

# MCHK

The Methodist Church, Hong Kong

香港基督教循道衛理聯合教會



# NEWSLETTER

Issue 02 May 2011

## Challenges Ahead Moving On Hong Kong Calling

To be a disciple who is willing to offer  
MCHK Youth Ministry

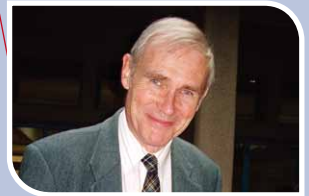
A Soul Garden A Sacred Place





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## Editorial

# Challenges Ahead

The Revd Prof Lung-kwong Lo  
President of the Methodist Church, Hong Kong

**Much** has happened since the publication of the first issue of the English Newsletter 6 months ago. The Revd Dr John Illsley who has served the Methodist International Church, Hong Kong (MICHK) for almost 9 years decided to return to England this summer for his last stationing before his retirement. Under his visionary leadership, MICHK has grown significantly in terms of Sunday attendance, ministries and revenue. I must thank God for John's service at MICHK!

The Methodist has a fine tradition — the Stationing System. Pastors may be stationed to other posts after they have served in the same circuit for 5 to 7 years. New stationing gives pastors good opportunities to renew their ministry and enable different local churches to benefit from the leadership of good pastors. After almost 9 years of service in Hong Kong, the Revd Dr John Illsley will be stationed as the Superintendent of the Bury Circuit of the British Methodist Church in the coming September. He will surely be missed but we are sure that God has shown and led him to move into another phase of his ministry. We pray that as John moves forward with our blessings and the valuable experience he has had in Hong Kong, brothers and sisters in England will be blessed!

With God's guidance, we are pleased that the Revd Canon Dr Howard Mellor will serve as the Senior Minister of MICHK as from 1st September 2011 and will be coming to Hong Kong with his wife, Rosie, in August. Howard has served in different circuits in the UK for 15 years and in the prestigious Cliff College for 21 years, 11 years of which as tutor and the Director of Evangelism for the Methodist Church and 10 years as the Principal. The mission of Cliff College is to train evangelists. Howard is now the head of the Vocation and Discipleship Development of the British Methodist Church. At present, he is in London preparing himself to develop disciple training in MICHK.

In this transitional period and while the Revd Dina Chamberlain is recuperating, we are happy that the Revd Marybeth Asher-Lawson is helping with the pastoral work as a contract Associate Pastor of MICHK.



▲ (left) The Revd Canon Dr Howard Mellor, Mrs Rosie Mellor and the Revd Prof Lung-Kwong Lo.

After 4 years of discussing and planning, the fourth General Building Plans (GBP) we submitted was approved by the Building Authority in August 2009 which allowed the redevelopment of MICHK into a 24-storey building. MICHK planned to use 10 floors while the Conference and social services would take up 11. Three storeys would be living quarters for the ministers of MICHK and the President of the Conference. But Government has published in Gazette a new height limit on the land used by "government, institution or community" in Wan Chai. We thank God that we can still redevelop the site based on the approved plan but we think this policy is unjust and unreasonable. We will join with other churches and social service agencies to voice our opposition.

The approved plan for MICHK was slightly amended in March this year. It will be valid for 2 years, that is, until April 2013. The Standing Committee has decided to finalize the building plans within 2 years and to start the work in 2013. In the Representative Session of the Conference this year, fund raising activities will be launched, hoping to raise 300 million dollars within 7 years.

All these are very exciting. Let us thank God and remember them in our prayers. Let us get involved and give support. May our Lord grant us faith and strength as we take up all these new challenges! 🏰



# Moving on

Revd Dr John Illsley

To paraphrase Ecclesiastes 3. "To everything there is a season, a time to come to Hong Kong and a time to leave." The arrival for my wife and I was nearly nine years ago and those nine years have been so special. On a personal level both are children have graduated in that time, both married and both have now got families of their own. So when we came here there were four in our family; there are now nine! We have travelled to places in the world that we had only dreamt of before, places like Beijing, Vietnam, Myanmar. But we had had the privilege of sharing in the life of the church. God has worked some amazing things in those nine years. I list a few:

- It has been my privilege to preside at some 700 weddings and share in preparing young couples for married life.
- I have baptised over 400 new Christian believers.
- The church has changed its name from Methodist Church (English Speaking) to Methodist International Church, Hong Kong (MICHK).
- We now have four sites for worship, from the two previously.
- And we have seen significant growth, having doubled the number of services.

The church is one of the most amazingly cosmopolitan churches in Hong Kong, with some 25 different nationalities all worshipping together and a dramatic increase in our English speaking congregation.

In all this I have been so well supported by my wife, Jean, my excellent Filipino colleague, Rev Jess, other staff members and by some committed leaders. There have been disappointments of course, and not everyone has been happy. In particular the building scheme has not yet started.

But Christ never said it was going to be easy or straightforward. Of course there are failures and setbacks but I will never forget the privilege I have had. But in the words of Tennyson, "the old order yieldeth place to new as God fulfils Himself in many ways, lest

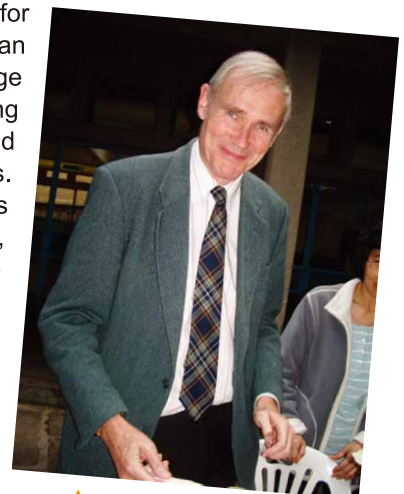
one good custom should corrupt the world." We will be leaving Hong Kong in July to return to UK. I am to serve again in the British Methodist Church as Superintendent of the Bury Circuit – it is 16 churches and 6 ministers just north of Manchester. Reflecting the sad decline in Christianity in UK, two Circuits are being amalgamated. Of the two previous Circuits, four staffs are leaving and at present there are only two new ones arriving – a Methodist minister from Uganda and me. So if you would like a job in UK, this may be your chance!

