

LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY



NEWS

FAITH & FUTURE

ECO-THEOLOGY FOR
A SUSTAINABLE WORLD

Hong Kong | Winter 2025 | No. 107

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THE MESSAGE OF THE TREE

The story goes like this: One day, Luther was asked what he would do if the world were to end tomorrow. He answered, "I would plant an apple tree today."

This, probably Luther's most famous quote, forms the background for the Luther Garden. It was opened in Wittenberg in 2017 to mark the 500th anniversary of the publication of Luther's 95 theses. Churches around the world each donated a tree. Some were planted by Catholics or Orthodox Christians in a spirit of ecumenical solidarity. Also, the Chinese Rhenish Church Hong Kong Synod contributed a tree. 500 trees were planted to mark 500 years of the Reformation. The garden is shaped like a Luther rose and is intended to symbolise that Lutherans and other Christians around the world grow together.

The inspiration for the Luther Garden came, of course, from Luther's apple tree quote. This quote has one disadvantage and one strength. The disadvantage: Luther's most famous quote did not come from Luther himself. He did not say it. The strength: even if it did not come from Luther, it is still true.

The quote expresses optimism and hope. In his younger years, Luther was dominated by fear. He felt the fear of

not being good enough in God's eyes. Luther's central insight, gained from the Bible, was that God accepts you as you are – by grace alone. Now hope and confidence prevail: we can look forward to heaven. This optimism is not only directed towards the hereafter, it can also give us courage in the here and now. Many people are afraid of climate change and its consequences, of the pollution of the oceans and the destruction of our natural resources. The apple tree gives us the courage to work for the preservation of creation. Where God is, there is hope.

Luther's insight into justification by faith alone was liberating. Christians no longer have to look to themselves. They no longer have to worry about their own salvation. Instead, they are freed to serve their neighbours in love. When I look at the Luther Garden and think of the apple tree, I ask myself: does this service extend beyond our neighbours? Christians are freed to serve their neighbours – and nature, God's good creation. Christians care not only for their neighbours, but also for the whole nature. We are freed to serve the creation. Let us do this with optimism and hope!

Stefan Gradl

Cover Picture: © German National Committee of the LWF

CONTENTS

- 2 Editorial | Stefan Gradl
- 3 Strengthening the Positive Aspects of Having the Quality of "Diversity" | Kenneth Tsang
- 4 Nature as a Dialogue Partner for the Church? | Jukka Helle
- 6 Transforming Lives through Faith and Sustainable Agriculture | Matthew Pang
- 7 Eco-Theology from the Perspective of Christianity in Myanmar | Shwe Gyan
- 8 Animals in God's Eyes | Robert Doornenbal
- 9 2025 Theological Lecture | Hak-shun Fong
- 10 25th MMF Anniversary | Stefan Gradl, Leon Chau
- 11 MMF Elects Again a Hongkonger as its Moderator | Charis Lee
- 12 Student Exchange Program between VID and LTS | Cynthia Chau
- 13 New Teacher: Ms. Sandee Stadler
- 14 New Students
- 16 48th Graduate List 2025
- 18 News
- 20 Enrollment

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Publisher : Lutheran Theological Seminary
Mailing Address: Lutheran Theological Seminary
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Telephone : (852) 2691-1520
Website : https://lts.edu/eng/lts_newsletter
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Statement of Purpose

The LTS News is a newsletter for local and global alumni/ae and friends of the Lutheran Theological Seminary "LTS" in Hong Kong. Through stories about people and events at LTS, it aims to connect readers and create a sense of belonging to a broad LTS community even beyond graduation.

Donation

To make a donation to support LTS, there are three methods and receipts will be sent back afterwards.

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STRENGTHENING THE POSITIVE ASPECTS OF HAVING THE QUALITY OF “DIVERSITY”

Kenneth Tsang | President



One notable quality of LTS is “diversity.” Our faculty and student body come from many different countries and regions, including the United States, Finland, Germany, Sweden, the Chinese Mainland, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Myanmar, Thailand, and more. Due to this diversity, we often face challenges related to language and cultural differences. For example, we need to allocate resources to design our courses to be “biliterate and trilingual.” We also have to arrange simultaneous translation for most of our activities. Despite these challenges, we affirm that this characteristic is God’s grace and a gift given to LTS. When you join the LTS community, you have a great opportunity to learn from this diversity in your theological and ministerial journey. It also allows you to broaden your horizons about how God works differently around the world. Therefore, the school themes for these two years are “Treasure Different Cultures, Together We Serve” and “Treasure Our Diversity, Together We Learn” aiming to highlight and strengthen the positive aspects of this quality.

Another way to enhance the positive aspects is for LTS to explore opportunities for collaboration with international churches in Hong Kong. Supporting local churches in theological education

remains the main mission of a seminary. The “biliterate and trilingual” feature not only enables LTS to serve Cantonese- or Mandarin-speaking churches but also English-speaking churches. In October, we partnered with Kowloon Union Church (KUC) to conduct a short-term training titled “Ten Commandments of Leadership: A Biblical Coaching for Those in Charge,” led by Dr. Uwe Vetter from Germany. We plan to have a similar collaboration with KUC in the Spring semester of 2026. We also compiled a list of suggested short-term courses that LTS can offer jointly. Furthermore, we introduced a “tailor-made training” service to promote collaboration.

This service invites churches to share their training needs, and we will do our best to support them.

