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Wetlands as an Ecumenical-Theological Metaphor for a Geopolitical Imaginary in East Asia

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A nation is defined by the territorial boundaries within which its sovereignty is recognized. Relationships between nations may descend into hostility and even conflict if territorial boundaries are not respected. Paradoxically, the protective role of boundaries against invasion can be abused as a nation's justification for ignoring and even condemning the demand of social justice from the global community. Such an ambiguous role of boundaries in East Asia is the context of this paper. Instead of a political perspective, this paper opens a discussion on the concept of boundaries from an ecological perspective and focuses on wetlands. It suggests that wetlands characterised by blurred boundaries can be understood as an ecumenical-theological metaphor for a geopolitical imaginary in East Asia.

Geopolitics in East Asia

Among Asia-Pacific's multilateral regional organizations, such as ASEAN Regional Forum, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, the ASEAN Plus Three, East Asian Summit and others, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has been a primary shaping mechanism in all these bodies. ASEAN was created in 1967 with five member nations, and expanded to ten in 1999: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. Its aims are:

to accelerate economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region and to promote regional peace and stability through abiding respect for justice and the rule of law in the relationship among countries in the region and adherence to the principles of the United Nations Charter.¹

In 2008, the ASEAN Charter took effect. In 2015, the ASEAN leaders adopted three pillars as their aims, namely the political-security community, economic community and socio-cultural community.²

A recent challenge to the political-security community of ASEAN is the coup in Myanmar in February 2021. Despite the fact that ASEAN adopted a “Five-Point Consensus” on Myanmar on April 24, 2021,³ ASEAN has no power to enforce it because ASEAN adopts the principles of “non-interference”, “consensus based” and “non-conflictual way”. In short, the principle of “non-interference” puts national sovereignty first and emphasizes “non-interference” in the internal affairs of other nations.⁴ This is so called the “ASEAN Way”. The challenge to ASEAN is the extent to which the “ASEAN Way” characterized by sovereign boundary is still effective in addressing common issues such as the promotion of human rights, the protection of the global environment and the maintenance of the global economy. Since there are churches in the member nations of ASEAN, the corresponding issues facing churches are: how churches respond to suffering in Myanmar and how God’s mission as life flourishing is different from the “ASEAN Way”.

Another issue shaking the security of East Asia is the maritime disputes in the South China Sea.⁵ First, Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam claim interest in waters contested with China. Second, the United States, which has a strong interest

in preventing China from controlling access to the South China Sea, has increased its maritime presence to enforce freedom of navigation in international waters. Third, the member states of ASEAN are divided among themselves over their ties to China and to the United States. Apart from the South China Sea disputes, severe tensions have erupted between China on one hand and Taiwan, North Korea, South Korea and Japan on the other. Apart from the duty of country, the civil community also has a role in shaping geopolitics because Article 1.13 of the ASEAN Charter states that ASEAN should “promote a people-oriented ASEAN”. The pressing challenge to churches is how churches as ecumenical communities can push the implementation of a people-oriented ASEAN which prioritizes matters of human concern over regime interests, and demonstrates ways of coexistence.

It is not the purpose of this study to evaluate the extent to which ASEAN has achieved its task,⁶ but to explore the meaning of churches as God’s ambassadors (2 Cor 5:20) in East Asia. However, the two issues mentioned above may be too vast for churches to digest and handle. More importantly, churches in East Asia are minority, except in the Philippines. Therefore, some suggest that it is more appropriate for churches to focus on evangelism and worship. Evangelism and worship are central to the Christian mission, but they are not the alternatives to the minority role of churches in international relations. Churches should recall Jesus’ teaching that “the kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened” (Matt 13:33; Lk 13: 20–21). Churches’ engagement in political realities is motivated and empowered by the eschatological vision in the Hebrew Bible, namely, *shālôm* (peace), *ashrê* (blessedness) and *tāmîm* (wholeness),⁷ and in the life and praxis of Jesus Christ,

1. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/fd/04_asean-generalin/04_asean-generalinfo.pdf (accessed on April 1, 2023)

2. See the website of the ASEAN, <https://asean.org/our-communities/> (accessed on April 1, 2023)

3. “Five-Points Consensus” is: 1) The immediate cessation of violence in Myanmar; 2) Constructive dialogue among all parties concerned... to seek a peaceful solution in the interests of the people; 3) Mediation facilitated by an envoy of ASEAN’s Chair, with the assistance of ASEAN’s Secretary-General; 4) Humanitarian assistance provided by ASEAN through its AHA Centre; and 5) A visit to Myanmar, by the special envoy and delegation, to meet with all parties concerned.

4. Taku Yukawa, “The ASEAN Way as a Symbol: An Analysis of Discourses on the ASEAN Norms,” *Pacific Review*, 31: 3 (2018), 298–314.

5. See Nehginpao Kipgen, *The Politics of the South China Sea Disputes* (London: Routledge, 2020).

6. See Richard Stubbs, “ASEAN Sceptics Versus ASEAN Proponents: Evaluating Regional Institutions,” *The Pacific Review*, 32: 6 (2019), 923–950.

7. Jonathan T. Pennington, *A Biblical Theology of Human Flourishing* (Tysons: In Institute for Faith, Work and Economics, 2015).

rather than determined and measured by political power and capital. In what follows, I would like to develop the ecological phenomenon of wetlands as an ecumenical-theological metaphor to articulate such a vision.

Wetlands and Life Flourishing

“Wetlands are lands transitional between terrestrial and aquatic systems where the water table is usually at or near the surface, or the land is covered by shallow water.”⁸ Wetlands are neither totally dry land nor totally underwater. The overlapping area between land and water creates its unique ecological nature and causes life to flourish. First, wetlands as the “nurseries of life” provide food and habitat for many terrestrial and many aquatic species. Migrating birds use wetlands to rest and feed during their cross-continental journeys and as nesting sites when they are at home. Wetlands may serve as the last refuges for many rare and endangered species. Wetland diversity is often higher than that of adjacent ecosystems. Second, wetlands pull leaves, animal waste, and other high carbon matter down from the surface of the water. Carbon dioxide is absorbed into plants and soil. Wetlands can store 50 times more carbon than rain forests and help to keep the heat-trapping gas that contributes to climate change out of the atmosphere. Wetlands have been described as “the kidneys of the landscape”, performing the rites of cleansing. Third, the capacity of wetlands to absorb a great amount of water benefits developed areas, especially during periods of flooding. Coastal wetlands serve as storm surge protectors when hurricanes or tropical storms come ashore. Wetland systems can also recharge groundwater aquifers and cleanse polluted waters. Despite occupying an area of no greater than 8% of the earth’s surface, wetlands are, in fact, among the

most productive ecosystems in the world.⁹ However, as much as 2.4 million km² of inland wetlands have been lost over the past 300 years, with much of this loss happening after 1900.¹⁰ According to the United Nations, roughly 35 per cent of all wetlands globally disappeared between 1970 and 2015, and the rate of loss has been accelerating since the year 2000.¹¹ It is generally agreed that worldwide at least half of all pre-development wetlands have been lost to human activities.¹² For instance, what is economically beneficial in the upper portions of drainage basins — irrigation, timber harvesting, hydroelectric power, recreation and other human uses — is often deleterious for downstream inhabitants of wetlands and coastal regions. Water supply to wetlands may be reduced by levees, canals and dams as well as by extraction of ground water. Filling is another common means of converting wetlands for building construction, urban expansion, and industrial development. The loss of wetlands affects greenhouse gas fluxes, flood control, nutrient cycling and biodiversity. “Asia is the global centre of tidal wetland loss from direct human activities.”¹³

In order to prevent further deterioration of wetlands, negotiations between various countries and non-governmental agencies in the 1960s culminated in adoption of a treaty in the Iranian city of Ramsar in 1971, namely, the Ramsar Convention. This treaty, which came into force in 1975, dealt with conserving wetland habitats necessary for migratory waterbirds. The number of contracting parties (countries) has reached 160, representing all parts of the world, and nearly 1900 sites have been listed as wetlands of international importance covering more than 185 million hectares. Despite this, wetlands are still at risk of degradation due to human activities.

8. Sanjeev Sharma and Pardeep Singh eds., *Wetlands Conservation: Current Challenges and Future Strategies* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2022), 2.

9. See James Sandusky Aber, Firooza Pavri and Susan Ward Aber, *Wetland Environments: A Global Perspective* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2012).

10. E. Fluet-Chouinard, B. D. Stocker, Z. Zhang, et al., “Extensive global wetland loss over the past three centuries,” *Nature*, 614: 281–286 (2023).

11. “Revive and Restore Wetlands, Home to 40 percent of all Biodiversity,” *UN News*, February 1, 2023. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/02/1133072> (accessed on April 1, 2023)

12. G. A. Ballut-Dajud, L. C. Sandoval Herazo, G. Fernández-Lambert, J. L. Marín-Muñiz, M. C. López Méndez, E. A. Betanzo-Torres, “Factors Affecting Wetland Loss: A Review,” *Land*, 11(3): 434 (2022).

13. *Study Reveals Dramatic Loss of Global Wetlands* (May 12, 2022) <https://www.nature.org/en-us/newsroom/dramatic-loss-of-global-wetlands/> (accessed on April 1, 2023)

Rethinking Boundaries

The blurred boundary of wetlands allows the synergy of soil, water, vegetation and wildlife, and its distinctive ecosystem supports and encourages life. How does this ecological blurred boundary inspire theological reflection on boundaries?

Boundaries for others

Wetlands are zones in which the boundaries between dry land and water are blurred. The dry land cannot claim wetlands as its own. Neither can the water. The blurred boundary of wetlands creates a unique ecosystem. However, humans always tend to change the blurred boundaries of wetlands into dry land for agriculture, urbanization and industry. Interestingly such a human activity may correspond to God's act in creation.

And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good (Gen 1:9–10).

It is with God's act of drawing a boundary that the creation story begins. Can we say that it is human invasion into wetland that cultures are created? God's creation is his/her self-withdrawal where God cedes the cosmos its own space and time, which is to say an existence of integrity not obliterated by divine presence. God's act of drawing a boundary is an act of giving space for others to exist, develop and interact rather than simply an act of separation. Creation is the overflow of the infinite love of God and witnesses to God's *kenosis*. This divine *kenosis* reveals a passionate

interest in the otherness of the other, a passionate interest in letting the other unfold himself/herself in freedom, a passionate interest to pave ways for the unfolding of his/her life...It respects the depth and the mystery and the freedom of the loved one; it even keeps this depth and mystery and freedom alive and holds it open.¹⁴

Regarding giving space in creation, Jürgen Moltmann finds that a sense of *kenosis* echoes the *zimzum* of kabbalistic thought. In *zimzum*, the self empties in withdrawing, in contracting the self to make space for creation and for the other. "It is not just self-giving that belongs to creative love; it is self-limitation too; not only affection, but respect for the unique nature of the others as well."¹⁵ God's *kenosis* in creation helps us to understand God's command to humanity: "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat you shall die (Gen 2:17)." The tree of the knowledge of good and evil can be seen as the boundary between God and humans, and it is a boundary of mutual respect. This is further explicated in the Ten Commandments. Once such a self-limiting, for others and protecting practice of boundary in God's creation has been translated into dualism, exclusivism and patriarchalism, boundary carries more a sense of marginality, self-centeredness and authoritarianism, and as a result, certain groups of people are seen as living on the edge of society. In order to save the cosmos from the distorted practice of boundary, God revealed in Jesus Christ tears down the barriers of discrimination. Paul said, "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28). Tearing down barriers does not mean homogenization. Rather it is the blurred boundary in which differences are kept and respected.