In my place we have already welcomed Rev Marybeth Asher-Lawson as Associate Minister and in late August Rev Canon Dr Howard Mellor comes as Senior Minister. Both are excellent and are amazing answers to my prayers and I know many others prayers.

In UK when a minister arrives in his or her new appointment the church makes a commitment to them; in particular the church commits to its minister to "work with you and pray for you." I ask you to do that.

MICHK also will be launching its rebuilding project this year. For MICHK and the whole Methodist Church this is a tremendous opportunity, a once in a lifetime project. It will be demanding and challenging but should united us under God's vision and purposes. I will look forward to being asked back to the opening service!

At MICHK there are amazing possibilities. In Christian work, the best is always still to come. There are so many opportunities for mission, particular as Wan Chai continues to change and develop. I hate leaving and July will be a sad occasion in many ways. But the work of God is bigger than any person, thanks goodness. So God bless to all. 🇬🇧



▲ Revd Dr John Illsley



# Hong Kong Calling!

Revd Canon Dr Howard Mellor

**I**t all began when we were on our honeymoon in St Ives, Cornwall attending an evening service. It was the Overseas Missions Sunday and the preacher announced in the course of his sermon that he was sure that there were two people in the congregation who were called to go overseas. We looked round this ageing congregation and decided there were only two people eligible for this prophecy – Rosie and I! That was millions of years ago but it has curiously stayed with us all this time. The call to join the staff of Cliff College was such a clear leading and we stayed for so long that the prospect of serving the World Church has not been possible, until now...

Not that is, until across my desk at Methodist Church House in London, came the advert for a Senior Minister in Hong Kong. I had first met Revd Lung Kwong Lo in the early eighties, when he was studying in England and so I thought I must find a minister to help and told him so. Then one day a World Church Secretary dropped in the chair beside my desk and said, 'Howard, you should go' - what me! I asked for more details and Rosie and I began to think and pray about it. One Sunday we had a long discussion over breakfast and then, with the discussion ringing in our heads and hearts, we went to church. Nothing unusual there, but when it came to the intercessions the Minister began to pray about Hong Kong. I nearly fell off my chair.

It was that event which galvanised our thinking – it did seem God was calling us to Hong Kong. We really set about talking with trusted colleagues and eventually I contacted Professor Lo indicating that, though I had failed to find a suitable candidate for this post, it seemed God was pointing us in the direction of Hong Kong.

I had better report that a number of things had changed in the last few months. Last summer my father died suddenly which meant that all our parents were not with us. Similarly our three children were all in their twenties and relatively independent. Although an enthusiastic teacher Rosie had been thinking she

was ready for a change from her present post. I have three years to offer the Church and if the Hong Kong Methodist Church were content with that then, we would be delighted to come and meet people at the Methodist International Church. Everything seemed to open up and so we came to Hong Kong in February with two questions: 1) is there a task and a ministry for us to engage in that will use our gifts and graces such as they are; and 2) will the invitation be unanimous?

The welcome we received, the hospitality from the Church and Conference that was offered, could not have been more gracious, open and honest. The whirlwind 5 days culminated with clear evidence of how we could build on John and Jean Ilesley's significant ministry and moreover a unanimous invitation

was offered just before we boarded the plane. We met our children in a Chinese restaurant in London (very suitable), and with them decided this was God's call to our family, that Rosie and I should come this summer for three years to work with the Methodist International Church and Circuit. It was with great peace of heart and mind that we wrote to accept the offered appointment in the Hong Kong Conference at this remarkable church. It will be a delight and privilege to serve in the best way we can. We are sure that the God who prompted all of this will equip us, enable the church and for all of us, encourage our discipleship and mission. 🇬🇧



▲ Children of Revd Mellor, Lydia, Beth and Tom



▲ Revd Canon Dr Howard Mellor



# Tithing or freewill offering?

Revd Lincoln Leung

**Someone's** wife first became a Christian, got baptized and joined a church. But the husband, though being a believer for years, did not want to follow suit. Why? The church required tithing (10 per cent of giving). The husband was reluctant to do so.

Should the church put an emphasis on tithing? This is a very difficult issue. Tithing was required according to the laws in the Old Testament but not in the New Testament, which only says, "God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Cor 9:7) But we have found that the churches that tithe are more prosperous than those that don't. One of the reasons is, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Mat. 6:21)

## Requirements in Old Testament

In the Old Testament, the law required the Israelites of tithing. They were to give God a tenth of their income (Lev 27:30).

The first person that ever tithed was Abraham. He gave Melchizedek a tenth of everything in his plunder (Gen 14:18). Later on Jacob made a vow and promised to give God a tenth as a token of gratitude (Gen 28:22). When it was Moses' time, tithing became a requirement in the law. After the Temple was built, tithing was made into a tax, which provided for the expenses and sacrificial rites of the Temple.

Prophets reproached those who did not tithe, saying that they had "robbed God" and they were under a curse (Mal 3:8-9). But for those who tithed, they could even "test" God to see if he would throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessings that they would not have room enough for it (Mal.

3:10). Here, we must be careful when reading this passage or we would be misled by the wrong beliefs in the teaching of 'prosperity gospel', thinking that we could receive a hundred times of income through offering (Mak 10:29-30). This would be false and cause people to have a wrong motivation and make them greedy. The goal of offering is not the "return". Old Testament scholars told us that the Israelites gave more than one tenth. All the offerings for festivals (Deu 16) and welfare purposes (Deu 14:28) made a total of 23%.