Of course, since we have long had students from international churches, pastors and members of these churches are most welcome to enroll in our degree programs for systematic or advanced theological training. To my knowledge, LTS is one of the few seminaries in Hong Kong that offers a variety of courses taught in English. As stewards of God, LTS strives to make good use of what He has entrusted to us. With a strong international faculty, we are eager to serve more churches and people in this international city, Hong Kong. ■



NATURE AS A DIALOGUE PARTNER FOR THE CHURCH?

Jukka Helle | Assistant Professor (Missiology, Contextual Theology, Worship and Liturgy)



News about the effects of climate change is alarming. The seasons of the year are no longer as they used to be. Rain often comes late, and when it does, the downpour is massive, resulting in catastrophic floods and landslides. In some places, excessive heatwaves and prolonged droughts cause unprecedented harm to people and all living creatures. We also know that humankind produces millions of tons of plastic waste every year, and the vast majority of it ends up in our seas and oceans. Other long-term challenges include rising sea levels and deforestation. It has become clear that, unfortunately, we human beings are the biggest threat to planet Earth, our common home. Our greed and unrestrained use of nature aggravate these threats.

The clock is ticking. Scientists warn that we are fast approaching climate tipping points, after which the consequences will be irreversible. Some of these tipping points include the slowdown or collapse of the Atlantic Ocean current system, which could bring Siberian-type temperatures to Europe and disrupt monsoon seasons in other parts of the world. Another worrisome tipping point is the melting of glaciers and the transformation of the Amazon rainforest into a savanna-like dryland.

What can we do as Christians and as a Christian community, as a church? Are we just passive onlookers, sitting on the deck of the Titanic as it heads toward an iceberg?

I suggest that we return to the Bible, though perhaps not exactly in all the traditional ways of reading it. Earlier, it was quite common to understand the relationship between human beings and nature as one of God-given responsibility and dominion over all other

creation. Now, however, in light of the human-made or human-intensified natural crises mentioned above, we have gradually come to realize that the dominion model is no longer a justified way of perceiving the relationship between us and nature. Another often-suggested model is the stewardship model. This means that God has assigned human beings the task of being faithful stewards in the "garden" of God, in the world that God owns. But again, in light of the worsening climate crisis and other human-intensified problems, we must acknowledge that we have not managed to be faithful servants and stewards. In addition, a strong emphasis on the term "steward" may lead to an understanding in which a good steward is perceived as an efficient manager of God's property, whose task is to manage it as efficiently as possible to make as much profit as possible – often at the expense of nature. Moreover, we can see that currently the biggest share of profit gained from natural resources goes to those who already have much, at the expense of the poor.

Therefore, we may need to consider another biblical model for our relationship with nature, God's creation. I suggest a model that can be called the partnership model. In this model, we humbly acknowledge ourselves as part of created nature, among other animals and living beings. We know that our physical existence depends on what nature provides, and we should not overuse its fruits – our Mother Earth's gifts.

You may ask what it means to accept or welcome nature as our partner. Let's think about our everyday language. If someone is our partner, we normally conduct dialogue with one another. We speak and we listen. We give and we receive. This new model of partnership with nature also means that we can no longer consider nature as a mere backdrop to our activities. It must have a more active role. Indeed, in our speech we could



more often start calling nature our Mother Earth to express our relationship and dependence on her. Here we might borrow the famous "I-Thou" expression from the Austrian-Israeli philosopher Martin Buber. Nature should no longer be a distant and technical "it" but rather a "Thou" with whom we need and want to be in relationship. Any meaningful relationship needs to be cultivated. Therefore, we need to learn to love nature more. Only then will it become our dialogue partner – even a friend.

Paul writes in his letter to the Romans (8:21–22) how creation will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. Paul continues to describe how creation is groaning like in labor pains, waiting for redemption. Paul assures that the promise of redemption does not concern only human beings but extends to all creation. This viewpoint emphasizes that we human beings can be saved and redeemed only together with creation – with nature. In Paul's time, there were hardly any substantial human-made natural catastrophes. However, even then Paul somehow understood the suffering of creation. Now, with the worsening climate crisis, we have become painfully aware of how wounded our dear Mother Earth is.

A necessary question follows: What should we do, as individuals and as faith communities? There is a need for ecological conversion, which is not optional but urgent. This conversion is both personal and communal, manifest in eco-actions that flow from our faith into daily life: reducing waste, promoting sustainable practices, protecting biodiversity, and standing in solidarity

with the poor and vulnerable who suffer most from ecological degradation. There are many practical ways of reducing our greenhouse gas emissions: we should resist excessive consumer culture. For those who can make choices in what they eat, one recommended ecological choice is reducing meat consumption. Meat production has a significant impact on greenhouse gas emissions. First and foremost, ecological conversion is an act of faith in which we humbly assume our dependence on God's creation. Necessary actions can then follow from this conversion. ■



TRANSFORMING LIVES THROUGH FAITH AND SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

Matthew Pang | LTS Alumnus (MDIV 2025)



1. Background of Growing Nations

I am Matthew, a Master of Divinity graduate of 2025. After graduating last June, my wife and I joined a short-term mission trip to the Growing Nations mission farm in Lesotho. Growing Nations was founded by South African missionary Rev. August Basson. Having served in Lesotho for over two decades, Rev. Basson saw that although the local people had received the gospel, many still suffered from food insecurity and extreme poverty. In response, Rev. Basson decided to adopt the Farming God's Way method which integrates biblical teaching with sustainable farming principles. He

trained local youth and farmers to rebuild their faith while equipping them to bring both the gospel and practical farming knowledge back to their villages, transforming their lives and communities.