14. M. Welker, "Romantic Love, Covenantal Love, Kenotic Love," in J. Polkinghorne ed., *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 134.

15. J. Moltmann, "God's Kenosis in the Creation and Consummation of the World," in J. Polkinghorne ed., *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 147.

Interestingly the two natures of Jesus Christ as fully divine and fully human constitute a striking example of barriers torn down, and this can be metaphorically seen as the blurred boundary between the divine and the human. Any attempt to sharply distinguish between the two natures of Jesus Christ distorts Jesus Christ. The Chalcedonian Creed confesses that the two natures of Jesus Christ are “without confusion, without change, without separation, without division.” The blurred boundary of Jesus Christ is also reflected in St Athanasius’ theology of *theosis*. In his work *On the Incarnation* he wrote, “For the Son of God became man so that we might become God.” I would not say that the blurred boundary of wetlands metaphorically fully expresses the two natures of Jesus Christ. Rather, in the light of God’s creation and Jesus Christ as the Incarnated God, boundary is to support life-flourishing and respect for others instead of simply separation. Returning to the concern of wetlands, first, humans should protect wetlands; second, humans should practice self-limiting *kenosis* in order to allow space for others; third, humans should challenge and tear down boundaries unfavorable to the flourishing of life.

Coexistence as together towards life

The blurred boundary of wetlands illustrates one of the world’s most biologically diverse environments, but we should not romanticize ecological coexistence as peace and harmony without violence. In fact, there are many sorts of interactions between species in ecosystems. They include predator-prey relationships, in which one species is food for another; mutualistic relationships, in which each partner to the relationship provides something the other needs; and competitive relationships, in which the interaction may be indirect through the effects that each species has on its shared environment.¹⁶ In an ecosystem, mutualistic

relationships should not be seen as morally superior to predator-prey relationships and competitive relationships. Instead of unquestionably copying the ecological system into the human community, humans as moral agents have to ask what ethical coexistence is involved. The basis of ethical coexistence is to recognize the reality of inter-dependence and the right to exist. However, there are various reasons for coexistence. First, people learn to recognize the differences among them, and so they practice toleration, mutual respect and settle conflicts without recourse to violence. Second, people choose to live in coexistence because there is no way to destroy the others. They practice toleration without mutual respect. In fact, to eliminate others is still the goal. Third, there is a kind of coexistence for the sake of exclusion. Coexistence is selective rather than open to all. Coexistence can be determined either by value-based or strategic considerations. Taking the reality of international relations into consideration, Terry Nardin rejects the normative theory of co-existence and suggests the “purposive association” or “practical association”. There may be many areas in which groups of nations will have common purposes which they will wish to pursue through purposive association. He explains:

... (purposive association) is an association of independent and diverse political communities, each devoted to its own ends and its own conception of the good.... The common good of this inclusive community resides not in the ends that some, or at times even most, of its members may wish collectively to pursue but in the values of justice, peace, security, and co-existence, which can only be enjoyed through participation in a common body of authoritative practice.¹⁷

16. Kevin S. McCann and Gabriel Gellner eds., *Theoretical Ecology: Concepts and Applications* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 5–27.

17. T. Nardin, *Law, Morality and the Relations of States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 19.

His proposal of the development of a common body of authoritative practice expressed in international law remains questionable because nations can ignore international law when they find the international law does not serve their interests. For instance, China rejects the Arbitral Tribunal's ruling in the South China Sea. My question is not whether statements of the normative theory of international relations are practical or not, but whether there is any symbol or myth that opens human consciousness to the possibility of a common goal of liberation rather than closing it off in the narrow security of reactionary conservatism. This is not a matter of "what ought to be" but some kind of utopia. Max Horkheimer comments that the otherworldly elements of religion are "a longing for something other than this world", a longing that can help to open and keep the human imagination alive to the possibility that what presents itself as the natural order of things is not the fullness of what might be.¹⁸ This is the area that I now turn to.

On September 5, 2012, the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches (WCC) approved the new mission affirmation, that is, *Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*.¹⁹ It states:

God created the whole *oikoumene* in God's image and constantly works in the world to affirm and safeguard life... A denial of life is a rejection of the God of life. God invites us into the life-giving mission of the Triune God and empowers us to bear witness to the vision of abundant life for all in the new heaven and earth ...²⁰

Together Towards Life illumines our imagination of co-existence in several ways. First, coexistence is about a culture of encounter. It is an encounter in which people open themselves and move beyond boundaries defined by nations, ideology, religion, gender, ethnicity and others. The encounter is to support an I-Thou relation instead of I-It and a practice of "radical hospitality to the estranged in society."²¹ This is reflected in Jesus' practice of meeting sinners, prostitutes and tax-collectors. Second, coexistence is about solidarity. It is "a movement taking place from the centre to the periphery, and from the privileged to the marginalized of society."²² Pope Francis uses a phrase — an ecumenism of blood — to describe a particular way of solidarity with martyrs. I would further say that we are not only united with people suffering for their faith, but also anyone who has suffered from injustice. Ecumenism of blood is a kind of coexistence in which we are the voice of the voiceless. Third, coexistence is to allow and encourage each other to participate freely. It recognizes the importance of each life and that each life is capable of contributing something to others. No matter how marginal, vulnerable and feeble one is, one's participation should not be overlooked. Fourth, coexistence is to celebrate because we are invited to the feast of life through Jesus Christ.²³ It is both a reality in the here and now and a promise. Celebration reminds us that life is about sharing rather than competing, flourishing rather than suffering oppression, living to the fullest rather than struggling to meet standards. Unlike natural coexistence, an ethical coexistence is one in which diversity is respected, encounter is promoted, solidarity is practiced, participation is encouraged and celebration is felt.

18. M. Horkheimer, *Critique of Instrumental Reason* (New York: Verso, 2013), 50.

19. This is the second WCC policy statement on mission and evangelism since the first one produced in 1982, *Mission and Evangelism: The Ecumenical Affirmation*.

20. Kenneth R. Ross, Jooseop Keum, Kyriaki Avtzi and Roderick R. Hewitt eds., *Ecumenical Missiology: Changing Landscapes and New Conceptions of Mission* (Oxford: Regnum, 2016), 355–380 (355).

21. *Ibid.*, 365.

22. *Ibid.*, 356.

23. *Ibid.*, 378.

Are wetlands by their nature pro-life flourishing? Are wetlands inviolable? The ecosystem of wetlands reminds us that there are many forms of coexistence in nature, and we should not be surprised by the possible tension among different organisms. In fact, nature does not provide the ultimate to life. It is God's grace that perfects nature. In Thomas Aquinas' words, "*Gratia non tollit naturam, sed perficit.*" *Together Toward Life* reminds us that the Spirit of God is the source of life, sustaining, renewing, healing and flourishing within creation.²⁴ It is the Spirit of God continuously working within nature implicitly and explicitly. Humans are invited to be God's co-workers (Gen 1:28; 1 Cor 3:9) to take care of, liberate, evangelize and sanctify the nature which humans are part of. At the same time, humans are co-sufferers with nature and long for God's salvation (Rom 8:20–23).

Wetlands as a geopolitical imaginary

The emergence and development of ASEAN is an example of the East Asian geopolitical imaginaries. Its effort should be recognized because it is not an easy task bringing nations with different political ideologies, social structures and histories together to work for a better regional environment. However, ASEAN is still framed in the classical geopolitics that focuses on the interrelationship between the territorial interests and power of the state and geographical environments, and territory, resources and location. Critical geopolitics tends to focus more on the role of discourse and ideology, and how the interactions between the human and physical produces geopolitics.²⁵ The critical geopolitics is to be rather more fluid and subject to interpretation. My concern then is how wetlands characterized by blurred boundaries and ways of coexistence as an ecumenical-theological model may shape and inspire people in East Asia to reimagine their lives.

First, I am not thinking how international government organisations such as ASEAN can be converted to something like wetlands with blurred boundaries, but how civil society in different nations is encouraged to emerge, develop and be connected. Metaphorically, civil society is as a wetland. ASEAN is a top-down model where nations take initiatives while the model of civil society is bottom-up where people take more initiatives. ASEAN is framed by boundaries while civil society always exists across boundaries and borders. Civil society is not the soft power of governments in international relations. Ironically, it challenges and pushes governments to be committed to life flourishing. The bottom-up model of civil society corresponds to the Catholic social teaching of the principle of subsidiarity. It means that larger social bodies should not take over decisions that are responsibilities of small groups or associations. It has its roots in the 19th century social thinkers in France and Germany and first appears in Catholic social teaching in Pope XI's encyclical *Quadragesimo anno* (1931).

The supreme authority of the State ought, therefore, to let subordinate groups handle matters and concerns of lesser importance, which would otherwise dissipate its efforts greatly. Thereby the State will more freely, powerfully, and effectively do all those things that belong to it alone because it alone can do them: directing, watching, urging, restraining, as occasion requires and necessity demands. Therefore, those in power should be sure that the more perfectly a graduated order is kept among the various associations, in observance of the principle of "subsidiary function," the stronger social authority and effectiveness will be the happier and more prosperous the condition of the State.²⁶

24. *Ibid.*, 358.

25. Klaus Dodds, *Geopolitics: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 5.

26. *Quadragesimo anno*, Article 80.

The principle of subsidiarity does not weight civil communities over governments; both must work together to meet the common good in the prevailing circumstances and conditions of human life. However, governments should protect, support and intervene less in civil society instead of vice versa. This request is particularly true in East Asia in which civil society has undergone different degrees of scrutiny and suppression. Many nations in East Asia consider that limiting the development of civil society helps to safeguard the authority of governments. Paradoxically, the suppression of civil society brings insecurity and instability to nations, not only because the legitimacy of a government comes from people, not from the suppression of people, but also because people have very limited non-violent channels to express their discontent to their government policy. The experience of wetlands teaches us that self-limiting is urgently needed so that a life flourishing ecosystem can be developed and sustained. Unlike individual persons, governments are hardly likely to be self-critical and self-limiting. Therefore, empowering civil society through connecting with and supporting one another are ways to protect and enhance life flourishing communities. Civil society here is more understood as politics of influence. Now we turn to the second point.