## Requirements in New Testament

As Christians under the New Testament, do we need to comply with the law on tithing? The New Testament does not stress tithing for believers. It only says, "On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income." (1 Cor 16:2) It is a routine and the amount is based on your income. And in 2 Corinthians 9, Paul mentioned a few principles for offering, "(1) Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. (2) Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, (3) not reluctantly or under compulsion, (4) for God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Cor 9:6-7) As explained by a Reverend from Singapore,

1. The amount of an offering is not most important. We need to look at how much we earn. If we earn a lot, we should give more than one tenth. Ten percent is only a basic requirement.
2. We give as our heart tells us. We need to know why we give – the ministry and the needs.
3. Only a cheerful heart is pleasing to God.





## Freewill offering

We give because God loves us and we want to love Him. Sacrifice is at the heart of offering. It is like God sacrificing his only son or the widow who gave all she had (Luk 21:1-9) and the Lord commended her.

The Bible tells us that David provided materials and presented treasures to the temple of God because of his "devotion to the temple of my (his) God." (1 Chron 29:3) He asked who he was that he "should be able to give as generously as this." It was because "everything comes from you (God)." (1 Chron 29:14) David challenged the people and asked them, "Who is willing to consecrate himself today to the Lord?" (1 Chron 29:5) If we read 2 Chronicles 31, we will see that during the time of Hezekiah, the Israelites gave a tithe of everything freely (2 Chron 31:14). Tithes and freewill offering can be made at the same time. They do not contradict each other.

If a person loves God and loves his neighbours as he loves himself, he will not mind how much or little he gives because he was willing to do so. In fact, the amount of a tithe is not so big that it will affect our lives substantially. If it does and we can't tithe, God will not be calculating. As someone says, one tenth is only a reference.

When I was pastoring a church, I would encourage my congregation to tithe. But I wouldn't stress it. What I found important was "freewill offering" and I needed to practise what I preached. But "freewill" doesn't mean carefree. We need to be serious when we give.

I remember a time when Ms Margaret Kaung, our treasurer, asked me whether Christians needed to comply with the laws and regulations in the Old Testament and give tithes. My answer was "freewill offering". A year later, she said to me, "You know what? In freewill offering, I gave more than one tenth." What she said is still true. 🇲🇲



▲ Revd Lincoln Leung



# *To be a Disciple who*

**In** the Representative Session of the Conference last year, Ministerial Session set the theme for the church in the days coming: to cultivate a Church culture based on Bible; to be a Disciple who is punctual and willing to offer. The theme has not been improvised and is not for the coming year only. The Bible is the basis of our faith. We have taken it for granted and it seems not important anymore. Some of us may even have put our focus on other things like increasing the number of members, the amount of offering or the enhancement of facilities or the variety of activities. We have forgotten that the Bible is the basis of our faith and that the first thing the church needs to do is to teach the Bible.

This goal carries the most basic core value of the church whose basis is the Bible, which guides us in our lives and value system. Also, 'Jesus' disciple' is most fundamental to our identity. 'Disciple' and 'Christian' has a similar meaning in the Bible (Acts 11:26b). Jesus commanded us, "Go and make disciples of all nations." (Mat 28:19). It says here that all Christians are disciples and our mission is to go and make disciples for Jesus. What the Bible asked of us as his disciples is the same as that he asked of his Twelve. Disciples are known for their love for the Lord Jesus. They love him more than anyone or anything in the world including their parents, brothers, sisters, wives and their own lives. Loving God is the pinnacle for our lives. With that, Jesus taught us to love others as we love ourselves and to carry our cross and follow him.

We cannot define what life is but we can set up some indicators of life like time, money, talents and our body, which will show our commitment to our faith in the way

we use them. In the last issue, we mentioned about offering our talents to God. And in this issue, we talk about offering our money. Since the collapse of USSR and some Eastern European communist countries in 1989, what we have left in the world is mainly a capitalist society and the rest of the communist or socialist countries have become very market-oriented. In the core of capitalism, money is the basic unit for all human transactions. For example we use our time and talents, even to the point of damaging our health, and in return we receive money as the reward. Nevertheless, not all types of work or achievements could be quantified in terms of money. What housewives do for a family cannot be measured by money. Or for pastoral staff or workers in voluntary groups, they would rather earn less or even work for free because they see changes in people's lives and improvement of living conditions, which are more important than money. However, money remains the basic unit for values in our society. How should we as the disciples of Christ Jesus use money? This tells our core values! This is why Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Mat 6:21)

Christians are, unbelievers might think, silly people – going to church, volunteering, serving in the church and giving offering. We do all these because we confess that God, the creator of all things, is the Lord of our lives. We have experienced powerlessness in our morality and our lives; we have seen the love of Jesus Christ and that the church is our home. Then we will be happy to give as it is as natural as we make contribution to our own family.



# *is willing to offer*

Speech by Revd Professor Lung-Kwong Lo

Compiled by Editorial Team

## Members reluctant to give offering as it would be shared with other churches?

I have been a pastor here for 35 years and understood that our brothers and sisters are not more indifferent than those in other churches. We have more people giving offerings than some long-established denominations. But because of our nature and the little teaching we have on money, we have fewer people giving than those denominations which are not Conference based (like the Christian and Missionary Alliance and Baptist Church) and some young independent churches. Most of the offerings are used in the churches themselves. They do not redistribute or share their human or financial resources as we do.

Our church is different because we only have one Methodist Church in Hong Kong. The Kowloon Methodist Church and Chinese Methodist Church, Wan Chai, for example, are churches we set up in different districts. Whichever church you belong to, you will be first a member of the Methodist Church and then a member of that church. The same applies to pastors. They are pastors of the Methodist Church and are sent to serve different churches. As for our financial system, each local church pledges to the Conference every year a certain amount of money as their finances and expenditure shows. As it is written in the Bible, the church is the body of Christ and is like a vine. It has different parts or branches. Those who have more should share with those who have less. Under this system, the bigger church may feel more burdened or the smaller one may say that they do not have the resources and are more needy. Our structure is set to share resources, both human and financial.