2. Farming God's Way

Genesis 2:8–9 provides the biblical foundation for Farming God's Way, describing how God planted a garden in the East, in Eden. God is the Creator and the very first farmer. Farming God's Way seeks to apply the farming principles that God reveals to us in the Bible, including:

- a. **Minimal soil disturbance:**
Disturb the soil only up to a depth of 15 cm;
- b. **Permanent soil cover:**
Maintain adequate soil cover to reduce erosion;
- c. **Crop rotation:**
Grow crops from different plant families in successive seasons.

Farming God's Way has been proven to preserve soil conditions and produce higher crop yields in the long

term, especially during consecutive dry years. Rev. Basson emphasizes that partitioning farmers of Farming God's Way must maintain a harmonious relationship with **God, themselves, their neighbours, and nature.**

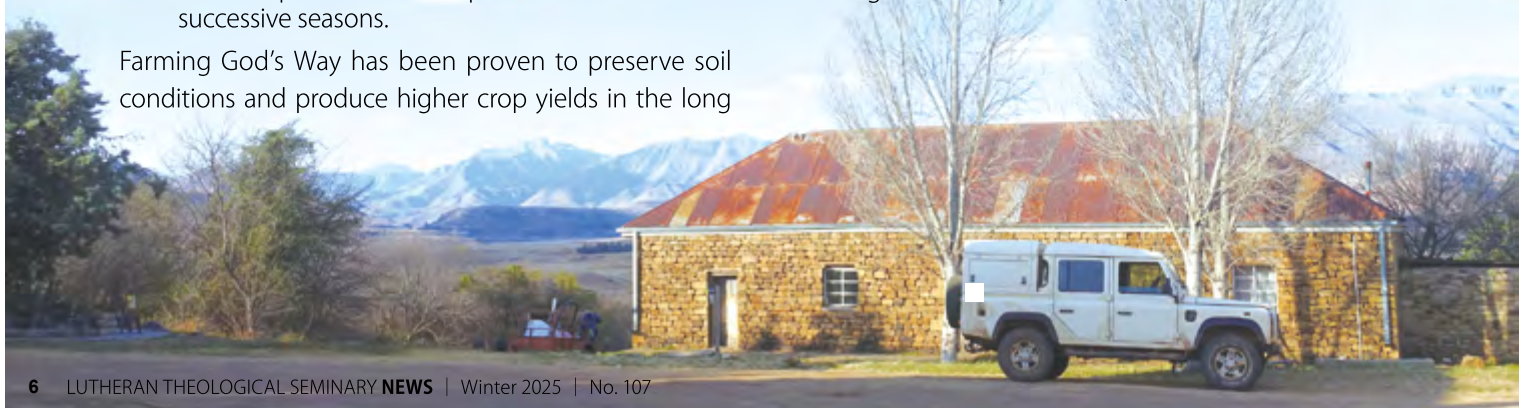
3. Bringing Hope to the Communities

Life in Lesotho is extremely challenging, with limited job opportunities. Many men have to leave their families to work in South Africa, while those who remain behind – mostly farmers – struggle to produce enough crops each year. Climate change has further reduced their harvests and incomes. Amid such high unemployment, young people often lose hope; tragically, Lesotho has one of the highest youth suicide rates in Africa.

However, at Growing Nations, young trainees not only learn agricultural skills but also study the Bible daily with staff members. More importantly, they live for nine months within a Christian community where they learn to love and serve one another. After graduation, many of them willingly return to their villages to share both their farming knowledge and faith, hoping to bear witness to the gospel through their actions and bring hope to their communities.

4. Mutual Respect Between Humanity and Nature

The ministry approach of Growing Nations harmoniously integrates evangelism, livelihood improvement, community transformation, and respect for our nature. It reflects the Old Testament principles of the **Sabbath year** and **Jubilee**, where God ensures mutual care and respect among the land, its owners, the vulnerable, and all living creatures (Lev. 25:8-17). ■



ECO-THEOLOGY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF CHRISTIANITY IN MYANMAR

Shwe Gyan | Vice-Principal of Karen Baptist Theological Seminary, LTS alumnus (DTH 2014)



ဝိညာဉ်တော်များ

Myanmar, also known as Burma, is a Southeast Asian country endowed with abundant natural resources. The spiritual heritage of its people has been profoundly shaped by the primal religion of *nat* worship, which centers on the belief that *nats*, or spirits, inhabit nature and serve as its guardians. Consequently, the Myanmar people perceive the presence of *nats* within the natural world, affirming that every living being possesses intrinsic value and is therefore worthy of reverence and care. This worldview nurtures a deep respect for the environment, as nature is regarded as sacred and inseparably connected with human life. From this primal spirituality arises an eco-theological perspective in Myanmar that emphasizes the interdependence between humanity and the natural world.

In Myanmar, the primal religion of *nat* or spirit worship can generally be categorized into two types: belief in Absolute Spirit and belief in Nature Spirits. Among some ethnic groups, such as the Karen people, the concept of the Absolute Spirit refers to an Absolute Being who exists beyond the physical world. The Nature Spirits, on the other hand, resemble the Divine Beings or *nats* of Bama ethnic group (the majority ethnic group in Myanmar), who are believed to inhabit and protect various elements of the natural environment.

However, the Christian understanding of the Spirit in Myanmar differs from the conception of *nats* or spirits found in the primal religion. The Christian understanding of the Spirit in Myanmar, expressed in Burmese as ဝိညာဉ်တော်များ, stands apart from both the notion of the Absolute Spirit and that of the Divine Beings. Rather, it is derived from the biblical concept of *ruah*; the primordial vital energy, power, or force that has existed since the beginning. The term ဝိညာဉ်တော်များ is a

compound of two Burmese words: ဝိညာဉ်တော် meaning “Absolute Spirit,” and တော်များ, meaning “Divine Beings.” The word ဝိညာဉ်တော် refers to the transcendent aspect of God, the Absolute Spirit who exists beyond human comprehension and remains ultimately unknowable. In contrast, တော်များ, meaning “Divine Beings,” denotes the immanent aspect of God, who is present within creation and can be experienced and known by humanity.

