

Golden Anniversary for Hong Kong



The Methodist Church in Hong Kong celebrated its 50th Anniversary this autumn with a Thanksgiving service attended by 7,000 people including representatives from the UK. The inspirational communion service on Advent Sunday was tempered by the news of the Tai Po fire and the service started with a two-minute silence and prayer by the President Revd Tim Lam.

The history of Methodism in Hong Kong is almost as long as the British influence there. From small beginnings initially among service personnel, the first English Methodist Church opened in 1893 (Now the Methodist International Church, MIC). What was being celebrated this Advent Sunday was the joining of two strands of Methodism which came to Hong Kong as the Maoist government expelled



Celebrating Holy Communion

missionaries following the establishment of the People Republic of China in 1949. The two strands were the British Methodist inspired *Tsun To Kung Wooi* 'Follow the Way' church, and also the American United Methodist *Wei Li Kong Hui* 'Defend the Truth' Missions.

They worked side by side and in October 1975 the two strands of Hong Kong Methodism united to form the Hong Kong Conference. At first the English Methodist Circuit remained aloof but in 1988 the Methodist Circuit with its church and all the other buildings and assets, were transferred from the British Conference to become a circuit within the Hong Kong Methodist Conference. Today Hong Kong Methodism is made up of twenty-five local churches in four Circuits, many of which are in leased premises on a floor of a building, seeking to worship and serve their community with energy and vision.

In addition, Methodists undertake a monumental amount of community service to the city: There are 8 Methodist secondary schools, 11 primary schools and 12



Children from Methodist schools lead the singing

kindergarten and day nurseries. The Church also is responsible for social service centres employing hundreds of social workers and outreach workers at The Methodist Centre, Yang Memorial Methodist Social Service, Asbury Social Service, Epworth Social Service and Kwun Tong Social Service, as well as a caring and mission work in Macau.

Mission programmes are a significant part of the work of the church and include an evangelistic ministry, outreach to prisons, a mission to the Indonesian helpers, the Putonghua Fellowship. The Macau Mission reaches out to residents and the Filipino community. All this undertaken by a vibrant but relatively small church.

In his pastoral letter to the Methodist Church Hong Kong, President of MCHK Revd Tim Lam wrote that the spirit of 'unity' over these fifty years had enabled the church to support one another, collaborate together and utilise resources for the benefit of Church members and society in Hong Kong.

In his pastoral letter Revd Tim Lam brought a note of realism about current political and social changes: 'In recent years, our church has seen a decline in attendance and offerings due to the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and the surge of emigration'. Nevertheless, he notes, the Church and its leaders are not disheartened and offer a vision for the future.



Revd Lam preaching to the vast congregation

The plans for the celebrations were to, 'streamline our structures, pool our resources and rebuild our spiritual culture so that we may draw closer to the Lord and glorify Him in our service and life.' As a result, the theme for the celebrations was, 'Following our Roots of Faith, Co-creating New Chapters'.

As part of this reflection the MCHK Pastoral Committee published a booklet, 'The Core Beliefs and Traditions of Methodism' and distributed it to every member. The

intention has been that church members and fellowship groups will benefit from studying the document. A clear understanding of the churches Wesleyan roots, it is suggested, will help chart the way forward.

A prayer for the church in Hong Kong:

May this Hong Kong Methodism
have strong foundations of faith,
high hopes for ministry,
far-sighted vision
with a deep well of kindness
for all who come.

May all who enter its life
find sacred space,
places of sanctuary;
be nurtured in faith,
challenged by the gospel
and receive amazing grace.

Through God's empowering Holy Spirit
May they share Jesus' mercy and hope,
encouraging one another with overflowing love
to share faith,
serve the community
and stand for justice,
that with One Voice
they may give Glory to God.

Howard and Rosie Mellor
Revd Dr G. Howard Mellor



Methodist and ecumenical guests with MCHK leaders