▲ Revd Professor Lung-Kwong Lo

This sharing of financial and human resources is a wonderful system. It is a realization of what the teaching of Jesus about sharing in the body of Christ. But when we practise it, it is hard to be impartial as human beings are selfish. We may feel that our offerings are not used in our own local church and may be less willing to give. This is one of the reasons that has kept people from giving. But this is because some of our church members do not have a proper understanding of our system.

Upon leaving Hong Kong, the British Methodist Church gave all their property to the Methodist Church in Hong Kong. One of them was Sailors and Soldiers Home, which has now become The Wesley. This project with developer has brought forward money which is not spent on salary raise for pastors, or basic training ministry or renovation works. We have spent the



money on projects which are not supported by regular offerings. Examples are overseas missions, theology education, mainland ministry, and education and social services not supported by the government. The Methodist Church depends on offerings for its operation. This is our principle. The church must depend on our brothers and sisters for both human and financial resources. If we use the funds we obtain from the society to run the church, we will make our members lose their heart for offering and the church will decline.

### Tithing: a must?

Some churches require their members of tithing. They do not let them do so casually but see first whether they understand what tithing is and have committed themselves to their faith. Their brothers and sisters can only tithe when their application for so is approved. If they can, it is something they can be proud of. Churches differ in their culture and history. Those with a long history have already adopted certain ways of doing things and only few can practise tithing. Our church has a long way to go in asking all members to tithe.

### A cheerful giver and a sacrifice of the whole person

Rev Lincoln Leung has pointed out in this issue that giving of a tenth in the Old Testament is a law, God's commandment and our duty. Malachi 3:8-9 says that the Israelites robbed God in their tithes and offerings. However, in the New Testament, nothing was mentioned about tithing. This is not to say that the Old Testament is outdated, but the New Testament has been updated. It is no longer a covenant with one race. Jeremiah says that God's covenant with men will not be written on stone tablets but on their hearts. Tithing is not mentioned in the New Testament but it does not mean denying what was said in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, much has been said about being a cheerful giver, and giving of not only money, but our talents, our body and our time. It is giving our whole person, our whole life. It asks for even more.

Offering is a response to the love of God. It is a principle we find in the Bible. All things come from God and all we have belongs to him. In offering, we only return what we have received. It is an expression of our love for God, a response to his power and grace. As said in Malachi, we give not because we are afraid of the curse of God but to provide "food in my house" as the church is our home.

### Give as needed? No!

We need enormous amount of money for projects like renovating the Methodist Retreat Centre at Mui Wo and rebuilding the Methodist International Church at Wan Chai and many other needs in the church. Pastors have kept reminding our members of offering and it seems that we want their every penny. We have not understood it properly! The church does not hanker after money and so forcing members to give. Some brothers and sisters need to know whether the church is in deficit. Then does it mean that we only give when the church is in need? If we believe so, we have got it wrong. This way of giving is not in line with the Bible.

The church is the house of God and it is also our home. Offering is like supporting our own family. We don't give money to our parents because they 'need' it but because it is our duty to our family. The biggest mistake we have today is that we only give when the church is in need. This will end up into a vicious cycle and is a reason why church members are not bothered to give.

### Offerings to other Christian groups the same as tithes?

Many brothers and sisters have asked whether the offering given to the church only is regarded as tithes. What about those given to other Christian organizations? If we have become so calculating, we will not be a cheerful giver.

Offerings show how we manage our money. When giving to God, we can do so through giving to our church or other Christian organizations or even



voluntary groups. I don't think there is any problem if someone thinks that it is a part of his tithes. But those who really want to give a tenth will not care about such. If we see the church as our home, we will give it first! If some of us want to support some brothers and sisters working in certain Christian organizations, it may be more appropriate to do so through giving to the local churches to which they belong (instead of giving directly to them or their organizations). They are our sons and daughters and the church would support their ministry. So, could offering to other Christian organizations be regarded as our tithes? This is not a question at all. But when you count the money you give in offering, there will be a problem.

