under the **persecution** of King Herod, who ordered the killing of tens of thousands of innocent boys. The King further sent **the three wise men** to hunt Jesus down. However, the three wise men did not return to the King but chose to go the **other way**.

Fancy a
game??

Kindness for All

Maybe Christmas is not just about **celebration** but a **reminder of a duty** to bring **peace** or hospitality to the person next to you.

And it does not have to be something complicated!

Over this **festive season**, do go and say '**Merry Christmas**' to the clergies (and everyone else!) at the Cathedral. **Three** selected clergies will each give you a **hint** to the location of a **QR code** placed somewhere on the Cathedral grounds that will reveal a **little surprise** for you!

Have a **blessed season**, and see you in **2025**!





Dr Alex Li

NEW DIRECTOR OF *St John's Cathedral Counselling Service*

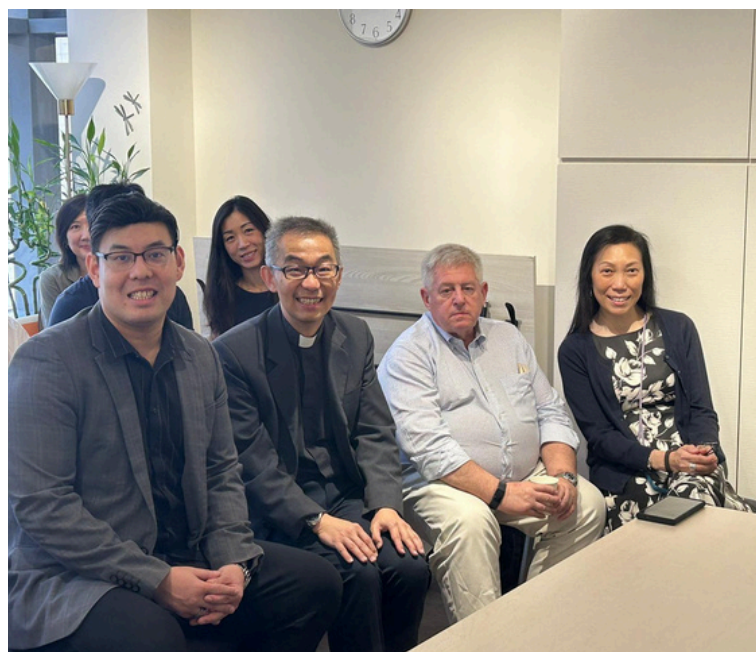
Text by / NATASHA NGAN

In a significant step for mental health support in Hong Kong, Dr Alex Wai Ki Li has been appointed as the new Director of St John's Cathedral Counselling Service. With nearly 15 years of experience in psychology and counselling, Dr Alex brings a wealth of knowledge and a deep commitment to enhancing the service's outreach and effectiveness. His doctorate degree from the University of Roehampton, along with registrations with esteemed professional bodies in the United Kingdom and in Hong Kong, positions him well to lead the counselling service team in providing essential mental health support to the community.

Dr Alex's journey in mental healthcare has seen him work in diverse settings, including schools, the National Health Service, and youth charities. Since joining St John's Cathedral Counselling Service in 2015, he has focused on helping clients navigate challenges such as depression, anxiety, and burnout. His approach, grounded in Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, is complemented by training in various therapeutic modalities. Beyond his clinical work, Dr Alex conducts speaking events, workshops and supervises trainee counsellors and psychologists from a number of universities in Hong Kong, Canada, and Australia. This reflects and reinforces his commitment to mental health education and preparing the next generation of practitioners in the mental health field.

As Dr Alex steps into this new leadership role, his motivation stems from a deep dedication to the community. He aims to empower individuals towards emotional, social, and spiritual well-being. The Counselling Service, with over 40 years of experience, welcomes clients from all backgrounds, offering support in 14 languages. Dr Alex views his directorship as a natural progression in his career following his years of experience as the Lead Psychologist at the Counselling Service. He is confident to enhance the Counselling Service's reach and effectiveness and to bring it to its next level.