Coexistence in wetlands supports biodiversity. Coexistence is about the values of I-Thou encounter, hospitality, solidarity and celebration that have been articulated in this paper. In the East Asian context, the implementation of coexistence is concerned with understanding and protecting human rights. The importance of human rights discourse(s) is the acknowledgement of everyone's potential for human flourishing. Human rights are not new to most nations. ASEAN possesses four instruments and institutions to promote and protect human rights, namely the ASEAN Charter, the ASEAN Community,

the National Commission on Human Rights and the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Asia. However, we experience different degrees of the violation of human rights in East Asia.²⁷ Some violations are very serious. Besides, there are debates in the understanding of human rights in East Asia, such as, western values versus Asian values, civil and political rights versus subsistence rights, liberal rights versus collective rights and so on. The cultural, philosophical and political debate on the "Asian exceptionalism" was reflected in the Vienna Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna in 1993. The differences should be noted and understood, and not dichotomized. Edward Said argued in his classic text *Orientalism*, the very notions of West and East are problematic constructions that homogenise and obscure the dynamic complexity of both areas.²⁸ These differences should never be an excuse to justify that women's and girls' rights can be overruled because of Asian cultures. Freedom of expression can be given up because of the different degree of development of society, the right to justice can be traded off because of national security, freedom of religion and belief can be denied because of the supremacy of one's religion. I am expecting to see how Asian uniqueness can enhance our commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights rather than that maintain the status quo. Coexistence is more than living together without the use of violence; it is to speak up for others whose existence is under threat, and who are denied and deprived. Coexistence challenges the "ASEAN Way" on the one hand, and illustrates the protection of human rights as the basis of coexistence on the other.

I would not expect such an imaginary of self-limiting and coexistence-human rights to be embraced by most East Asian nations, in spite of ASEAN's vision of "a people-oriented ASEAN". Rather, it is civil society that we should expect to carry such a vision, even

27. *Asia and the Pacific Regional Overview* (Amnesty International, 2022).

28. E. W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Vintage, 1979).

if its impact remains limited. In his book, *Dreams of Peace and Freedom: Utopian Moments in the 20th Century*, historian Jay Winter writes of “minor utopias” or “moments of possibility” when a very disparate group of people tried in their separate ways to imagine a radically better world. These minor utopias are opposed to major utopias such as the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere by Japan during the Second World War. Winter describes minor utopias as visions of partial transformation that “sketch out a world very different from the one we live in, but from which not all social conflict or all oppression has been eliminated.”²⁹ I am inclined to say that churches are minor utopias or moments of possibility, but these are not confined to churches only. Theologically, first, Jesus Christ is the foundation of the church, and the life of Jesus Christ is for others and thus *kenotic*; second, churches are ecumenical and not defined and bounded by the national boundaries within which churches are located; third, churches are not a sect (though churches are in the world, they are not of the world), but they participate in *missio Dei*. Churches are like wetlands: they nurture and support human flourishing, although churches are far from offering a full realization of this theological vision. Any theological reflection and practice have to start from *metanoia* (conversion).

Conclusion

This paper employs wetlands, an ecological phenomenon, as a metaphor to think about the geopolitics in East Asia. The “is” and “is not” nature of metaphor helps us to correlate two partly different, partly corresponding, entities imaginatively and allows us to cross boundaries, think outside the box and even generate something new. On the one hand, we learn from wetlands that the blurred boundary fosters diversity and encourages coexistence in human communities. On the other hand, we recognize

the richness of wetlands and our responsibility to wetlands through self-limiting. We preserve the natural wetlands and, at the same time, we metaphorically create something like wetlands in human communities in which communal life, as characterized by the eschatological vision of *shālôm* (peace), *ashrê* (blessedness) and *tāmîm* (wholeness) revealed in Jesus Christ can flourish. Geopolitics from civil society thus is more about a vision and a practice for the promotion of life-flourishing communities rather than narrowly maintaining a regimes’ political interests. Despite its limits and weaknesses, the church as a minor utopia always has an indispensable role to play in supporting a life-flourishing geopolitics.

29. Jay Winter, *Dreams of Peace and Freedom: Utopian Moments in the 20th Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 5.

God's Timely Servant

Rev. Ray K.F. Wong ('95 BD)

"Some ministries are like a cherry-on-top, making the good even better. But I prefer ministries that are like charcoal in the snow, offering timely help to the needy," the pastor noted lightly. His statement of commitment speaks not of a lofty grandness, but nonetheless conveys a sense of determination. From Ka Fai's perspective, certain marginalized communities receive little social attention, and it is these communities that he wishes to serve and shepherd, as if bringing them warmth amidst a bitter winter. Graduated from a kindergarten and primary school organized by the Christ of Church in China (CCC), Ka Fai came to the Lord in P.5, and had been cultivating his faith in CCC ever since. Before embarking on his theological journey at CUHK, he had worked in a bank. In 1995, Ka Fai graduated from CUHK with a Bachelor of Divinity degree. Shortly after in 1998, he was ordained as a pastor in The Hong Kong Council of the Church of Christ in China, and thereafter served in different churches including Hop Yat Church Kowloon Church, Hop Yat Church (North Point), and Leung Faat Memorial Church. In 2015, he began his service at DSCCC as the Director of the Pastoral Programme,

Chaplain, and Practical Education Coordinator, and was selected as the General Secretary for Christ of Church in China in 2021.

Theology: A Fuel for Arrogance?

"In the late 80's, Hong Kong experienced an emigration wave akin to the current one. There was an acute shortage of pastors and missionaries in the church, and pastors came and went," he recalled. At that time, Ka Fai took up the responsibilities of a fellowship leader and mentor and involved himself in many teaching duties, including Bible study groups and group sharings. Since he took on the role of a teacher, he began to wonder if he should study theology, and consulted church elders on this matter.

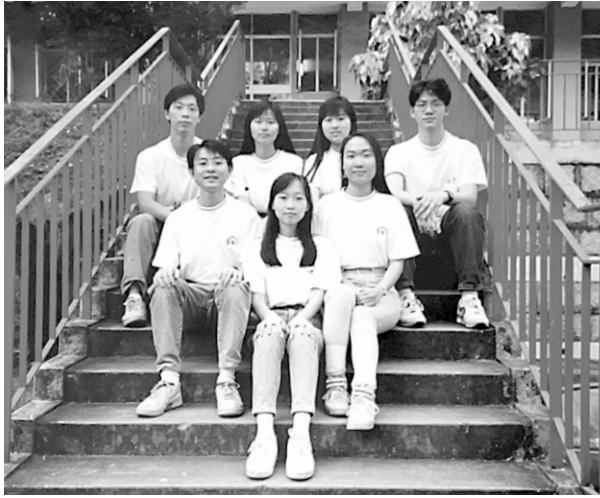
"Elders of that generation believed that ministerial passion was all that mattered, and that extensive theological knowledge would fuel arrogance and undermine one's faith." Given the advice he received, his idea of studying theology was thus shelved.

The Unpredictability of Life

One day in 1989, Ka Fai received a call from the police. The police told him that his grandmother had fainted on the street, and was taken to the hospital by passers-by. His grandmother had been taking care of him for years, and looked just fine as he left that morning; and yet just in a few hours, she was lying still on a hospital cot and, a few days later, sealed in a slumber she never woke up from. Ravaged by the mutability of life, Ka Fai re-examined his own life and pondered over ways to make the most out of his remaining time. In the same year, the number of emigrants reached a new high. Upon completion of secondary school education, Ka Fai had already been hired by a bank, where he received professional trainings and assessments of all sorts. However, driven by a need to consider a pastoral career,



Photo taken at Rev. Wong's inauguration ceremony.



Ka Fai and his wife met during their years of study, and the lady in the front of the photo is Cynthia, who was studying religious studies at the time.

he took two months off for a retreat in Cheung Chau to mull over his options and receive God's calling.

"In the holiday home in Cheung Chau, I studied the Bible every day and quietly waited for God's revelation and calling." To his dismay, nothing miraculous happened over two months, but his wallet was already wearing thin. Subsequently, he gave up on the idea of pursuing theology and went home. Much to his surprise, the "miracle" happened only after he went home, and he found the situation rather ridiculous. "As soon as I decided to give up, the Bible began to speak to me. When I was reading the Books of Nevi'im, I saw God's calling to Isaiah and Jeremiah. It was as though God was asking me the same questions, and calling me to become His servant." Ka Fai then rethought his choices. "I shared my feelings with the elders and approached Rev. Dr. Daniel Hui, whom I knew well. He used to be my fellowship mentor when I was a child, and he immediately agreed to be my referee for DSCCC application." By the time Ka Fai applied, it was already way past the deadline and selections have already been completed. Fortunately, the pastors of different churches agreed to give him an opportunity to become a publicly-funded theology student.

A Fruitful Journey

There were few teachers at the Divinity School in the 1990s, but all of them left a lasting impression on Ka Fai. "The late Rev. Daniel Chow recommended me

for scholarships several times, which encouraged me a lot," Ka Fai recalled. "Rev. Canon Alan Chan, who had back pain at the time, went swimming regularly to cure his illness, and even invited all students to join him for dips and lunch. I also remember Rev. Victor Cheung ('95BA;'97MDiv), with whom I achieved a high attendance rate. And then there's Prof. Kwok Pui-lan, whose teaching was advanced yet easily comprehensible. I had more opportunities to meet with her because we belonged to the same fellowship group. I still remember that she was nicknamed "Kwok Ting" because she got distinction in all subjects when she pursued her PhD at Harvard. Last is Dr. Joseph Kaung, who always shared the latest theological knowledge with us. His down-to-earth pedagogy was admired by many."

In addition to good teachers and friends, Ka Fai also found his lifelong companion in Chung Chi. "She was a major in religious studies. Since there were few students studying theology and religious studies, the two departments often shared compulsory courses and even extra-curricular activities. She was one of the few who resided on campus, and so we met each other more often than others. Later I had learned that she shared my birthday, and hence began to pay more attention to her," Ka Fai recalled with a bashful smile. He added that the Theology Building had nurtured quite a few pairs of lovers. After marriage, Ka Fai had to father three children of top of his pastoral work. "As a pastor, I cannot go outdoors with my children on weekends like other parents do. Attending church is our family activity,



For Rev. Wong, church activities are also his family activities.



Captured during their honeymoon in Canada with their parents, this photo was taken at Lake Louise in Banff National Park, Alberta.

and my kids have grown to attend Sunday school and worships on weekends. Living close to the church, I tried my best to meet them as often as I could. I would pick them up from school, and enjoy afternoon tea with them before meetings," he said with a smile. "My kids could always meet me when they go to church. One of our parent-child activities is listening to my sermons. I had once arranged a children's storytelling session during Sunday worships, and my kids would sit beside me to listen to the stories."