## Tithing and money management

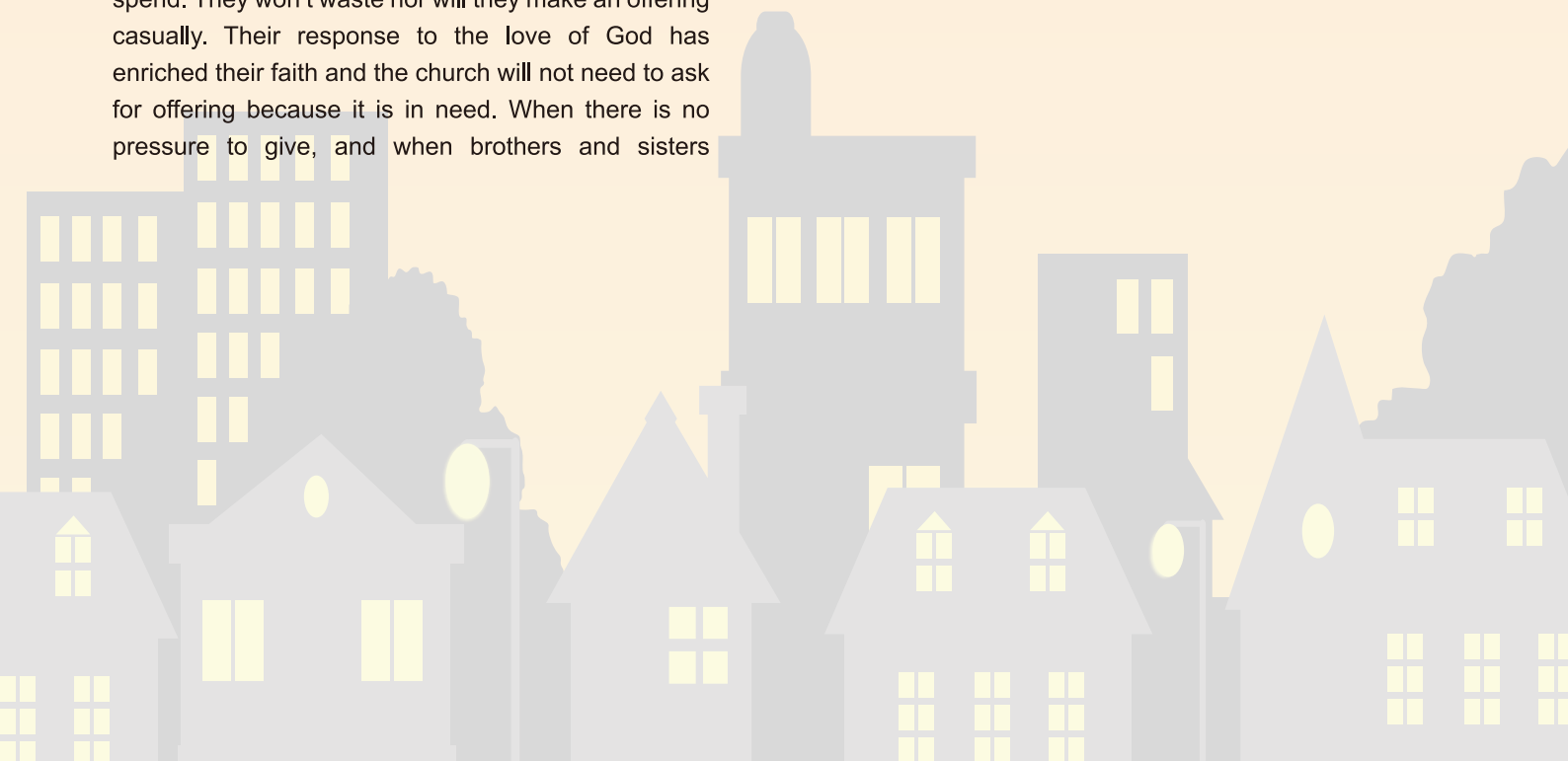
For those who just start working, tithing may bring some pressure, as there are also many other expenses. However, parents need to teach their children tithing, using their pocket money. Don't wait till they start to work. They will then learn to include tithes in their plans. Tithing is a planning activity but many brothers and sisters do not plan their spending and think they have less if they give. But many have shared that they haven't got less and learned to be a better servant of God. They have better plans on how they spend. They won't waste nor will they make an offering casually. Their response to the love of God has enriched their faith and the church will not need to ask for offering because it is in need. When there is no pressure to give, and when brothers and sisters

dutifully give as they respond to the love and grace of God, the church shall not be in want.

## An action as a response of love

Have we forgotten that our family, talents and money all come from God? Have we responded to God with our love? Offering is an action, showing our faith in and love to God. A tenth in the Old Testament is only a reference. A cheerful giver often gives more.

Offering is a response to God. It is our responsibility to God. It is an important way for believers to manage their money. We don't need to compare ourselves with other churches. But we need to encourage one another. Jesus says that where your money is, there your heart will be also; where your heart is, there your money will be also. Our heart is where God is, where the church is and where the mission is. We don't give, as the church needs because this is not biblical. It is hoped that our brothers and sisters will understand the meaning of offering. It is a response to God's love and grace. And as we fulfil our duty, God's house, our church will not be in want but be able to develop different ministries and to share with those in need. When we give, the most important is to present our whole life as a living sacrifice—this is your true and proper worship! 🏰





# MCHK Youth Ministry

Rev'd May Poon, Executive Secretary of Missions and Pastoral Care Division

**Youth** ministry has always been the core of our work! Those of us in the Missions and Pastoral Care Division have implemented many reconstructions in recent years in the face of changes in our society. We would like to share with you our work.

## The Youth Affairs Executive Committee

Our goal is to raise the awareness of the Methodist Church among our young people and train young leaders. We have organized different activities including Youth Festival, Retreat Camps, and bible study training currently held. In line with the development of our church, we will focus itself on the care of our working youth. Please keep yourself posted with our website: <http://ucome.methodist.org.hk>.

## The Junior Youth Affairs Executive Committee

Our mission is to help our youngsters feel at home in the church. We provided joint activities and training to teenagers as well as their trainers. Some of our recent programmes were The Community Mission Camp and peer counselling, training course which proved to be very popular. We will continue to help the church care for the youth in school and their workers, we also develop the ministry for Group Leaders.

## The Gospel Adventure Ministry Executive Committee

Camps are the places where we prepare our teenagers for service, bring students from our primary and secondary schools to God and to raise the awareness of safety when conducting adventure trainings.

We have three types of camps: Burning Bushes\* for secondary five school leavers, Living Water for junior secondary students and The Clouds for primary five students. Burning Bushes camps have been held for the last 15 years. Many young people have given their hearts or rededicated their lives to God during the camp, and have become our young leaders in different churches. Quite a number of them have also joined full time ministry.

*\*Note: It was known as The F5 Gospel Camp and was jointly held with Breakthrough from 1996 to 1998. When The Local Missions Executive Committee became the sole organizer in 1999, we changed the name to Burning Bushes. The camp will be suspended for 2011 because of the change in the Hong Kong education system. It will be held again in 2012 for secondary six students.*

## The Church Music Executive Committee

We have worked along the church and organized two Teens Choir Training Camps to draw in and train teenagers for the choir where they can serve God with their voices.

## Methodist Youth Scheme

It consists of Group Leaders Training, Life and Friendship Camp and Development of Youth Ministry of Tin Shui Wai Methodist Church with the support from Kwun Tong Methodist Church.

## The Alpha Course Executive Committee

We held team training course for various Alpha Teams. In recent years, to serve the needs for various churches to develop the Youth Alpha Course, we have organized the Youth Alpha Team Training to help brothers and sisters enhance their skills when serving teenagers.