Therefore, ဝိညာဉ်တော်များ represents not merely the Absolute Spirit or the Divine Beings, but the Divine Spirit. This term does not refer solely to the Holy God who dwells in a sacred realm beyond the world, nor only to the immanent God who is knowable within creation. Rather, ဝိညာဉ်တော်များ signifies the Divine Spirit who is both transcendent and immanent, dwelling beyond creation and simultaneously within it as the life-giver, sustaining force, and mysterious energy that surpasses human understanding.

Thus, the various kinds of spirits or *nats* (နတ်တော်များများ) are not the same as ဝိညာဉ်တော်များ; rather, they may be understood as symbolic representations or images of the Absolute Spirit manifested in new forms as Divine Beings. In this sense, ဝိညာဉ်တော်များ is neither merely a transcendent Absolute Spirit nor simply an immanent Divine Being. Instead, ဝိညာဉ်တော်များ is the transcendently immanent God, the source of all creation who dwells within creation, suffers with creation, and has compassion for a groaning world.

Because ဝိညာဉ်တော်များ dwells within creation, the created world is neither evil nor an object to be exploited. Rather, creation, as the dwelling place of God, is inherently good and worthy of care. Since ဝိညာဉ်တော်တော်များ is present in creation in various forms, every part of creation exists as a multidimensional unity within the Divine Spirit. Therefore, all forms of life on earth exist in mutual coexistence and interdependence. Life itself is *co-arising*, sustained and made complete only through its relationship with other forms of life. ■

ANIMALS IN GOD'S EYES

Robert Doornenbal | Overseas Visiting Scholar (Pastoral Theology)



It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him, we read in Genesis 2:18. "Ah yes, then came Eve," we think. But that is too quick. "So from the ground ADONAI, God, formed every wild animal and every bird..." (Gen. 2:18-19, *Complete Jewish Bible*, D.H. Stern). Note that elsewhere in the Bible, God is referred to as man's "helper" (for example, in Ex. 18:4 and Ps. 121:1-2). It is downright astonishing that animals are presented to Adam as such! In some ways – admittedly limited, but still – animals can indeed; help us, they can be our "companions" (Karl Barth).

As a pastor, I have often noticed how true this is! Homeless people and cattle farmers, social workers and police dog trainers, children, single people, and people in mourning have moved me with their stories about their dog, horse, cow, or other "helper." A reptile expert and snake whisperer put her companion around my neck: a five-meter-long python!

Animals matter to people – and to God as well. In Genesis 9, we read that He includes them in His covenant with Noah and his family: "I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you, and with every living creature that was with you – the birds, the livestock, and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you – every living creature on earth" (verse 9-10). Apparently, not only humans but also animals can participate in a covenant. That is to say, they can participate in a relationship characterized by companionship, care, community, and exchange.

Sustainable connection with animals

Is a mayfly also part of God's *berit olam*, his eternal covenant? And what about the malaria mosquito that is the cause of so much suffering? Will there be animals on the new earth? And what about animal sacrifices – how "animal-friendly" are these? I would like to address questions such as these, but there is not enough space here. As to this last question, suffice it for now to say

that, while it is true that animals were killed in the ritual of sacrifice, this does not entail that animals were not cared for. On the contrary. The sacrificial animal must be birthed, protected, fed, and guided – all things that Israel wished for themselves from their God.

Moreover, God also wants to form a lasting bond with animals, as is evident from Hosea 2:18: "In that day I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, the birds in the sky and the creatures that move along the ground. Bow and sword and battle I will abolish from the land, so that all may lie down in safety." This text echoes God's blessing for animals.

An animal is valuable as a creature that is part of a web of life that has its deepest origin and purpose in the triune God. He is the preserver of "both man and beast" (Ps. 36:6). How wonderful it would be if we as Christians and churches could shape our treatment of animals according to the values of God's covenant and his coming kingdom! This begins with the realization that factory-farmed chickens are not God's will and that pigs are much more than walking hamburgers. Much would already be gained if we focused on the welfare of animals as expressed in Biblical law – think for example of the Sabbath (Lev. 25:5-7). What would it be like if, in our time, we rediscovered an ecological, green "Sabbath" worldwide and adhered to it? ■



2025 THEOLOGICAL LECTURE

The Spirit of God in the Public Space

Hak-shun Fong | Lecturer (Systematic Theology)



On October 17 and 18, LTS held its biennial theological lecture at its To Fung Shan campus and the Truth Lutheran Church of ELCHK respectively. The invited speaker this year was Prof. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen from Fuller Theological Seminary, a systematic theologian with a wide scope of interests, especially in the many possibilities of manifestation of the Holy Spirit in this pluralistic world. This two-day lecture, *The Spirit of God in the Public Space*, had been delivered along two correlated but diverse perspectives, namely, “Christian Pneumatology as Public Theology” and “Christian Witness as Lighthouse Keeper”, and it had attracted a total of over two hundred attendees.