Theological Education

Looking back on his early pastoral days, Ka Fai admitted to his approval-seeking tendency, which put him under great pressure. But as he fledged and matured, he began to build his own idea of pastoral care, and started to contemplate God's views on his ministry. He also paid heed to his own behaviours such that he would not cause others to stumble. "As a pastor, 'being' is more important than 'doing'. People do not trust you for your contributions and achievements; they trust you for being genuine and practicing what you preach." Currently, he is hoping to make a positive change through his ministry in different communities. "We shall not be confined within the wall of the church. It is also our mission to promote our beliefs and ministry to our brothers and sisters, such that they may exert

influence from their social positions, be it management, headmasters, professors, kindergarten teachers, doctors or social workers."

In 2015, Ka Fai returned to DSCCC as the appointed chaplain. He noticed that the Divinity School was not only growing in size, but the teachers were also expected to be more professional than ever. "Already burdened by the university's research requirements, they are still expected to spend their free time bonding with students. On top of that, they have to maintain close ties with local churches so that they could nurture future pastors who are aware of the local situation." Ka Fai added that it is equally important for teachers to connect with students. Activities like late night snacking, watching football games, and joining overseas study tours grew strong bonds within the community. "The Divinity School set up groups like "families" so that teachers and students could engage in frequent communications," he noted. "Students are often delighted when they are joined by teachers at different activities." He expressed that pastors are not only preachers on the pulpit, but also teachers in life. Pastoral care should be more than the transmission of theological knowledge; more importantly, it has to speak into others' lives. "Nowadays, many Hongkongers have chosen to emigrate. Teachers might not have the opportunity to talk about it in class, but I believe our students will benefit from such discussions with their teachers after class."

A Timely Servant

Now that Hong Kong is experiencing another wave of migration after 1989, Ka Fai was asked if he had ever considered emigrating. "I believe God's calling is for me to serve the brothers and sisters who are staying in Hong Kong. Besides, most of my family and friends are still here. Although many have left, many more have chosen to stay. Given the circumstances, sadness and the sentiment of abandonment is somewhat inevitable in the church; it is of my wish to shepherd those who are staying, and care for the church during such times." In times of perils and uncertainties, Ka Fai's sole wish is to stay behind and offer timely help to those in need.

After assuming the post of General Secretary of the Hong Kong Council of CCC in September 2021, Ka Fai has been visiting congregations and arranging

sermons in hopes to strengthen the ties between the Council and the churches. “The change in my status has granted me opportunities to communicate and learn from church leaders. The Hong Kong Council and local churches are closely related; if they can cooperate well, they can definitely serve the community better.” In order to deliver sermons in over 70 CCC churches, his Sunday sermons have been scheduled until 2024, with some special celebrations scheduled until 2028. Ka Fai hopes that during his tenure, he might continue to help the Council in training their successors. “The emigration wave has caused a succession gap in some pastoral positions. I hope that with limited resources and strength, we might still create, find, or maintain platforms for dedicated believers to fledge. This way, we might be able to retain local talents.”

Epilogue

Compared with monotonous administrative work, Ka Fai enjoys hanging out with his brothers and sisters above all else. Human interactions excite him, even if it entails a fully-packed schedule. “On my working days, I would return to the office early in the morning to finish my paperwork so that my co-workers could follow up on administration. After that, I would attend a series of meetings and appointments. Actually, right before this interview, I had bid farewell with a brother who is going to study in the States, and there is going to be another meeting immediately after this. Next month, I will be attending an octennial meeting organized by the World Council of Churches,” Ka Fai explained slowly, his

expression humble and gentle as always. After assuming his post as the CCC General Secretary, he was elected Chairperson of the Hong Kong Christian Council, and will continue to serve as the Chairman of *Christian Times*’ Board of Directors. In September 2022, he was also elected a Central Committee member at the World Council of Churches, and will be able to speak up for the Hong Kong churches. In an article in *Christian Times*, Ka Fai noted that he would take on more responsibility after his appointment. “If the Lord wishes to use my small voice to draw the world’s attention to Hong Kong and build a bridge between churches in mainland China and Hong Kong, I believe it is my duty to do my best. May God help me!”*

* Hu Qingxin, Mak Ka-yan: “Wong as elected to be the Central Committee member at the World Council of Churches;” 王家輝當選普世教協中央委員 *Christian Times*(2022.9.7.). Website: https://christiantimes.org.hk/Common/Reader/News/ShowNews.jsp?Nid=169711&Pid=102&Version=0&Cid=2143&Charset=big5_hkscs



The family photo of the couple and their three children.

Written by Li Kwong-ping;
translated by Ivy P.Y. Chan



Devotional Camp 2023

Our two-day devotional camp was successfully held on January 6 and 7, 2023, with a total of 25 participants.

The theme of the first day's workshop was "Trauma, Loss, Divine Encounter, and Identity Reconstruction," hosted by Prof. Sonia K. Wong and the associate chaplain Ms. Vicky Shiu. Prof. Wong introduced the encounter stories of God, Moses, and the Hebrew people in the Old Testament to illustrate God's calling of Moses. Moses had multiple identities that were not recognized or accepted, and he also rejected God's call. However, God personally appeared and touched him, and through the process, Moses re-identified himself, regained his calling, and experienced a divine encounter that changed and transformed his life. Prof. Wong shared her personal experience and encouraged the participants to seek encounters with the divine during their studies at the seminary and in God's presence, as a way of renewing and enriching their lives. Ms. Shiu then led everyone to meditate through drawing, reflecting on their own identity, life experiences, and

difficulties, and, finally, to think together about the road ahead.

On the following morning, after a joint Taizé Prayer Meeting with teachers and participants, Prof. Simon S. M. Kwan, Associate Director of the Divinity School, introduced the school's history, educational philosophy, faculty, and course offerings. Then, Ms. Susan Ip, the assistant chaplain, hosted a segment during which alumni of the seminary, including Miss Yung Sumyi (MDiv 1), Rev. Ada Chiu ('13 MDiv), and Mr. Joseph Chan ('13 MACS; DProf), shared their theological journeys. The three guest speakers came from different backgrounds and graduated in different years. The host facilitated a relaxed and enjoyable conversation to help the participants understand and experience the diverse and networked features of the seminary and the rich content of theological journeys.

After individual sharing between the participants on one hand and our faculty members and chaplain team on the other, Rev. Yiu Chi-ho led a worship service in the school's

chapel. Prof. Alex Ip preached on Philippians 2:12–18 and shared his own experience of studying theology, which, for him, was transformative. He encouraged participants not only to pursue theological knowledge, but also to face discrimination and injustice with courage, trying to understand and respond to the needs of these dark and chaotic times without abandoning a Christian identity as children of God and by adopting a critical attitude towards the church and society. He admonished his listeners to be compassionate while continuously pursuing God's word and holding on to their faith in a dark age; not to forget their original purpose for studying theology; and to remain open to the possibility that God may extend, renew, deepen and ultimately transform their plans and intentions.

After the sermon, Rev. Yiu led participants in a ceremony of dedication, inviting everyone to offer their hearts to God. A total of 35 participants, including teachers, students, and visitors, attended the worship service.



Public Perception of Protestant Christianity in Hong Kong: Insights from 2021 Survey, 2023 Focus Group, and Pastoral Conference 2023



The Divinity School of Chung Chi College and the Hong Kong Christian Council have conducted a research on the public perception of Protestant Christianity in Hong Kong. The first part was a city-wide survey conducted in summer 2021 through Telephone Survey Research Laboratory of Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies. The survey found that while 58.6% of citizens have no religious affiliation, Protestantism is the most widely believed religion (17.2% of the population), and approximately 41.5% of Hong Kong citizens have a positive impression of Protestantism in Hong Kong. A report of the survey was publicly released on November 10, 2022, and can be downloaded by scanning the QR code provided.

The second part of the research was a series of focus groups to discuss the findings of the survey and the recent situation of the churches and Christian communities in Hong Kong.

The findings of two parts of the research were presented at the pastoral seminar organized by both parties on June 9, 2023.

The seminar attracted a significant turnout of 168 registered participants. Besides sharing the findings of the research, there were two panel discussion sessions. In the first session, pastors from four churches shared their experiences and challenges in the face of migration wave, pandemic, and social movements. They also shared their churches' adaptive strategies. In the second session, four speakers from youth ministry organizations and parachurch groups focused on creating innovative spaces for young people, sharing their experiences and ideas for small and flexible faith communities, appropriate materials, and linking like-minded individuals. Despite the challenges posed by various crises, the seminar recognized the opportunities that arise and the belief that everything is under God's sovereignty. The seminar also recognized the rise of new forms of being church, such as new communities for unchurched and de-churched Christians and believers with multiple church belonging.



Monday Cheer-Up Programme

Rediscovering Christian Identity in Turbulent Times



On December 19, 2022, the Divinity School held a “Monday Cheer-Up” via Zoom, with the theme of “Rediscovering Christian identity in turbulent times,” led by Prof. Alex Ip. More than 35 pastors from different churches participated.



Homecoming 2022

The “Monday Cheer-up Programme” has set up a new platform for alumni to support and accompany each other, allowing everyone to rest their mind, body, and spirit amidst busy pastoral work. We hope that through this activity, alumni can return to a familiar environment, practice spiritual exercises, engage in quiet prayer and share holy communion in a peaceful environment. They can also write down their prayers and leave them at the small chapel for teachers and students to remember, thus maintaining a connection both inside and outside the campus. On this occasion, the meeting lasted about two hours and was hosted by Rev. Yiu Chi-ho and Ms. Vicky Shiu. Recent graduates attended the event.

Animal Theology



On February 28, 2023, Dr. Yam Chi-keung gave the first of two special Zoom lectures on animal theology. More than sixty participants joined, including some of our DSCCC alumni now based in Canada. Dr. Yam is the current publisher of the Hong Kong *Christian Times*



and serves as one of our adjunct assistant professors. The two talks were entitled “Lent: Freeing the Oppressed Animals” and “Lent: Good News to the Animals.” The second talk was held on March 28, 2023.



Hong Kong Christian Women's Association and the Anti-Coolie Trade Movement (1921–38)



On April 25, 2023, the Divinity School of Chung Chi College hosted a Zoom meeting organized by the Pastoral Programme on the topic of “Supporting the Pastoral Ministry during the New Normal.”

During the event, Prof. Christina W. Y. Wong presented on the topic of the Hong Kong Christian Women's Association and the Anti-Coolie Trade Movement (1921–1938). She discussed the background of the coolie trade and the first controversy in the 1880s, as well as the anti-coolie trade movement from 1920 to 1938. She also covered the parliamentary debates (1920–1921), the rally at Tai Ping Theatre in July 1921, the anti-coolie trade declaration, Dr. Yeung Siu-chuen's

speech against the coolie trade at Tai Ping Theatre, the establishment of the Anti-Coolie Trade Association, and the abolition policy and ideology of anti-coolie trade.