***A special thank you note to all the members of the executive committees under the Missions and Pastoral Care Committee. Our youth ministry would not be as diversified and developed as of now without your vision, daring and faithfulness.***





▲ Bible Studing Training



▲ Group Leaders Training



▲ Teens Choir Training Camp



▲ Youth Festival



▲ Community Mission Camp



▲ Retreat Camp



▲ Youth Alpha Team Training



▲ The Clouds, the gospel camp for primay students



# Unity reveals the power of

**Adolescence** is a golden period for growth and it's worth it all to put in a lot of resources, time and energy to provide systematic training based on its needs. The 9-month Group Leaders Training held by the Methodist Church is a life building project with these visions:

## The goal of Group Leaders Training ■

We want to turn our young people into small group leaders, being able to lead other teenagers and provide pastoral care. Our goal for them is: learning to be a spiritual leader who is healthy, positive, confident, humble, kind, brave and who cherishes life, loves God and people.

## How to realize the goal ■

We want to raise them up as faithful and wise servant-leaders through: vision casting, calling and commitment, discipline, sharing, team building, and setting up ministry goals (e.g. leading groups, organizing camps, bringing people to Christ, community service). Supported by their peers and instructors, they are engaged in these elements through ongoing learning, practice and reflection, striving for a breakthrough.

## The focus of Group Leaders Training ■

Youth culture, the concept of servant-leader, the power of life, group/activity facilitating skills, spiritual training, peer evangelism and vision realization.

## The details are: ■

- youth-oriented evangelism and pastoral care;
- the quality, role and function of small group leader: being a servant-leader;
- organization skills for small group leader: theory and practice;
- leadership of small group leader: theory and practice;
- small group dynamics: theory and practice;
- facilitating skills: theory and practice;
- healthy growth for small groups: peer evangelism;
- youth-oriented fun bible study;
- crisis management, problem solving and spiritual growth in small groups;
- life-giving small group leaders.

## Eligibility ■

Pastoral workers, parish workers, pastoral clerks, youth instructors, group leaders and leaders-to-be (regardless of age) who want to serve young people are welcome. A recommendation from the church-in-charge is required. Participants must attend all programmes, camps and the graduation ceremony. Participating churches are required to send at least one pastoral worker or parish workers to join the programme. All applicants will go through a screening test before they are admitted.



# Group Leaders Training!

Revd Wai-Ki Lo

Participants need to be earnest in their faith and are willing to commit to God and their time to serve our young people. They also need to commit themselves to the goal and direction, and the development and work of the fellowship. Full attendance to classes and camps is required.

After nine months, our trainees organized the Life and Friendship Camp 2010 to which 2000 people came. The programme was full of miracles and grace. We have seen:

- 1) We thought it was impossible but it was possible. We learn that nothing is impossible with God. We need to learn to trust and hope always. His love and grace never fails.
- 2) When young people had visions, faith, training and when they were in unity, they could be greatly used and blessed by God. The Bible says, "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity." (1 Tim. 4:12) Our young people are wonderful! Be proud and grateful for your love and faith!

We believe that their faithful learning, giving and work in God will not be in vain! May God continue to revive our Methodist Youths! May God increase their faith and love so that they can achieve more for God! May our church raise up more young leaders who are committed to the building of church, humble and loving in service, and are able to bless the community. Amen. 🙏



▲ Revd Wai-Ki Lo



# A soul garden

**“Remain** in me, and I will remain in you.”  
(John 15:4)

Why are we so busy in modern times? What can be done? “The real antidote to busy-ness must be sought outside the consumerist world...” (Abbot Christopher Jamison’s Finding Sanctuary: Monastic Steps for Everyday) In the past, those who sought for a holy place called it a sanctuary, which in Latin is sanctus. It is holy, a holy space. It is also a shelter and refuge for those on an escape.

On the road to Emmaus, the risen Christ walked with two disciples (See Luke 24). Today Christ is still in our life and walks with us. But in our journey on earth, our eyes have become blurred and our heart slow. We need to pause and rest. It was like what the two disciples did. They chose to stay and rest, not forcing ahead. When they sat down at the table and at the breaking of bread, their eyes were brightened and they recognized Jesus who had been with them all along. In fact, we don’t need to build a remote refuge and we can’t build a sanctuary. What we need the most is to give ourselves space and time and leave behind our daily routines for a simple quiet place. Upon leaving,

we will have nothing that will blur our eyes and will see Christ.

The restored Methodist Retreat Centre (MRC) is a resting garden for our soul. The Stations of the Cross, the Meditation Path, the Labyrinth Garden, the Devotional Park, the Cross Square, the Spring and the meadow, coffee corner, the little path along the seaside, the natural trail, the peaceful hall, the prayer room for pleading alone... the breeze, sunshine, grass, flowers and stones... all these express the goodness of God’s creation. All these will help us tremendously in spiritual life.

Open your diary and mark a time for personal retreat at MRC! The following itinerary is for your reference:

1. Leave behind the world: When you are there, quiet down for half-an-hour first in the prayer room. This will help you leave everything behind.
2. Gaze at Jesus: Then go to the Meditation Path and meditate on the 7 “I am” statements (John) and the seven last words of Jesus.
3. “What am I doing?": Go to the Labyrinth Garden



▲ Prayer Room



▲ Meditation Path



▲ Labyrinth Garden





# a sacred place

Revd Maria Lau

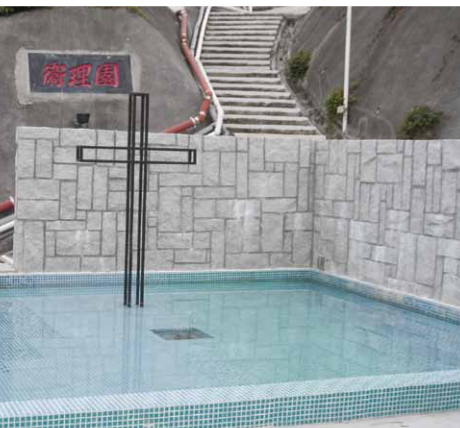
and follow the trail. Start from the outside and when you reach the centre, return on the same path. Walk slowly this time and think about our short journey on earth. When we think about the past, we may have some insights or new questions.