The community faces pressing mental health challenges often related to relationships, work, or family dynamics. According to Dr Alex, many individuals resort to maladaptive behaviours to



cope with negative emotions, leading to isolation and further difficulties. The Counselling Service aims to help clients manage these emotions, fostering reconnection with loved ones and spiritual beliefs.

Recognising the growing importance of mental health awareness, Dr Alex plans to expand the Counselling Service's outreach through workshops and collaborations with local organisations. In 2025, the focus will be on addressing burnout, promoting resilience, and enhancing community engagement.

Within the Cathedral setting, faith and spirituality play integral roles in the counselling process. While the service welcomes clients of all beliefs, many counsellors at the service incorporate Christian perspectives to support those who wish to explore their faith during therapy. This respectful approach allows clients to navigate their emotional experiences within the context of their spirituality.

St John's Cathedral Counselling Service prides itself on being accessible to all. With face-to-face sessions available in a welcoming office environment, clients can also opt for tele-health services. The team is dedicated to providing a supportive atmosphere for anyone seeking help.

As he embarks on this new chapter, Dr Alex emphasises the significance of mental health for everyone and encourages individuals to seek support from trained professionals. At St John's Cathedral Counselling Service, all counsellors and psychologists are highly qualified, ensuring clients receive the best care. With a diverse team of over 45 counsellors and 10 psychologists, the service strives to match clients with the right counsellor or psychologist to aid their journey towards improved mental health.

Dr Alex's appointment as the Director of St John's Cathedral Counselling Service marks a promising new era for mental health support in the community. Through innovative programmes, compassionate care, and a focus on spiritual well-being, the Counselling Service is poised to make an even greater positive impact in Hong Kong under his leadership.



New Face

at the cathedral office



Christine Tsang

Administrative Assistant

We are delighted to welcome Christine, our new Administrative Assistant, to the St John's Community! A recent graduate of Baptist University with a degree in Visual Art, Christine brings a creative flair to our team. She has a keen interest in painting and enjoys expressing herself through her art.

In her free time, she enjoys reading, charity shopping, and journaling, which reflect her creative spirit and love for exploration. Her cheerful disposition and warm personality make her a welcoming presence within the St John's Community, where she is eager to contribute and connect with others.

We look forward to the positive energy and fresh ideas she will bring to our team. Please join us in welcoming Christine!

APOCALYPSE NOW?

Crisis. Catastrophe. and Christian Hope

Text by / THE REV. DR WILL NEWMAN

In October, St John's Cathedral returned to the tradition of hosting an annual series of Public Lectures, featuring a series of four lectures delivered by the Very Revd Canon Professor Martyn Percy, Honorary Provost Theologian of the HKSKH.

'Apocalypse Now' is a classic Vietnam War film that portrays the horror and futility of war. In these lectures, Martyn led us into an apocalyptic world, exploring apocalyptic art, literature, and films that depict plague, war, the collapse of civilisation, and the end of the world as we know it. The word 'Apocalypse' links these lectures with the Book of Revelation in the Bible, with its graphic images of death and destruction on a huge scale, brought by the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.



History is full of times when people believed they were experiencing the end of the world. War is one of the Four Horsemen. During the Cold War, we lived under the threat of nuclear annihilation. Older readers will remember the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, when people, certainly in England, literally didn't know if they would live to see another day. In 18th century France, the price of a loaf of bread rose from 7% of a labourer's daily wage to 92%. Faced with starvation, the result was revolution—the violent overthrow of the old order, the terror of the guillotine, and war in every corner of Europe—the end of the world as they knew it.

Another of the Four Horsemen is Plague. We have all lived through Covid, but there have been far worse plagues. The Black Death swept across Europe in the 1340s and 50s, killing a third of the population. The devastation was so terrible that people thought this could be the end of the human race. Plagues continued to afflict Europe for hundreds of years. A striking illustration showed the Three Kings, all with plague. And the famous Isenheim Altarpiece created by the German artist Matthias Grünewald in 1512, shows Christ crucified, his body covered in black sores, sharing with his people the terrible death of the Plague.