Prof. Wong also spoke about the involvement of the Hong Kong Christian Women's Association in promoting the movement, and shared speeches from notable women such as Madam Ho Kai Tong, Madam Tse Duk Lee, and Madam Irene Tozer. She also discussed the contributions of non-local organizations, including the Anti-Slavery and Protection of Aborigines Society, the Industrial Committee of the National Council of Women of Great Britain and Ireland, the Women's Committee of the Fabian Society, and the International

Woman Suffrage Alliance. Professor Wong pointed out that the movement received support from both the Chinese Nationalist Party and the communist labor movement. The Southern government (i.e. the Sun Yat-sen government) issued a proclamation abolishing the system of “mei-zaai” in 1922, and the Canton Women's League prepared to establish an industrial school for women. The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in Guangzhou also sent representatives to attend the conference and speak. Su Zhaozheng, an early leader of the communist labor movement, was also a member of the Anti-Coolie Trade Association.



Open Week

First Lecture:

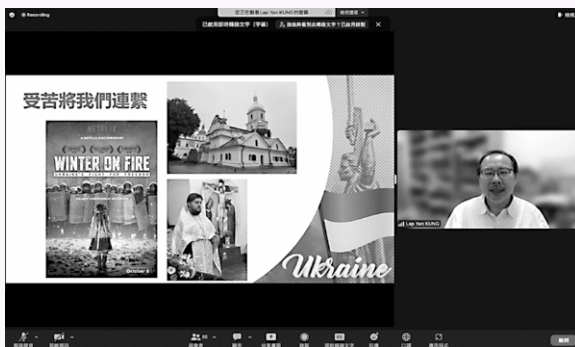
Life as Luggage — Visiting Ukrainian Refugees

On November 15, 2022, the first online course experience of the seminary was held, with Prof. Kung Lap-yan as the speaker and over 110 participants in attendance.

Prof. Kung shared his story of visiting Ukrainian refugees in Romania in June 2022, as well as the struggles, trauma, and aspirations of some of the

refugees. He also shared how the Romanian church welcomed and served the refugees, and showed video clips of conversations with Romanian pastors to help participants understand how the local church and refugee center served refugees from different Christian backgrounds by celebrating different holidays, sports, art, and language learning, among other things. He urged people to have the courage either to act or to resist when facing war, suffering, or injustice, and to discern between the two. He also encouraged people to have the resilience and creativity to endure suffering, to see the light in the darkness, to maintain a pure heart, and to resist loneliness.

Finally, Prof. Kung reflected with the participants on how Chinese churches in Hong Kong can better serve refugees seeking political asylum by breaking down language barriers and understanding their needs.



Second Lecture:

Back to 1841 — Starting with the First Christian Archive in Hong Kong

On December 13, 2022, the divinity school held the second online course, with Prof. Ying Fuk-tsang as the speaker and nearly 100 participants in attendance. Prof. Ying was on sabbatical and conducting research at the Academia Sinica in Taiwan at the time.

He briefly introduced the history of the British occupation of Hong Kong and the geography, population distribution, and overview of Hong Kong at the time. He also mentioned the historical significance of the British choosing “Zhou Shan” and Hong Kong as their bases.

Prof. Ying used the first Christian archive in Hong Kong to launch the lecture, discussing the history of missionaries inspecting Hong Kong from Macau and introducing archives written by missionaries such as J. Robert Morrison, William Lockhart, and William Charles Milne. He also provided an overview of the report from missionaries inspecting Hong Kong in 1841, which provides insight into their evaluation of Hong Kong at the time. He analyzed historical materials related to the British occupation of Hong Kong Island.



Third Lecture:

Narrative and History — From Judas to the Formation and Transmission of the Gospel

On January 10, 2023, the third online lecture was delivered by Dr. Xie Ganlin, titled “Narrative and History—From Judas to the Formation and Transmission of the Gospel.” Over 130 participants attended via Zoom.

Dr. Xie emphasized the importance of studying Judas and pointed out that there is relatively little research on him in the Chinese-speaking Christian community. He led participants to read and discuss how Judas was portrayed and described in the Gospels of Mark, Matthew, Luke, and Acts.

He used early German passion plays, 16th-century art, and stained-glass paintings depicting Judas' death to help us understand the process of Judas' “stigmatization” and to reflect on the relationship between the Gospel and history, the veracity of the records, the formation and transmission of the Gospel, and the relationship between history and facts. He also introduced traditional historical criticism and literary methods under new historicism to illustrate the relationship between biblical texts and the effects of history and listed the process of the Judas narrative becoming more concrete in the Gospels. He pointed out the narrative style of the “traitor paradigm” in other documents and its connection to the portrayal of Judas in the Gospels. Finally, he concluded that the Gospel authors were not historians but interpreters of the truth, who could reflect unique Christian ideas and cultural contexts of both the authors and readers, as well as the “effects” of, “memories” of, and “responses” to the events of Jesus.



News from the Asian Practical Theology Association (Hong Kong)

“「他者」 Other-wise”

Co-organized by the Hong Kong Christian Council and the Asian Practical Theology Association (Hong Kong), and co-sponsored by our School, the “Other-wise” lecture series was officially launched on June 27, 2022, with 60 participants attending the first lecture. The

purpose of the course is to explore different theoretical approaches to understanding “the Other” so as to question the assumptions underlying practical perspectives, broaden our imagination of universal unity, and enrich resources for practical reflection. The six lectures: “The

Others” in Critical Theory; “The Others” in the Dispersed Experience; “The Other” in Political Reality; “The Other” in Feminism”; “The Other” in the Church Community”; “The Other” in Disability Theology.

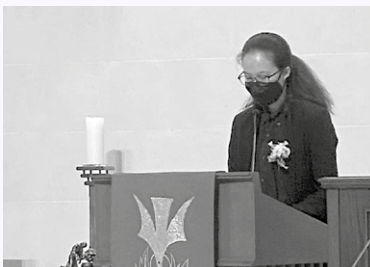


Ordination of Rev. Dr. Leo K. H. Li

Dr. Leo Li, known affectionately as “Leo Sir” by our students, is a lecturer at the Divinity School teaching biblical Hebrew and the Hebrew Bible. He is also the warden of the Theology Building and a volunteer preacher at the Church of Livingstones (Kowloon). On the afternoon of April 30, 2022, he was ordained as a pastor at the Church of Livingstones. The ordination ceremony was organized by the church and co-hosted by our institution, with over 200 people attending both in-person and online from around the world.

In his testimony, Rev. Leo Li shared his spiritual journey, the confirmation of his calling, and his pastoral philosophy. He noted that being ordained as a pastor was more profound than anything else he had experienced. He hopes to combine his pastoral and teaching roles, applying what he has learned from his studies and nurturing believers in the complexities of Hong Kong society through the Bible. He shared that he felt honored to be recognized as the Lord's representative as a pastor

and hoped to wholeheartedly serve his community.



News on Asia Association of Practical Theology (Hong Kong)

【「他者」 Other-wise】 Talks



Co-organized by the Hong Kong Christian Council and the Asia Association of Practical Theology (Hong Kong), and co-sponsored by DSCCC, a series of six lectures on “Other-wise” was successfully concluded last summer. After the course, participants gathered on August 8, 2022, for a post-lecture discussion.

In the first part, Ms. Pang Suk-yi, assistant executive secretary of the Hong Kong Christian Council, explained the relationship between “Other-wise” and universalism. She pointed out that the universalist movement originated from the missionary movement of the 19th century and the 1910 World Missionary Conference. It was the encounter with the “Other” in non-Christian cultures during the missionary enterprise that spurred reflection on missionary practices. She also briefly introduced the Universalist Social Pastoral Internship Program

that has been held since 2007. The program is designed to broaden participants’ social pastoral vision by focusing on different “Others,” including youth, women, refugees, sexual minorities, individuals with special educational needs, the deaf, drug addicts, etc. The program aims to encourage direct interaction and participation, as well as deep understanding and reflection. From past experiences, Ms. Pang pointed out that encountering the “Other” may challenge us to think about the wisdom of differential treatment, to listen to their voices, and to respect



their differences while seeking common ground. She reiterated that the six lectures on “Other-wise” presented historical “Other” voices to the participants, providing them with a richer understanding and imagination to encounter and transform with them truly.

In the second part, Prof. Simon Kwan, President of the Asia Association of Practical Theology, explained the relationship between the “Other” and practical theology. He began by discussing the history of practical theology in Hong Kong and its focus on practical theological education. He then briefly introduced

the four models of practical theology and emphasized that the primary characteristic of practical theology is to transform society, the church, life, or the human heart, and to move the world towards justice and love in line with God’s will. Practical theology workers use their “down-to-earth” common participation to build bridges between theology and practice through research, discussion, action, and establishment. Professor Kwan pointed out that dissatisfaction with the “Other-ness” of reality and the experience of conflicts with one’s understanding of the world can often become a driving force for transforming the world. He also noted that the “Other” is not just about difference, but is often stigmatized, marginalized, and even repressed at different levels of power. He reminded the participants of the danger of oversimplifying or typifying the “Other,” and cautioned against “othering” while hoping to transform the world.

The third part of the meeting was a sharing session where participants reflected on the six lectures.





On September 8, our school held the Term Commencement Service. 182 guests, faculty, students, chaplains, and new students attended in person, including Rev. Ma Chi-ming, the Chairman of the executive committee of the Hong Kong Council of the Church of Christ in China, Rev. So Shing-yit, the Chairman of the Theological Council of DSCCC, Prof. Simon Fung and Rev. Lam Kam, members of the Board of Directors, and Rev. Pele Ko, the chaplain of Chung Chi College. Our director, Prof. Francis Yip, associate directors Prof. Simon Kwan and Prof. Tobias Brandner, Prof. Kung Lap-yan, Rev. Leo Li, Prof. Sonia Wong, Prof. Colten Yam, Dr. Xie Ganlin, our Chaplain, Rev. Yiu Chi-ho, associate chaplain Ms. Vicky Siu, chaplain assistant Susan Ip, and part-time teacher Rev. Ng Wai-man, Dr. Cheng Hon-man, and Dr. Natalie Chan were also in attendance. Prof. Naomi Thurston

and six students attended via video conferencing due to quarantine restrictions.

Introduction of New Students

After Rev. Ma's sermon, Prof. Francis Yip introduced the new students from different programmes and Dr. Xie Ganlin prayed for them.

After the service, a sharing session was held, hosted by Rev. Yiu. The new students' pastors shared their support and encouragement. The details will be published in the *Lamps Aflame* (a booklet for new students).

The Lord's Commission

For this year's Term Commencement Service, Rev. Ma Chi-ming, the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Hong Kong Council of the Church of Christ in China, delivered

the sermon on the topic of "The Lord's Commission." He looked back on his thirty years of ministry and shared many insights. He invited everyone to reflect on what message and gospel to preach in these times of social upheaval, fluctuating pandemics, and troubled hearts. He also advised the students not to "follow the trends of the time" but to remember that the Lord's message is the essence of the gospel itself, even in the face of new technologies, models, and media.