Acknowledging the insufficient elaboration on the works of the Holy Spirit in traditional theological development, Prof. Kärkkäinen invited the audience to adjust their confined imagery about the Holy Spirit as a spirit active merely within the believers’ personal spirituality or church life, and to accept the fact that this Spirit of the Divine One could never be stopped from exercising His might over every object of His own creation, from the East to the West, from the highest to the deepest, from as big as the cosmos to the ones as tiny as a particle – an inspiration that the speaker attained from Psalm 139. He also affirmed the audience that such a readiness in expanding one’s reception to the work of the Spirit, which he named as a “world-embracing and multi-layered vision of the Spirit of God,” would by no means be opposing the fundamental Christian belief in the God of Trinity, or be contradictory to the Christ-centered theology, which is core to Protestant faith.

Nevertheless, Prof. Kärkkäinen considered it crucial for Christian communities to keep an open mind to the presence of God’s Spirit and His works over areas of our society where traditional thoughts would have been hardly imagined in the past. For instance, art and entertainment, science, ecology, socio-politics

area, economy, work, and even various religions and ideologies. By introducing existing projects and studies of some of these areas by other scholars, the speaker proved that such a comprehensive vision towards the Holy Spirit is being pursued by many. Moreover, one could also see that these endeavors, including the speaker’s, are not some totally new, suspicious inventions since works in last century from many well-known theologians of various backgrounds had been cited to indicate one same, shared vision.

In addition to the above, a parallel outcome is the fact that the church of the Spirit, a charismatic community, can no longer remain behind her walls, but to follow the leading by the Spirit to where He wills, as the speaker derived. Whether the church intends to or not, she will be in the world as a witness, be she a good one or a bad one. However, in this process of realizing her ministry through service to the world, Prof. Kärkkäinen ensured the audience that the church would be empowered and energized by the Spirit for her ministry fulfilment.

Last but not least, the help from the Holy Spirit to the church in her discernment of the spirits, when she exposes herself to such a highly complex and ambiguous arena, is already warranted in the Scripture. Prof. Kärkkäinen referred to 1 John 4 and 1 Corinthians 12 and concluded that confessing Jesus Christ, complying with Him, are guaranteed checks which are made possible solely by the Holy Spirit. However, since it is up to the sovereignty of the Spirit in His guidance to the discernment process, the speaker gave his utmost pastoral advice to all: be patient. ■



25th MEKONG MISSION FORUM ANNIVERSARY

Stefan Gradl | Associate Professor (Missiology, Christian Education)

Birthdays are often occasions to look back and look ahead. This year, the MMF, the Mekong Mission Forum, is celebrating its 25th birthday. MMF is a network of Lutheran churches with the aim of supporting the Lutheran churches in the Mekong region (Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam). To this end, Lutheran churches from the West (e.g. Finland, Germany, USA) and the Pacific region (e.g. Malaysia, Hong Kong) work together with local churches.



MMF promotes various projects of local churches, for example for young people or women.

At its annual meeting, this time in Ho Chi Minh City, almost 50 delegates from the different partners looked back with

gratitude on the past 25 years of MMF. At the same time, the MMF is to be made future-proof. A thorough evaluation of its work is to be carried out by the LWF in order to use resources as efficiently as possible in the future.

Also, the Annual Forum decided to establish a theological committee to develop a system of courses for lay people and Lutheran pastors. Lutheran pastors often complete their basic training at a non-Lutheran institution. Additional courses are intended to make them more familiar with Lutheran theology and tradition. The members of the committee include LTS professors Dr Jukka Helle and Dr Stefan Gradl.

The election of a new moderator was also important for the future: Mr. Leon Chau (Chinese Rhenish Church HK) completed two terms as moderator. He is succeeded by another Hong Kong resident: Ms. Charis Lee, a local employee of the Norwegian Missionary Society. ■

Leon Chau | Outgoing Moderator

When I was sent to MMF as an observer 20 years ago, it was my third year of service as executive secretary in my own church, the CRCHK. The highly educated European style of collaboration overwhelmed me in both positive and negative ways. I got lost in reading high volumes of papers and reports, yet encouraged by the systematic and strategic ways of doing mission.

We faced a difficult reality in the Mekong countries; we struggled with conflicts among different churches established by different mission societies, and as well the "mis-theology" (misleading/confusing theology) that exists in Asia.

Journey continued. In the 14th out of the 25 years of MMF, the first Asian moderator was elected and things changed drastically, and we have tried our best to keep the moderator Asian and we have succeeded. Six years ago, I was elected as the first theologically trained but not ordained moderator. I brought in a consistently

collaborative approach to working together. This year we elected a young female lay moderator. She is experienced, brilliant, yet is still undergoing her first training in theology. I trust she will lead MMF well. What a progress we have made!

It is time to change my role from a church worker to a theology-doer, while continuing to maintain my focus on Asian and global churches. I look forward to seeing the success of Mekong churches, not only in their own region, but with the upcoming contribution to the Lutheran communion and the global church.

"MMF 25 years:
Thanksgiving Today,
Forward in Faith." ■



MMF ELECTS AGAIN A HONGKONGER AS ITS MODERATOR

Charis Lee | MMF Moderator

I am honoured to be elected as the Moderator of the Mekong Mission Forum (MMF) in the recent Annual Forum held in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. As the Representative of the Norwegian Mission Society (NMS) in the Chinese speaking region, I have been involved in the MMF as part of the MMF Network Implementation Committee (NIC) since 2022. The past three years have been an eye-opening and life-enriching experience for me as I worked with passionate and visionary brothers and sisters in the NIC, and witnessed how organizations and churches around the world put our heads and also resources together in sharing the gospel, building churches, training leaders and promoting theological education in the Mekong region through the MMF. It is also a privilege to walk alongside our sister churches in the area, and pray, support and learn from one another through different circumstances. Being part of this global fellowship is a huge blessing.