When you are done with 1 to 3, take a break. Have a cup of tea at the coffee corner or lie down on the meadow for the breeze and sunshine.

4. “Who am I?”: If you want to continue, you may go to the Spring or the disciple logo outside the hall and think about these questions: “Who am I?” “What am I doing?” “Listen, Jesus is calling me!”
5. Follow Jesus: At this time, you need to be solemn and turn yourself to Jesus again. Then tread the Stations of the Cross and experience the love and sacrifice of Jesus. Be willing to drink his cup and bear his cross.
6. My cross: At the end of the Stations of the Cross, you will see the cross. Stay for a while and ask, “What is my cross?” “Am I willing to carry it and follow Jesus?”

7. “Lord, I will always belong to you.”: Finish your prayer at the cross and then return to the Devotional Park (point 8). Sit down and look over to the sea. With all your heart, tell God that you are his disciple, one of his people. In your world, you won’t get lost again as you know who you really are. You are in Jesus and Jesus in you. Let the Keel Cross (still in progress) in the Devotional Park be a mark of your life – living for God.

All of us are running a marathon in life. And we need to spend more time for our spiritual life so that we can run towards the goal. Bless you as you meet with God in the MRC. 🇹🇼



▲ Spring



▲ Cross Square



▲ Devotional Park



# Starting afresh in the spirit

## — an interview with the architect

**Some** people like to have a getaway overseas once or twice a year; some like to spend time alone in outlying islands where they can renew themselves in God in the nature. Methodist Retreat Centre (MRC) is a wonderful place for that. It is surrounded by mountains by the seaside. The renovation work would make it a better place where people can come and have a closer walk with God.

Mr. Vincent Ng (the director of AGC Design Ltd) and Peter Kwok (design architect, AGC Design Ltd), the two architects in charge of the project, have explained to us the concept behind the restoration and some of the improvement.

### A preparation for quietness

Getting on a ferry in Central, leaving behind the busy city, reaching the Mui Wo pier, one will walk to MRC and prepare themselves for quiet time. Entering the MRC, you will find its new look and its facilities matching well with the surroundings. The stone house looks more or less the same outside. But the Meditation Path, the Devotional Park have blended even more into the peaceful environment. Anyone will quiet down here.

There was a basketball ground and barbeque site. The hall could also be converted into a 'ping-pong' room. But these are no more. Vincent said that the fun camp has become a retreat place and this has been what our church wanted for MRC — a place focusing on devotion and Christ Jesus. This has guided all the design and facilities in the restoration work.

### Designed to help people come close to God

We usually care more about the living condition in a camp and its surroundings. The restored MRC has made a lot of improvements. Big rooms with bunk beds have been turned into twin or single rooms with its own toilets.

The biggest change is with the canteen. Practicality was the buzzword before and the large area facing the sea was the place to cook and wash. The wonderful sea view was not well enjoyed. Now, the canteen and the kitchen have swapped their places. Those enjoying their meals in the canteen or the outside sitting area can also enjoy the view.

Vincent also said that they wanted more green in the MRC and the basketball ground, the highest place in the camp will be turned into a Meadow. There are many trees but they do not stand in the way when we look at the sky. It is nice to lie down there and look up to the sky and meditate on the work of God.

A new Meditation Path will take up the place of Stations of the Cross. It has two little paths and 14 prayer and meditation points. Each point, except the one at the Devotional Park, is surrounded by a few wooden piles, which create a little space between God and us while we don't feel isolated from the rest of the world.

MRC has a new item, the Labyrinth Garden, a winding trail for people to walk and meditate. As the barbeque site is not very big, the Labyrinth Garden will be limited in size. But Peter agreed with the concept behind it and has personally been blessed and he thought it would be nice to have one in MRC.



# restoring the Methodist Retreat Centre

Venus Leung, Church of the Saviour

The camp is divided into a quiet and a non-quiet area. Any activities that make noise such as group work or music worship will be held in the non-quiet area including the Activity Building, the Hall and the Spring. If you want some quiet time, you may walk a bit into the Meditation Path, the Labyrinth Garden or the Devotional Park to spend some time with God.

## Learn to 'delete' in our quiet time

It was the first time I came to the newly restored MRC and I found the space more open. Vincent had made some daring recommendations, asking the church to remove some of its old structures like the canopy outside the window and the cover



▲ Coffee Corner



▲ Charles Villa

of the corridor linking the Hall and the canteen.

Peter said that it was important to first purify a place if we want to purify our heart. The simpler the place, the better it is. If it was not a new place, it would be better to take out some old parts. Vincent added that MRC enjoyed a good natural environment and the camp should be in harmony with it. Structures which were unnecessary would disrupt the peace.

This is a very good reminder. When we have devotion, we need to learn more than building up. We need to learn to 'delete' the barriers between God and us so that we can be renewed. 🇧🇪