He mentioned that studying at a seminary, writing articles, and participating in discussions was like carrying a bag of rice on one's back, making one too busy to notice the genuine needs of people around us. When we complete our courses and enter the ministry, that is when the real practice of the Lord's commission begins.



News about MACS Retreat Day

Due to the pandemic, our most recent graduates have attended the majority of their classes via Zoom, with limited exposure to campus life. On June 11, 2023, at the beginning of the summer break, the Chaplaincy Department arranged a one-day retreat for the MACS students, with a total of 20 attendees experiencing a condensed version of campus life. The chaplain Rev. Yiu Chi-ho, associate chaplain Ms. Vicky Shiu, and chaplain assistant Ms. Susan Ip

were each responsible for different parts of the retreat.

In the morning, Vicky led everyone in a “static zero” meditation exercise, followed by a meditation walk along/on the Alumni Trail. During lunch, everyone participated in singing hymns together, as has been the school’s custom during Thursday evening assemblies. In the afternoon, Susan, in charge of pastoral care for students in the

MACS programme, led a reflection session, allowing students to reflect on both academic and personal issues. Prof. Francis Yip also attended the session, encouraging students to be salt and light in their own spheres of influences. The students expressed their gratitude to Susan for her care and the various thoughtful arrangements during the sharing session. Finally, Rev. Yiu presided over the communion and student commissioning.



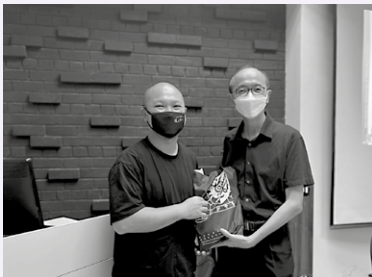
MACS Winter Break



At the end of last semester, over 20 MACS students gathered during the winter break. On January 4, 2023, Chris Yiu ('14 MACS), a part-time teacher, opened the “FAMtastic” center for students, where they can gather and share their experiences of student life. The event was initiated by second-year MACS students, Wen Nansheng and Li Yingyin, and coordinated by our chaplain assistant, Susan Ip. DSCCC chaplain, Rev. Yiu Chi-ho, also attended this first physical gathering

of the new academic year for MACS students, during which younger students shared the joys and struggles of reading, while older students encouraged them and cheered them on as laughter filled the room.

The gathering also featured a “chocolate-cutting ceremony,” during which students shared a 4.5-kilogram chocolate bar and wished each other success for the submission of their end-of-term assignments. This made the occasion even more memorable.



2022 Orientation Day

On September 3, 2022, we held our annual Orientation Day introduce new students to what they need to pay attention to on their future theological journey.

In the first session, Prof. Francis Yip introduced the characteristics and spirit of our school. Next, Associate Director Prof. Simon Kwan spoke to the students on matters relating to academic integrity and introduced CUHK's plagiarism-detection

software "VeriGuide," a powerful tool that can assist those who are not familiar with academic writing to reference and cite correctly. Later, Mr. Leo Ma, director of the New Asia College Ch'ien Mu Library and the United College Wu Chung Library, explained how to make optimal use of library resources. Lastly, associate chaplain Vicky Siu and Chaplain Rev. Yiu Chi Ho led the new students on

a campus religious and cultural tour, accompanied by Rev. Pele Ko, chaplain of Chung Chi College who introduced the College Chapel and its history.



2022–2023 Term Commencement Camp: A Theological Voyage

From August 30 to September 1, our school held a three-day retreat camp themed "A Theological Voyage", with over 80 teachers and students participating.

The three-day journey included activities like "finding companions", "in search of a home", "finding teachers", "finding joy", "finding treasure" and "finding the way", to engage the new students in their theological journey.



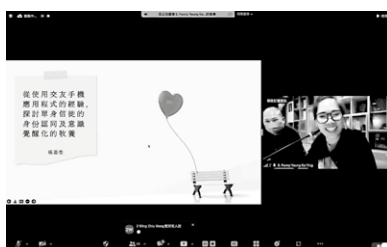
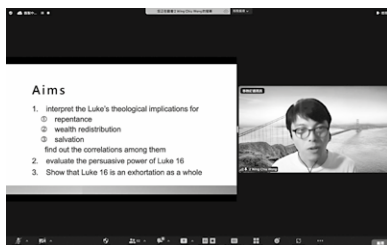


Prof. Francis Yip, our director, concluded the opening ceremony with a prayer, expressing gratitude for bringing the new students together to learn and equip themselves at the Divinity School of Chung Chi College. He encouraged everyone to respect each other and forge new friendships during their theological journey. He pointed out that there may be calm or rough waters ahead, even the possibility of drowning, but he prayed that the Lord would be with everyone in different environments. He also prayed for the new students who could not attend, and prayed for justice, peace, and joy, so that everyone could learn how to be salt and light in the world.

On September 1, 2022, at the closing ceremony of the camp, students led the worship with hymns. After three scripture lessons, Prof. Francis Yip delivered the sermon. He began with the story of Jonah and Jesus calming the storm, pointing out that the storms in both stories were unusually fierce, with the strong winds and waves. Both Jonah and the disciples felt afraid and unsure about how long this situation would last. The characters in both stories faced the fear of death, feeling threatened not only by the forces of nature, but also by the evil powers

that caused these storms. Prof. Yip stated that when we face chaos, suffering, and challenges, when we feel anxious and uneasy in the face of various anti-epidemic measures resulting from the pandemic and the challenges brought about by the new wave of emigration, and when we have to make choices about our future, we believe that the biblical stories resonate with our situation. He reminded everyone that we are not alone because Jesus is on the boat with us, and we can bring our fears to Christ, believing that the power of Jesus can control the storms and transcend the demonic powers behind them. He also mentioned the shocking experience of encountering Christ for theology students based on their faith; seeking a deeper understanding of their faith, he noted, was the driving force for embarking on one's theological journey. He guided students to think about the mission that God has given to each person and pointed out that the theological journey is not just about knowledge and intellectual development, but also about the spiritual development of the whole person.

GT Salon: Graduate Students Share Their Research Results



On the evening of June 9, 2022, our School held its first Graduate Thesis Salon via Zoom, hosted by Prof. Christina W.Y. Wong. Eight graduating students shared their thesis outlines, writing processes, and reflections. They came from the programmes Bachelor of Divinity and Master of Theology and covered topics of different subjects and

disciplines. Each student had about fifteen minutes to present his or her thesis, followed by a Q&A session with the participants. The event attracted more than 65 teachers and students from various courses.

After the introductions, Prof. Sonia Wong provided some practical writing tips to remind students to focus on

the details while being ambitious, and to actively discuss with teachers and classmates for inspiration when writing their papers. According to Prof. Christiana Wong and Prof. Sonia Wong, the purpose of this event was to allow graduating students to share their research results and pass on their writing experience to other students.



Rev. Daniel T.W. Chow

Memorial Service

The memorial service for Rev. Chow Tin-wo was organized by TTM and co-organized by our school. The service took place at the Hong Kong Alliance Church on July 3, 2022.

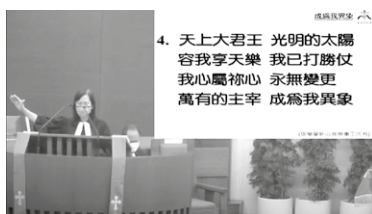
During the service, a brief biography of Rev. Chow was presented, and a video clip of Rev. Chow's wife, Mrs. Li Yuk-chun, was shared. Mrs. Chow described Rev. Chow as a faithful and devoted husband. Prof. Yip, our director, mentioned that although Rev. Chow did not teach him, he often heard positive comments about him from alumni. Everyone referred to Rev. Chow as a humble and gentle teacher who kept a low profile. His dedication to unity and his foresight were also evident in the merger of the Lutheran Seminary and the Divinity School of Chung Chi College. Prof. Yip further noted that Rev. Chow had published books on spirituality and the study

of the New Testament, serving pastors and believers both locally and abroad. A former colleague of the Divinity School of Chung Chi College, Mr. Joseph Kuang, also expressed his fond memories of Rev. Chow through a video recording.

After the Bible reading, Rev. Leung Kam Wah delivered a sermon. He mentioned that Rev. Chow was a scholarly pastor who lived out God's word in his life. He also shared some little-known stories about Rev. Chow. Others paid their respects by sharing fond memories of Rev. Chow through video recordings. The Hong Kong Alliance Church united choir sang a Hakka song "Beautiful Lord Jesus" in tribute to this respected pastor of the Alliance Church.

Apart from members of the Alliance Church, many of our DSCCC alumni, including Rev. Lo Lung-kwong ('76 MDiv), Rev. Yuen Tin Yau ('78 MDiv; '90 MTheol), Rev. Thomas Pang ('82 BA), Rev. Yung Chuen-hang ('84 BD; '97 MTheol), Dr. May Cheung ('85 BD), Rev. So Shing-yit ('85 BD; '93 MTheol; '17 DTheol), Dr. Eric Wong ('86 MDiv), Rev. Paul Kan ('88 BD), Rev. May Poon ('91 BD; '11 MTheol), Rev. Luk Kin Man ('91 BD), Rev. Timothy Lam ('92 BD; '20 MTheol), Rev. Timothy Yeung ('92 MDiv), and Elder Wong Fook-ye ('09 MATS) also attended the memorial service.

Rev. Daniel Chow passed away on February 26, 2023 (Hong Kong time) in Boston, USA, at the age of 96. He was a New Testament scholar who taught at our school



from 1976 to 1992. He was also the head of the Divinity School from 1988 to 1992 and served as acting college chaplain of Chung Chi College from 1990 to 1992. He was a pastor of Hong Kong TSPM and served as that church's Deputy District Pastor (1982-1984) and District Pastor (now called General Pastor) (1984-1998). He was also Head of the Theological Seminary of Basel Mission in Hong Kong (1984-1998). Rev. Chow was a beloved teacher, pastor, and leader who made significant and profound contributions to our institution.



The Global SITIS

(Summer Institute of Theology and Intercultural Studies 2023)

The Global SITIS (Summer Institute of Theology and Intercultural Studies 2023) was held in Hong Kong from May to June 2023, as a pilot program before its official launch in 2024. The program was sponsored by the Southeast Asia Theological Education Foundation to support Asian theological educators and doctoral students from different parts of the world to participate for courses and theological discussions.

The participants included theological educators and doctoral students from Central Philippine University in the Philippines; Abdiel Theological College and Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana in Indonesia; Institute of Myanmar Graduate Studies in Myanmar; Seminari Theoloji Malaysia in Malaysia. The group also consisted of nine students from Vanderbilt

University, and two teachers, Dr. Annalisa Azzoni and Prof. Graham Reside. Our School hosted a welcome dinner for the group on May 18.