Yet the plague could be halted. Plague came to the village of Eyam in Derbyshire in 1665, and the villagers, led by their clergy, took the brave but terrible decision to quarantine themselves and not leave the village.



260 of them died of the plague, but they saved the lives of many by not spreading the plague to other areas.

For me, the most moving of Martyn's lectures was the third, on Death. It's a taboo subject in many cultures, including Chinese and English. People don't talk about death and dying; they say someone 'passed', or use other euphemisms. But by denying death a place in our public discourse, we find that when it happens, we don't know how to deal with death, loss, and grief. And because we don't talk about it, we may find that it's too late to say what we wanted to those we love. Yet the Christian faith has something to offer. The Church is a place where you can bring your grief, pain, and loss, and find not answers, but love, acceptance, and inclusion. As Tom Lynch says, the priest who takes care over the funeral of a forgotten homeless man affirms the agreement between all God's children that we will witness, remember, and take care of each other.

Martyn's last talk was entitled Gloom, Doom, Prophecies—and Christian Hope. Where can we find Christian hope in the face of apocalypse? If we are living on the edge, where is hope?

The Book of Revelation offers hope in the possibility of a new heaven and a new earth, and an end to suffering. But Martyn has another answer too: hope lies in community, being together. Things happen as a result of gathering. Children invited to choose a picture of their ideal birthday party chose a picture of people of all ages gathered around a table to share food, rather than a child with a stack of presents. Ladies in an English village come together to make hot cross buns, creating an activity that creates a community where they look out and care for each other. I loved Martyn's image of bees flying around a garden. We think they are making honey, but in fact, they are cross-pollinating the flowers; honey is the consequence, not the goal.

Salt is a fertiliser. If Christians are salt, then hope lies in the amount of goodness and kindness that church groups put into the soil of the world around us. Our gathering, and the things that happen as a result, are our best response to the possibility of apocalypse.



What are we reading?

Wow! Christmas: Creatively Explore Stories in the Bible Martha Shrimpton

A well-designed, colourful, and creative Christmas activity book for children, families, and communities to connect with God and one another. *Wow! Christmas* explores six aspects of the birth of Jesus, including Jesus as the light of the world, the ordinary yet extraordinary shepherds, the journey of the wise men, the giving of gifts, the excitement and anticipation of waiting for Christmas, and the reasons why Christmas is something to celebrate.

Each story is accompanied by innovative activities, including engaging prayers, crafts, acting out scenes, time for reflection, discussion ideas, and creative praise.