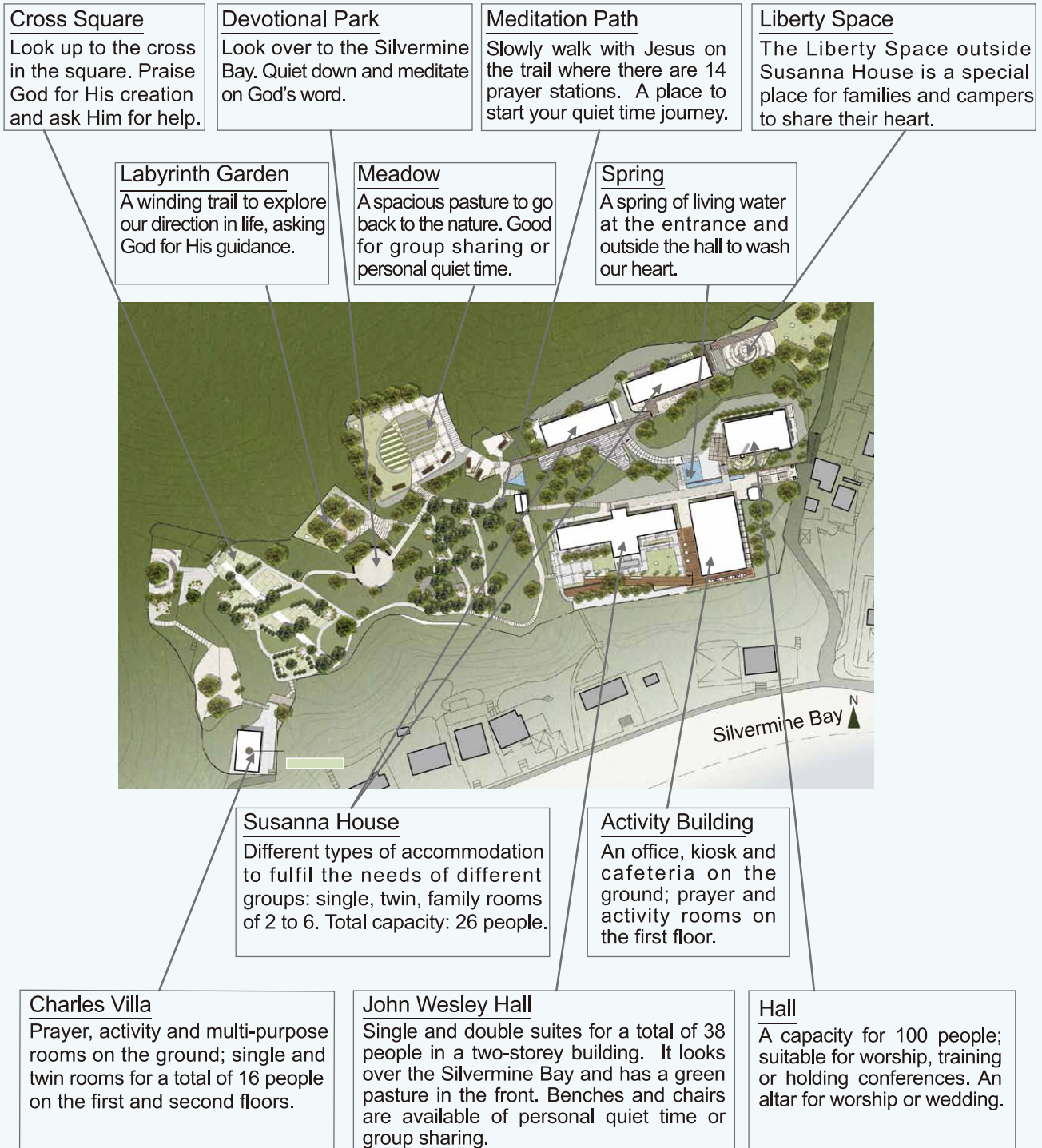
▲ Hall



▲ bedroom



# Methodist Retreat Centre



**For booking and inquire, please contact 2527 2026 or e-mail: [booking@methodist.org.hk](mailto:booking@methodist.org.hk)**

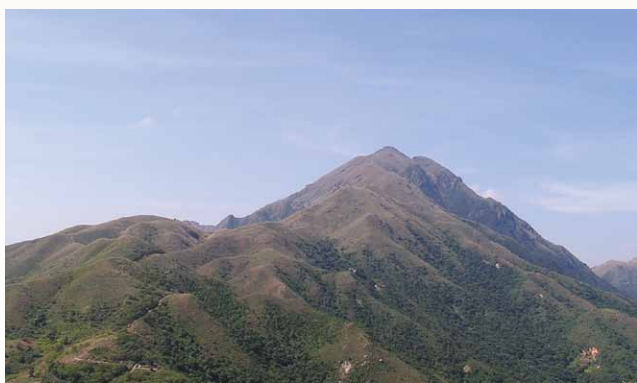


# Cabin No.8 at the Sunset Peak



**Cabin** No.8 is located at the Sunset Peak on Lantau Island. The Sunset Peak is a bit shorter than the Lantau Peak and if you stand on one, you can see the other across. There are 19 stone houses lying between the Sunset Peak and Yi Tung Shan. Cabin No.8 is one of our retreat centres. It is beautiful up there in the mountain and the scenery is never the same. On a sunny day, you can see the Chek Lap Kok Airport and the Tung Chung new town. The Sunset Peak has gained its name for a fantastic place to see the sunset. You will surely experience the greatness of God in his creation here.

The stone houses there were built by a group of missionaries who loved hiking. Their camps in Guangdong were damaged by robbers and they came to Hong Kong to look for another place. When they were hiking in Lantau Island in 1923, they found Sunset Peak. With the approval from the then British government, more than 20 houses were built between 1925 and 1935 and they had different owners. Cabin No.8 is ours and was built in 1932. Most of the houses were rebuilt after World War Two. 🇬🇧





# Wesley Lodge

**Wesley** Lodge is located at No. 24, Peak Road, Cheung Chau, near to the Alliance Bible Seminary. It takes about some 10 minutes to go there from the pier. There are 8 beds and a few foldable ones. It is a self-service quarter. A quiet garden, a 270 degree sea view and a beautiful surrounding – it is a natural place you seldom find in Hong Kong where your family or friends can have for retreat or rest. 🇭🇰



▲ Letters W and L on the gate stand for Wesley Lodge.



▲ The peaceful shaded path leading into the house



▲ Shell-shaped front yard



▲ The 1920 style porch in front of the house restored



▲ Peaceful house with an open style



▲ A little path in the front yard to the seaside



▲ A panorama sea view from the Lodge





▲ Spacious rooms for all kinds of activity



▲ Kitchen, 3 bedrooms, 3 standalone bathrooms, nice and clean



▲ Relics from our church will be displayed in the living room



▲ Garden at the back – a good place for meditation





The Methodist Church, Hong Kong  
香港基督教循道衛理聯合教會