The Asian participants were able to choose from two summer courses offered by our school, including "Special Topics in Biblical Studies II: Ancient Goddesses" taught by Dr. Annalisa Azzoni, and "Chinese Christianity" taught by Prof. Naomi Thurston.

On May 29, the participants gathered to share how they engage in theological exploration in their respective contexts. The program aimed to become a hub for Asian theological educators to interact with global partners, promoting exchanges and dialogues between global and local theological research.

Participants also had the opportunity to take a Hong Kong local study tour, which allowed them to explore the city and learn more about its culture and history. The tour was a great way for participants to engage with the local community and gain a better understanding of the context in which they were studying.

At the farewell gathering, Director Francis Yip gave a speech. He expressed his gratitude for the many theological exchanges that took place among the participants, especially in the context of different cultural and religious traditions. He highlighted that this event marked a great starting point for theological exchanges in Southeast Asia, and expressed his hope for fruitful discussions in the future. Prof. Sonia Wong also invited the participants to

promote the Global SITIS programme when returning to their home countries. The participants also had their valuable feedbacks to the school at the gathering, hoping to make the next exchange programme a better one.

Overall, The Global SITIS (Summer Institute of Theology and Intercultural Studies 2023) was able to provide participants a unique opportunity to engage in theological studies and cross-cultural dialogue. The program is set to launch officially in 2024 and

is expected to continue to attract participants from around the world, further promoting exchanges and dialogues between global and local theological research.



Thailand Study Tour

After being suspended for three years due to the pandemic, the overseas exchange and study tour finally set sail again in 2023! A group of 21 people from the theological seminary, including Associate Director Prof. Tobias Brandner, our Chaplain Rev. Yiu Chi-ho, Associate Chaplain Ms. Vicky Shiu, Prof. Naomi Thurston, and our supporting staff Miss Zoebelle Wong, along with 12 students and 4 alumni, embarked on the trip with a flight from Hong Kong to Chiang Mai on May 5, 2023. The study tour is also one of the elective courses (THEO5964 Christianity in the context of Thailand) offered by the seminary, worth 3 credits.

The itinerary was packed with visits to various religious sites and institutions, including a Buddhist temple, McGilvary College of Divinity, and the Christian Communication Institute. The group also had the opportunity to attend Sunday worship services at two different congregations (The First Church of Chiang Mai and Payap Church) and participate in joint meals and activities with local churches.





In addition to the religious and cultural experiences, the group also visited several schools, including the Payap University and Christian Conference of Asian. In Mae Sot, they spent whole day visiting Kaw Thoolei Karen Baptist Bible School, Love and Care Learning Center, Children Development Training centre school and Bangkok Institute of Theology (BIT). The group also visited the Church of Christian Thailand and met the leadership of the church to know more the Christianity in Thailand. They also learned about the ministry provided by Hong Kong missionaries for sex workers and missionary workers during a lunchtime sharing session at Well Hub, Bangkok.



Despite a tight schedule, the group managed to squeeze in some free time, including a visit to the Sunday night market in Chiang Mai, refugee center and individual dinners throughout the trip.

The trip was a valuable opportunity for students to broaden their horizons and gain a deeper understanding of different cultural and religious backgrounds. In the past, our school provided students with similar opportunities to study and exchange in various parts of the world, including Mainland China, Japan, Indonesia, Switzerland, and other countries.





New Teacher Introduction

Bruce Worthington

Assistant Professor

Hello, thanks for having me at Divinity School of Chung Chi College! I am incredibly happy to have arrived when I did, the weather in Canada has started to turn cold, perfect timing! By means of introduction, my name is Bruce Worthington, and I am the new Professor of New Testament here at Chung Chi College. I have come here after finishing my PhD at the University of Toronto and this is my first time in Asia! I must admit, as much as I miss home, there are some things I already love about Hong Kong, including the lovely food, friendly people, and active living. I have already joined a volleyball league and cycled the lovely Hong Kong coastline!

Before coming to Hong Kong and during my PhD, I worked professionally as an American country music singer, living and recording for a while in Nashville Tennessee, touring the continent playing shows. I had a radio hit in 2018 which made things quite busy for me, especially as I was trying to finish my dissertation and play over 100 shows per year. It was difficult for me to maintain excellence in both academia and the entertainment business, so I decided to focus on my main gift, which is teaching and writing about the New Testament.

My expertise is the New Testament and Critical Theory, which is simply using modern philosophy to help understand the New Testament better. My work uses some elements of traditional biblical studies, such as Greek language and historical criticism, however I typically use modern philosophy to better

understand the conditions of the ancient world.

As an example, my PhD dissertation used the philosophy of Alain Badiou and his notion of the “event” to map out the development of early Christian subjectivity. Badiou suggests that subjectivities, political bodies, and ultimately “truths” exist in relation to events that happen in the world. I find Badiou’s work fascinating and incredibly helpful for mapping out the relationship between event and subjectivity in the development of early Christ groups. His book “Saint Paul: the Foundation of Universalism” completely changed the path of my academic work and I highly recommend it. My dissertation has a contract with Fortress Press, and I hope to have the book out soon.

My latest project is on the topic of populism and Christianity, entitled “Populist Features of the New Testament.” In this project, I use the work of philosopher Ernesto Laclau and his book “On Populist Reason” to examine the relationship between populism and Christianity in the ancient world. One of the reasons populist groups today find the bible so useful as a rhetorical tool is because there are populist elements to the earliest Christ groups themselves, which can be found in the Synoptic gospels, the letters of Paul, and the book of Revelation. I am passionate about this topic of study, insofar as we can bridge the gap between the ancient and modern world to better understand why the bible is used by populist groups today.

In Canada, I had the opportunity to live at Saugeen First Nation, which is a nation of indigenous folks on the shores of Lake Huron, one of the Great Lakes. Though I am white—not indigenous at all—I was welcomed by the community there and have learned so much from my friendships, especially with the Elders in the community. At Saugeen, I attended an indigenous Pentecostal Church, which was full of life and music, testimony, and fellowship.

Theologically, I believe in the centrality of the resurrection of Jesus, as an event that has happened in the world. There is a diversity of commitments and fidelities that exist in relation to this event, and (as Badiou teaches) we strive to live out the consequences of this event in the world today. Not everyone will have the same response to this event, so there is a variety of fidelities (or denominations) that respond to the resurrection of Jesus in diverse ways. For me, the event of the resurrection cannot be known in the world other than through the task of proclamation, so there is a certain degree of militancy, or courage, that the individual believer must have, so that the resurrection may be known in the world.

Thanks so much for the privilege to teach and learn alongside you. I hope that we all might have the courage to live out the consequences of the resurrection in our daily lives, scholarship, and academic work this semester—may we be up to the task!

Director in News

Prof. Francis Yip was invited to speak on the theme “The Church in a Post-Covid World” as the keynote speaker for the Council for World Mission (CWM) East Asia Region 2022 Regional Assembly, which was conducted online on May 24, 2022. Representatives from CWM member churches in Hong Kong, Korea, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, and Taiwan attended the assembly.

On November 4, 2022, he attended the Nicene Creed Hymn Concert organized by the Hong Kong Christian Council and the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong. He spoke on the significance of the ecumenical Chinese translation of the Nicene Creed of 381.

On November 10, 2022, Prof. Yip and Prof. Wong Fook Yee, former honorary general secretary of Hong Kong Christian Council, presented the report on the “Survey on Public Perception of Protestantism in Hong Kong 2021” (research collaboration between DSCCC and Hong Kong Christian Council). Prof. Yip also presented the survey report at a meeting of the Theology & Ministry Department of the Hong Kong Council of the Church of Christ in China on December 12, 2022. A series of focus group meetings were conducted to help interpret the findings and to gain insights from various parties through in-depth discussion. The last meetings were held on February 27, 2023. Interpretations and insights from the focus groups were compiled into a report and was presented at pastoral conference on June 9, 2023.

From March 26 to April 8, he visited several Christian universities in Seoul, South Korea, to learn about the current situation of higher education and theological education in Korea. This was a study trip under the United Board Fellows Program, organized by the United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia, providing opportunities for higher education leaders in Asia to enhance their leadership and management skills. He has also participated in and successfully completed the Program’s Leadership Seminar offered by Singapore Management University in early July 2023.

On April 10, Prof. Yip attended the 50th Anniversary Thanksgiving worship of the CUHK Student Fellowship, and was invited to share as a former member of the fellowship in the 1980s. On April 22, he attended the 70th anniversary banquet of the Chinese Christian Universities Alumni Association (Hong Kong).

On May 18 and 19, he delivered a speech at a symposium on the Sinicization of Christianity, co-organized by the National Committee of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, China Christian Council, and the Hong Kong Christian Council. His speech was titled “Theological Education and the Sinicization of Christianity: A Hong Kong Christian’s Perspective.”

Teachers in news

Prof. Tobias Brandner

On March 18, 2023, Prof. Tobias Brandner presented a paper on “Chinese missionaries abroad” in the Chinese Christianity Studies Group (CCSG) at their annual meeting in Boston, U.S. (online).

On behalf of the Divinity School, Tobias Brandner attended the Christian Conference of Asia’s Regional Consultation on the topic of “Towards Theological Education on Good Governance” in Chiang Mai from November 27 to December 1, 2022.

Between June 20 and July 11, 2022, he attended the conferences of the European Academy of Religion in Bologna, Italy, the European Association for the Study of Religions in Cork, Ireland, and the International Association for Mission Studies in Sydney, Australia (online) where he presented papers on various aspects of Christianity in Hong Kong and on cross-cultural Chinese mission overseas.

Prof. Brandner was invited as a guest professor at the Ludwig Maximilian University Munich to teach a block seminar course on ‘Christianity in East Asia’ on June 24–25 and July 1–2, 2022.

Prof. Tobias Brandner co-led a workshop at the University of Basel, Switzerland, on African Christianity in Europe and in Hong Kong on June 7, 2022.

He presented a paper entitled “Resilience on the Road: The spread of religious beliefs along China’s Belt and Road Network” at the Annual Conference of the European Association of the Study of Religion (EASR) in Pisa, Italy (by zoom).

From May 5 to 13, 2023, Tobias Brandner led a study tour of the DSCCC to Thailand, visiting Christian institutions and theological schools in Chiang Mai, Mae Sot, and Bangkok, institutions for Karen refugees along the Thai-Myanmar border, and places of worship of other faith communities.

From May 18 to 29, 2023, Tobias Brandner led a local study tour with students from DSCCC, Vanderbilt Divinity School, and ATESEA member schools (Indonesia, Philippines, Malaysia, Myanmar) visiting Christian churches and NGOs, places of worship of other religious communities, and secular NGOs.

Upon invitation by the Hong Kong Christian Council, Tobias Brandner has been appointed as an advisor to the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches for the period until 2030. From 21 to 28 June, he attended the Central Committee's meeting in Geneva, Switzerland.