As a lay person still trying to complete my Master of Divinity degree, I sometimes would fall into the trap of considering myself being not good enough for roles like this. However, I have been reminded again and again that God has blessed us in different ways and has given each and every one of us many talents and gifts. All we need to do is to respond to His call. May God use whatever I have for His purpose in the MMF.



Charis (1st right) on an intercultural mission trip to Thailand with young people from Hong Kong, Norway and Estonia.

As we celebrate the 25th Anniversary of MMF this year, I pray that the Lord will continue to use the MMF to inspire, support and strengthen those involved and beyond. May God grant us the vision and wisdom to meet new challenges and embrace new opportunities in the years ahead. We also ask for courage to change if need be. Together, we pray this, "Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

A little more about myself: I am a first-generation Christian in Hong Kong and a member of the Praise Lutheran Church of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong. I have served as a deacon for my church, and am now studying part-time for a Master of Divinity while working for NMS. At NMS, I help oversee our work and relationships with our partners in Hong Kong, Mainland China and Taiwan. Our projects in the area focus on theological education, diakonia, young leadership, creation care, congregational development and Use Your Talents. ■



STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAM BETWEEN VID AND LTS

Cynthia Chau | Assistant Professor (New Testament)



On behalf of the International Program/Exchange Committee, we are thankful that LTS has a new exchange program. The VID Specialized University (VID vitenskapelige høgskole) in Stavanger, Norway and LTS have a three-year cooperation of student and faculty/staff exchange from 2025 Fall to 2028 Spring. We look forward to sending students to VID and receiving students from them. The exchange is a golden opportunity for students to experience and learn from a different culture.



We expect to host the first group of students in Fall 2026. A group of three students at the Bachelor level is considering spending two months in the LTS community and completing their internship in Hong Kong at the same time. In Fall 2027, a Master level student may come to study for one semester. We are looking forward to the new dynamics they may bring to our campus.

Both VID and LTS had the chance to visit each other in person to gain a deeper understanding of one another before sending out the first group of students. During our Nordic Trip, President Kenneth Tsang, Dr. Dag Oredsson, and I visited VID Stavanger on April 30. The hosts there warmly received us. We had a dialogue session, chapel time, and toured around the campus. All of these gave us a chance to learn about the campus life there. We have an excellent impression of them. We are enthusiastic to send our students there to study.

From September 26 to October 4, representatives from VID, including Dr. Terese Bue Kessel and Ms. Mari Sæverås, an administrative staff member, visited LTS. During the visit, they experienced life in LTS and met with our faculty and students. We have also discussed some concrete plans for the cooperation. After they have experienced life here in LTS, they went back and shared their experience with their students. Some of their students have also expressed interest in coming to LTS. The two-way visits have enhanced our understanding of each other's culture and community life on campus. Both VID and we are ready to see how students experience the different cultures God created and enjoy the learning process in another country. ■

NORWAY



VID initiated the cooperation. They applied for the Erasmus+ funding, and we were granted an amount for student and faculty/staff exchange from both sides. LTS plans to send around seven students, each for one semester, to VID over the remaining two and a half years. There may also be some seminars or presentations for faculty members. We will also host students from VID for a two-month or one-semester stay.

Our first group of students will go to Norway in January 2026. Two of our third-year BTH students, Sam Sham and Hinson Tong, will study there for the Spring Semester. They will take the course "The Christian Faith: New Testament, Historical and Current Perspectives," which is 30 ECTS (equivalent to 9 credits at LTS). They will also experience Nordic culture and Norwegian church life during their stay.

Photo (From left):

Dr. Ilse Paakinen (NMS),
President Kenneth Tsang,
Rev. Haakon Kessel (NMS),
Dr. Terese Bue Kessel (VID),
Dr. Dag Oredsson,
Dr. Cynthia Chau,
Rev. Knut Hallen (NMS)



HONG KONG

NEW TEACHER

Ms. Sandee Stadler | Lecturer (English)



Here I am – in Hong Kong – for the very first time - led here by the Spirit to the Lutheran Theological Seminary (LTS) in Shatin, Hong Kong. Led and called to serve the students of LTS as a missionary via the ELCA to teach English and to participate in the seminarian community.

I physically entered my new Hong Kong realm on August 28th, 2025 to begin my 2-year global mission – the culmination of a plethora of paperwork, assessments, emails, phone calls, applications, meetings, trainings, and organization of personal affairs – all in preparation to relocate and follow a calling – not an easy task and one that requires sacrifice.

Not only is following a calling to serve a culmination of the aforementioned red tape and sacrifice, but it is also a culmination of who we are – where we came from, the path we've taken, our faith, our beliefs, our desire to learn and grow and serve.

Speaking of who we are and where we came from – my name is Sandee Stadler and I hail from Milwaukee, Wisconsin in the United States – born and raised. I was also raised in the ELCA church and have ties to the United Church of Christ (UCC). I am a native English speaker – one who has a love for languages.

Through my studies and living abroad, I also speak Spanish and German. I used to speak French but not so much anymore – *c'est dommage!* Through my work with refugees and immigrants back in the US, I have picked up a little Somali and with my work here at LTS, I am starting to pick up Cantonese and am looking forward to learning more.

Not only do I love languages, I also love helping to make a difference in people's lives, especially students' lives. I feel very blessed to be teaching English here at LTS and to have also initiated a small impromptu dance group with my students. It's a great activity physically, mentally, and spiritually that appeals to learners with a musical and/or kinesthetic learning style. (I believe our dancing fits with Dr. Stefan Gradl's view of "the seminary as a playground" as expressed in the Summer, 2025 issue of LTS News.) Since I love to dance, I feel equally as blessed to be able to share this passion with those who are just as passionate about moving and dancing and having fun together as I am, while at the same time learning lyrics, singing, and praising God.