My Big Story Bible: The First Christmas

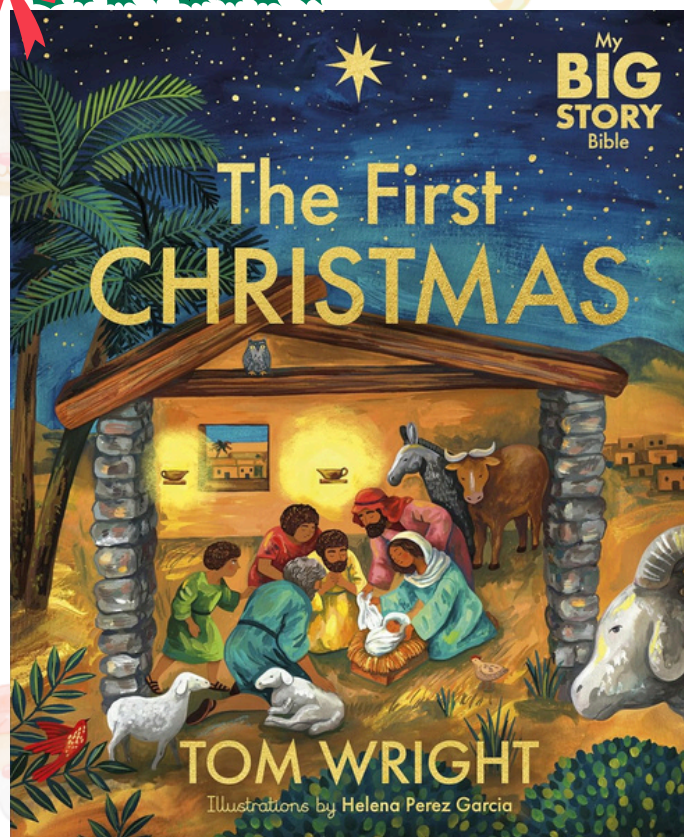
Tom Wright

A stunning, fully illustrated, and faithful retelling of the Christmas story by one of the world's most popular Christian authors Tom Wright.

In this faithful retelling of the Christmas story, children will be amazed by Mary as she is visited by the angel, share in the joy of the shepherds on the hillside, and join the adventure of the wise men as they follow a distant star to visit the special baby Jesus who will one day be king.

In *The First Christmas*, the world-changing events of the nativity are accompanied by stunning and richly detailed illustrations. This book is a beautiful gift to share with children and introduces them to the miracle of the first Christmas.

Tom Wright is one of the world's most popular Christian authors, and here he writes for younger children, aged 4-6 years, for the first time.



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Advent & Christmas

at St John's Cathedral

1
DEC
SUNDAY

THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

(Sunday Services as normal)

5PM

'THE KING AND HIS KINGDOM'
A SERVICE FOR THE BEGINNING OF ADVENT

8
DEC
SUNDAY

THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

(Sunday Services as normal)

5PM

'BLUE CHRISTMAS' EUCHARIST
A SERVICE FOR THOSE MOURNING A LOSS THIS CHRISTMAS SEASON

15
DEC
SUNDAY

THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

(Sunday Services as normal)

22
DEC
SUNDAY

THE FORTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

(Sunday Services as normal)

9AM

SUNG EUCHARIST
WITH NATIVITY PLAY

5PM

NINE LESSONS
AND CAROLS

24
DEC
TUESDAY

CHRISTMAS EVE

3PM

CRIB SERVICE

(The Cathedral will be closed from 6.00pm for preparation)

4.30PM

CHRISTINGLE SERVICE

11PM

MIDNIGHT MASS OF THE NATIVITY
AND BLESSING OF THE CRIB

25
DEC
WEDNESDAY

CHRISTMAS DAY

8AM

SAID EUCHARIST

9AM

SUNG EUCHARIST

10.30AM

SUNG EUCHARIST
(MANDARIN)

11.45AM

RESPONSORIAL EUCHARIST
WITH CAROLS

1.30PM

SUNG EUCHARIST
(PILIPINO)
(No Evening Service)

31
DEC
TUESDAY

NEW YEAR'S EVE

11PM

WATCHNIGHT EUCHARIST
A SERVICE TO WELCOME THE NEW YEAR

Discovery Bay Church

SKH Wei Lun Primary School, Lantau

Christmas Eve

6.00pm

Christingle Service
with Nativity Play

Christmas Day

10.00am

Sung Eucharist

Tel: 2987 4210

Website:



Emmanuel Church

Béthanie Chapel
139 Pok Fu Lam Road, Pok Fu Lam

Christmas Eve

10.00pm

Midnight Mass
of the Nativity

Christmas Day

10.30am

Family Eucharist
with Carols

Feast of the Holy Family

10.30am

Sung Eucharist
with Sunday School

Tel: 2523 4157

Website:



St Stephen's Chapel

St Stephen's College
22 Tung Tau Wan Road, Stanley

Christmas Eve

5.00pm

Crib Service

11.00pm

Midnight Mass
of the Nativity

Christmas Day

10.00am

Sung Eucharist

Tel: 2813 0408

Website:



St John's Cathedral

4-8 Garden Road, Central, Hong Kong

Tel: 2523 4157

Fax: 2521 7830

Email: general@stjohnscathedral.org.hk

Dean

The Very Revd Kwok-keung Chan

Cathedral Chaplains

The Revd Canon Dwight dela Torre

The Revd Canon Peter Koon

The Revd Drew Courtright

(Chaplain and Priest-in-Charge of Discovery Bay Church
—effective from 1 January 2025)

The Revd Sharon Langbis

The Revd Robert Martin CMP

(Chaplain and Priest-in-Charge of Emmanuel Church)

The Revd Will Newman

(Chaplain and Priest-in-Charge of St Stephen's Chapel)

The Revd Amos Poon

Cathedral Honorary Chaplains

The Revd Dr Philip Wickeri

The Revd Polly Wong Heung-fong

Executive Administrator

Thomas Li

Director of Music

Felix Yeung

Assistant Director of Music

Alan Tsang

Organist

Jonathan Yip

Communications Officer

Natasha Ngan

Verger

Dicky Ko

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James Choo

Head Sidesman

Frank Lang

In Touch Editorial

Natasha Ngan - Designer & Editor

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Council Away Day

MARTIN MATSUI &
THE REV'D WILL NEWMAN
Text by /

The Council Away Day took place on Saturday, 19 October at the historic St John's College Chapel at Hong Kong University. The Council met to consider two topics. The first was on 'Roles and Responsibilities of Council Members'. This address was delivered by Canon Moses Cheng. The second was on the 'Theology and Culture of Hospitality and Welcome' by the Revd Will Newman.

Canon Moses treated the subject of the corporate governance of St John's Cathedral. The governance of the Cathedral is directed by two documents. The first is the Church of England Trust ordinance which specifies that the Council's role is to advise the Dean of the Cathedral. The second is the canons of the Anglican church in Hong Kong known formally as the Canons of the Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui. Canon Moses directed Council members attention in particular to articles 26 and 27 of the Canons.

Canon Moses urged Council members to study these Canons carefully. He cited for instance in Canon 26 these Members have spiritual duties including supporting the vicar in his pastoral care of the congregation, assisting the vicar in promoting missionary activities and spiritual growth and fellowship among the congregation.

Article 27 he noted specifies that the Parish (of which St John's Cathedral and its daughter churches are one) are directed to be 'self-sufficient'. This means that the parish should have 'sufficient funding to pay for and maintain a permanent place of worship for its congregations' as well as 'be responsible for paying the emolument' of its priests.

He pointed also in 'sharing the blessings and love of Christ' a Parish should set aside no more than 10% of its budget from the previous year as part of the charity fund of the Parish.



He left Members with questions to ponder on how can we uplift the Cathedral as a whole; how can we enrich the life of our congregation; and can we heal the wounds of the community and around us; and what can we advocate to inspire people.

Will told Council members that the Cathedral's focus for 2025 will be 'Hospitality and Welcome'. The way people experience Christians and the Church will either attract them towards God or push them away. If we are honest, not everyone who comes through our doors experiences the kindness of a warm welcome. We should be hospitable to all, not because we are nice people, but because we follow Jesus, and we are called to welcome all people as we would welcome Christ himself.

What is required is not just an annual theme, but a change of culture. A deliberate effort to make St John's a place of God's grace. What would it mean if all of us at St John's thought of ourselves as hosts, and treated all who come as guests?

Jesus said, 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed. When it is planted, it grows and becomes a tree, and all the birds of the air come and build their nests in it.'

He urged Council members to consider these questions:

- 175 years ago St John's was planted in the heart of Hong Kong. What if we had a vision of the cathedral as that mustard seed, now grown into a great tree where people of all kinds find welcome, hospitality, and a touch of God's grace?
- What can we do to create a culture of generous hospitality at the heart of St John's Cathedral?

Council members benefitted from these two engaging speakers. They left the Chapel pondering the questions that were put to them and which will help define their work over the coming year.