Prof. Christina W. Y. Wong

Prof. Christina Wong presented a paper entitled, "Ecclesial imagination" in a Moment of Kairos: A Study of Christian Youth Protest Against the Church in Hong Kong", the Ecclesial Practices Unit of 2022 American Academy of Religion on November 21, 2022.

As a board member of Asian Women's Resource Centre for Culture and Theology, Prof. Christina Wong worked with an editorial group from alumni of the divinity school to publish a special issue of *in God's image* (June 2022), a journal promoting Asian Feminist Theology. This issue is called as "Stories of Post Hong Kong" to recall our Hong Kong Stories for the last three years from a feminist theological perspective.

Prof. Sonia K. Wong

Prof. Sonia Wong attended the Global Virtual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature (March 27–31, 2023) and presented as one of the panelists in the following sessions: "Activism and the Bible in Asia" and "The Hebrew Bible and Hebrew Bible Studies in China."

She attended the conference of Global Network of Research Centers of Theology, Religious and Christian Studies (Stellenbosch, South Africa; January 15–21, 2023) and presented a paper "The Acts of God and Restorative Justice in the Story of Joseph and His Brothers."

She organized a Hebrew Bible Study Group to read selected passages in the Hebrew Bible for a small group of students during March to May, 2023.

She attended the Tel Aviv Bible Department's Research Seminar on "Biblical Characterization: Common and Rival Stories" on December 20, 2022 through Zoom with Professor Koog P. Hong of Yonsei University and the members of the East Asian Old Testament Study Group.

She attended the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature (Denver, USA; November 18–22, 2022). She was invited as one of the panelists of the workshop "Navigating Academic Job Searches in Different

Institutional Contexts" organized by the SBL Status of Women in the Profession Committee. She also presented two conference papers: "Cross-Textual Hermeneutics: A Dialogical Approach to Biblical Studies in Asian Contexts" and "'Not by Might nor by Power': Antimilitarism and Demilitarization in the Deuteronomistic (Hi)Story".

Prof. Colten C. Y. Yam

Prof. Colten Yam was invited to be a visiting fellow for a research visit at KU Leuven, Belgium during February 15–March 8, 2023.

He was invited to present two papers at The Annual Meeting of Society of Biblical Literature, November 19–23, 2022 in Denver, USA: "Basil's Monastic Understanding of Evil" in the program unit Early Exegesis of Genesis 1–3, and "Philo's Prob 75–91 in Light of Eusebius of Caesarea" in the program unit Philo of Alexandria.

He presented a paper "Two kinds of Pneumatologies in Augustine's De Trinitate" at the Sixth Chinese Patristic Philosophy Online Conference conducted by the Fudan University on September 24, 2022.

Prof. Yam presented a paper entitled "Basil on animal's body" at the conference of "Koinonia of Chinese Christian Theologians" on June 24, 2022.

Prof. Yam was invited to give a keynote speech "Basil of Caesarea and the Debate of Animal Intelligence in Late Antiquity" at the conference conducted by the School of Philosophy at Fudan University in the series "Philosophy as Way of Life and Medieval Philosophy" on June 10, 2022.

Prof. Yam was invited by the Institute of Sino-Christian Studies to give a lecture on Philo of Alexandria's doctrine of creation via Zoom on April 7, 2022. Around 90 scholars and postgraduate students from the universities in the Mainland China and Hong Kong attended the lecture.

Prof. Yam's research project entitled, "Contextualizing De spiritu et littera: Analysis, Commentary and Latin-Chinese Bilingual Edition" was successfully funded by the Early Career Scheme 2021–22 from the Research Grants Committee.

He received the Teaching Development and Language Enhancement Grant 2021–22, CUHK for the project titled "Developing Pronunciation and Mnemonic Techniques in Ancient Greek Learning".

Prof. Yam was elected to be the awardee for the Best Teaching Award (2021/22) by the DSCCC Student Union.

He has 3 publications:

1. "Basil's Use of Oppian in Homiliae in hexaemeron 7: His Source of Zoological Knowledge Reconsidered." *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 27/1(2023): 147–72.
2. "Philo's Knowledge of Physicians and Medicine in His Later Roman Writings." *Studia Philonica Annual* 34 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2022), 93–112.
3. "Basil's Knowledge of Astronomy." *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 26/1(2022):126–44.

Prof. Ying Fuk-tsang

Prof. Ying Fuk-tsang was invited by Alliance Bible Seminary to be a speaker during their "China week" on February 8, 2023.

Prof Ying was invited by the Graduate School of Religion, Chung Yuan Christian University, Taiwan to be a speaker in a public lecture on History of Christianity in China on December 21, 2022.

Prof. Ying was invited to be a Visiting Scholar by Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, Taiwan during his sabbatical leave in Term 1. He was invited to be a speaker in a public lecture on History of Christianity in China by Institute of Modern History on December 14, 2022.

Prof. Ying was invited to deliver a speech "They are for the Faith: Protest Model of Minjian Chinese Christians" at the Annual Meeting of Taiwan Association for Religious Studies conducted by the Althea University on October 22, 2022.

Prof. Ying Fuk-tsang was invited by the College of Humanities, National Taipei University to be a speaker at the 2nd Workshop on Hong Kong and Macau: From Taipei to Hong Kong: Culture, Mobility and Practice. He presented a speech on "The History of Hong Kong Christianity from a Diasporic Perspective" on September 23, 2022.

Prof. Ying was invited by the Vancouver BC Forum to deliver a series of online workshops "A Centennial Appraisal of the Anti-Christian Movement in China" on September 20 and 27, 2022.

Prof. Ying was invited to give a sharing on the history of Hong Kong Christianity organized by Church History Taiwan Society on September 17, 2022.

Prof. Kung Lap-yan

On May 4, he attended a zoom seminar organized by the University of Pittsburg, and gave a talk on Religion in (Post-) Socialist Societies — China and Hong Kong.

From April 23 to 26, he attended a Council of World Mission 2023 East Asia Region Members Mission Forum at Singapore, and gave a keynote speech on Wetlands as an Ecumenical-Theological Metaphor for a Geopolitical Imaginary in East Asia.

From April 13 to 15, 2023, Prof. Kung Lap-yan attended a conference of Religion in Modern Education held at Canberra, Australia, and presented two papers titled "Lived Spirituality and Lived Religion: Religious Studies (Christianity) for Intellectual Disabilities in Hong Kong" and "A Curriculum Adjustment Synergy Between Religious Education and Life Education: a Hong Kong Case".

Prof. Kung was re-appointed as a member of the Senate Committee on Sub-degree, Professional and Continuing Education Programmes for the period from August 1, 2022 to July 31, 2023.

Prof. Kung was also awarded with 25-year Long Service Award. The prize presentation ceremony was held on September 7, 2022.

Prof. Naomi Thurston

Prof. Naomi Thurston was elected Director of the China Christianity Studies Group (CCSG), founded in 1983 by Kathleen Lodwick to promote the study of Christianity in China as an academic field in its own right.

She has joined the Steering Committee of the AAR China Christianities Unit for a term of five years (2023–2028).

She presented a paper on Moltmann's "New Political Theology" in China and the Beijing Summit of 2014 on March 15, 2023 at Princeton Theological Seminary as part of the World Christianity Conference co-organized by Princeton Theological Seminary and Overseas Ministries Studies Center at Princeton Theological Seminary.

She chaired the annual meeting of the China Christianity Studies Group on March 18, 2023 in Boston and also present our journal as part of a special panel on publication opportunities in the field of China Christianity studies and Chinese theology.

Her research project entitled, "Moltmann in China: A Sino-theological Reception History" was successfully funded by the Early Career Scheme 2022–23 from the Research Grants Committee.

She presented a paper on the "Sino-Christian Critique of Culture" at the Chinese Theologies Conference III: Academic and Diasporic Theologies on June 1–2, 2022. The conference was hosted by the Council on East Asian Studies at Yale University.

Prof. Bruce Worthington

Prof. Bruce Worthington, our newly appointed Assistant Professor, reported duty on December 8, 2022.

Prof. Worthington was invited to present a paper "Populist Features of the Book of Revelation" at The Annual Meeting of Society of Biblical Literature, on November 23, 2022 in Denver, USA.

He presented a research paper on the topic "The Impossibility of Community in the Study of the New Testament" at the Canadian Society of Biblical Studies Annual Meeting on May 28, 2023.

Staff in news

Congratulations to Prof. Alex H.H. IP for his substantiation and his advancement to Associate Professor.

Miss Vicky S.M. Shiu, has been promoted to associate chaplain of the school effective from July 1, 2022.

Ms. Tsang Ka-wing, Miss Wong Pui-foon, and Ms. Li Kwong-ping received 15-year Long Service Awards, and the prize presentation ceremonies were held in 2022 and 2023.

TSPM/CCC Delegation

On May 20, a delegation of 22 representatives from The National Committee of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant churches in China (TSPM) and the China Christian Council (CCC) visited Hong Kong. Eleven members visited our School, including Rev. Wu Wei, President of the China Christian Council, Rev. Shen Xuebin, Residential Vice President of the China Christian Council; Rev. Dr. Gao Feng, Chairman of the Supervisory Board of the China Christian Council and President of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary; Rev. Yue Qinghua, Vice Chairman of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee of the Protestant churches in China and President of Fujian Theological Seminary; Rev. Dr. Lin Manhong, Associate General Secretary of the China Christian Council and Academic Dean of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary; Rev. Wu Weiqing, President of the Beijing Christian Affairs Council; Rev. Lou Shibo, Vice President and General Secretary of the Zhejiang Christian

Council; Prof. Zhang Zhigang, Boya Chair Professor of Peking University; Prof. Yan Kejia, Director of the Institute of Religious Studies at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences; Ms. Shi Meiyang, Secretary of the Overseas Relations Department, China Christian Council and National Committee of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Churches in China, and Mr. Jiang Guoqiang, Secretary of the Theological Education Department of the China Christian Council. Members of The Theological Council and faculty members of the Divinity School of Chung Chi College received them. Director Francis C. W. Yip introduced to them the statue of Jesus washing the disciples' feet

and the architectural design of our chapel, including its Chinese cultural elements. Afterwards, they attended a luncheon hosted by our school at the Royal Park Hotel in Sha Tin. The representatives from our school included Rev. Canon Dr. Chan Hin-cheung, Acting Chairperson of the Theological Council, Elder Dr. Simon S. H. Fung, Rev. Tim C. Lam, Mr. Richard L. K. Tsang, members of the Theological Council, along with the Director, Associate Director and faculty members of our school.

Rev. Wu Wei presented an artistic table cloth and a set of books (including four volumes of collected papers on the Sincization of Christianity) on behalf of the visiting delegation. Rev. Gao Feng also presented a copy of "Compilation of Historical Materials of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary" (《金陵協和神學院史料匯編》). Our school presented each member with a commemorative model of the President Chi-tung Yung Memorial Building and Chapel, as well as a metal bookmark.