Not only do I feel blessed leading the students in dance, teaching English, and being part of a seminarian community with grounded leadership, I feel even more blessed (and humbled) to be surrounded by such welcoming, friendly, intelligent, talented, hardworking, patient, caring, capable people in a beautiful, pristine, serene, spiritual, organized, and clean space! This all comes complete with a mascot cat - Sunsun. What a blessing! Would it be too much to ask to have a dog mascot buddy for Sunsun?

Even with all the newly-found blessings and experiences, it is not always easy to get up and go and make the sacrifices we make to follow a calling, but for me, the blessings received thus far are beginning to overshadow those earlier-mentioned trials and tribulations of getting here. I am grateful that my life's journey and calling have led me to this special place with so many special people where I can share my gifts and receive the gifts of others - a place where we aspire together to grow closer to God, and learn how to better serve God, each other, our community, and the world. ■



NEW STUDENTS

For the 2025/26 academic year, 35 new students have been enrolled. We are pleased to introduce a few of them and invite you to join us in praying for their studies and their adaptation to campus life.



Ka-ling Cheng | MDIV

I am Kayla from ELCHK Tsing Yi Carpenter Lutheran Church. Since 2020, I have been called to serve God wholeheartedly, and my greatest joy is witnessing hearts turning to Him. I thank God for leading me to LTS this year. Please keep me in your prayers over the coming three years – that I may grow in faith and pursue my studies diligently.



Yuk-chu Lee | MDIV

I am from Amazing Grace Lutheran Church. Responding to God's calling, I have joined the full-time pastoral program to study His Word, equip myself for ministry, and walk closely with Him – bearing witness to His love and grace through my life. Please pray that I may overcome challenges, complete my studies faithfully, grow spiritually, and become a vessel fit for His service.



Louis Lap-ching Chung | MA-CS

I am a member of Saddleback Church Hong Kong now studying the spirituality program. I would like to step out of my comfort zone in my halftime by faith. I trust God will fulfil His wondrous plans for me. I would like to help people seeking an intimate journey with our Lord and longing to help others to come to Him, embracing their identity as God's children, and having a faithful heart.



Tweety Chui-yi Tam | MA-CS

I belong to Shatin Alliance Church. Now at retirement age, I thank God for allowing me to have a job to relieve my financial strain. I am a part time student studying the Spirituality program, which I have long desired for in the past decade. I am grateful to God for giving me the blessing of Caleb - to strive alongside the younger generation. Please pray that I may remain useful to the Lord in my halftime.



Leon Siu-lung Chau | MA-LS

I am a member of Kowloon Rhenish Church pursuing MA program in Lutheran Studies. After serving in church over twenty years, I return to LTS in my halftime to have deeper understanding on faith and church, hoping to make some contribution to local and ecumenical churches. Despite my insufficiency, I am confident God will complete the good work in me. Lord, have mercy and guidance on me.



Yi-shan Lin | MTH

I come from Taiwan. As a minister, I know spirituality, mental health and pastoral care are closely related. That's why I am pursuing a MTH in Counseling, believing having a good foundation on this aspect must start in seminary. I recently moved to reside in Hong Kong after marriage and it takes me some time to get used to the new environment. Please pray for my studies and my new journey in HK.



Hpakawn Seng Hkawng | MTH

I am Esther from Kachin State, Myanmar, currently pursuing a MTH in Christian Education. I serve at Wai Maw Theological Seminary and am a member of Waing Maw Town Baptist Church. My goal is to strengthen my theological foundation so that I can better serve my seminary and my community. Please keep my family, studies, and nation in your prayers. LTS truly feels like home to me.



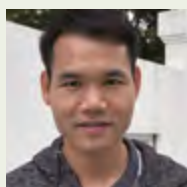
Mar Gawng Lu Mai | MTH

I am from Myanmar and belong to the Kachin ethnic group. My home church is Yangon Kachin Baptist Church. I joined this program to gain fresh insights and deepen my understanding so that I can better serve my community. Please pray for peace in Myanmar, a true democratic transition, and healing for those affected by war and natural disasters.



Naw Romie San Mya | MTH

I come from Myanmar and belong to Tha Yet Pin Kwin Church. My vision is to share God's truth throughout Myanmar, and I believe this program is equipping me to serve faithfully. Please pray for peace in Myanmar, for those who support me, and for students to love one another as Jesus loves us.



Phongsak Ase | MTH

I come from Thailand, and I am a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand (ELCT). I am currently pursuing on Lutheran Studies. My goal is to help strengthen theological education at the Lutheran Seminary in Thailand. To further my studies at LTS will better equip me to serve as a teacher in my country. Please pray for my studies, my church, and the vision God has placed in my heart to serve Him faithfully.



Yex Pleek Pao | MTH

I come from Lashio Township in Northern Shan State, Myanmar. I am part of the Wa ethnic group and a member of Wa Baptist Church in Lashio. My focus is Christian Counseling, and my vision is to share and teach what I have learned at LTS with others in my community. Please pray for my studies, my parents' health, my church, and my seminary.



La Nan | DTH

I come from Myitkyina, Kachin State, Myanmar. I am a member of Bethlehem Kachin Baptist Church. I focus on Mission and Culture studies, with a vision to share the Gospel across cultures and serve God's Kingdom. Please pray for peace in Myanmar, for families in war zones, refugees, churches under attack, and ministers serving faithfully there. I am grateful for God's grace for studying at LTS and the hospitality in the campus.

LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

48th Graduate List 2025

NAME	CONGREGATION	NAME	CONGREGATION
Higher Diploma in Christian Counseling			
Leung, Yee Ling	The Praise Assembly District 802	Ng, Kwan Nok Enoch	CRCHKS Chinese Rhenish Church, Tai Po
Li, Sum Yee	C&MA North Point Alliance Church	Ng, Pui Sze	CRCHKS Chinese Rhenish Church, Sheung Shui
Lo, Yat Wan	C&MA North Point Alliance Church	Pang, Yick Cheung	Christian Evangelical Centre Huaen Church
Ma, Lai Ying	CRCHKS Chinese Rehenish Church, Kowloon City	Sun, Xin Tong	NorthEast Theological Seminary (Liaoning)
Tam, Lok Lum	EFCC Glorious Grace Church	Tsang, Yui Hang	Assembly of God Yuen Long Gospel Centre
Master of Arts			
in Christian Counseling and Spiritual Direction			
Loo, Lai Yee Heidi	Living Streams Baptist Church	Tsui, Ka Wai	ELCHK Hung En Lutheran Church
in Christian Spirituality			
Yeung, Shun Yi	ELCHK Shun Yan Lutheran Church	Wong, Wai Pan	ELCHK Martinson Memorial Lutheran Church
in Christian Spiritual Direction			
Lau, Tsz Kit	ELCHK Ling Fai Lutheran Church	Yeung, Wing Hung	ELCHK Kwai Yan Lutheran Church
Liu, Mei Po	EFCC Yan Fook Church	Master of Divinity (Intensive)	
in Christian Studies			
Woo, Ngai Hang Ben	Abundant Life Christian Church	Song, Liang	
in Mission			
San Lwin	Mara Evangelical Church (Myanmar)	Master of Theology	
in Theology			
Tai, King Ho Yeo	ELCHK Tao Yan Lutheran Church	Fong, Chi Wing Jacob	Christian Love and Truth Church
in Biblical Studies (Intensive)			
Zheng, Cong Zhen		Fung, Lai Hing	EFCC Grace Church
in Diakonia (Intensive)			
Guo, Xiu Qiong		Hawng Hkawng	Kachin Theological College & Seminary (Myanmar)
Li, Shu Fan		Jia, Qiong	Lanzhou Shanzishi Christian Church (Gansu)
Song, Zi Ting		Khin Maung Shwe	Mara Evangelical Church (Myanmar)
Yan, Jun		Lal Hma Ngaiha	Myanmar Theological College (Myanmar)
Zhang, Bin		Lam, Ka Kin	Lutheran Church Hong Kong Synod
in Theology (Intensive)			
Zhang, Qi Cao		Lar Mar Zar Baw	Lisu Theological Seminary of Myanmar (Myanmar)
Master of Divinity			
Cheung, Ngai	HKMLC Hsin On Lutheran Chapel	Nan Hpung	Kachin Theological College (Myanmar)
Chow, Yue Kam	ELCHK Anointed Grace Lutheran Church	Wong, Chun Kit	CFGJ Jordan Church
Choy, Sherman Sheung-mun	ELCHK Hung En Lutheran Church	Yex Ohnmar Nay Win	Wa Baptist Church (Myanmar)
Huang, Chang Yu	Guang Dong Union Theological Seminary (Guangdong)	Doctor of Ministry	
Lam, Po Lei	EFCC Yan Fook Church	Wong, Wah Hing	CRCHKS Chinese Rhenish Church, Kowloon
Liu, Ka Fung	ELCHK Salvation Lutheran Church	Yao, Bao Shan	Jiangxi Bible School (Jiangxi)
Luk, Chung Yin	ELCHK Martinson Memorial Lutheran Church	Doctor of Theology	
		Cheng, Augustine Vernon	Swatow Christian Church, Kowloon City
		Tuominen, Olli-pekka	The Vine Church
		Ye Naing Oo	Rakhine Baptist Convention (Myanmar)





BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- ▶ Members of the Board of Directors for the new term (2025-2028) :
Chairperson: Rev. Yau-chi Yeung (bishop, ELCHK); **Vice Chair:** Rev. Caleb Tang-en Kao (bishop, TLC); Rev. Tom Cheuk-fung Wong (CRCHK); Rev. Man-yuk Yeung (president, HKMLC); **Vice Chair/Treasurer:** Rev. Kam-wa Leung (dean, TTMHK); **Secretary:** Rev. Kwok-lung Chiu (ELCHK); **Board Member:** Rev. Josephine Siu-yan Liu (CRCHK); Ms. Esther Yin-yung Chow (president, TTMHK); **Ex officio:** Rev. Kenneth Ho-yin Tsang (president, LTS)
- ▶ We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the outgoing board members of the previous terms, namely Rev. Chun-wa Cheung, Rev. Yat-man Leung, Elder Shui-yew Yee, and Mr. Leon Chau for their dedicated service and invaluable contributions.

PRESIDENT

- ▶ President Tsang visited multiple Chinese Lutheran churches in Canada and conducted teaching sessions (June 18-28).
- ▶ President Tsang taught at China Lutheran Seminary in Taiwan (July 19-25).
- ▶ President Tsang traveled to Yangon, Myanmar together with Dr. Stefan Gradl and Ms. Hellen Bok, assistant coordinator of Mekong Ministry, to visit alumni, seminaries, and churches (July 29-August 1).
- ▶ President Tsang attended the ATESEA Board of Directors meeting in Bangkok, Thailand (August 18-21).
- ▶ President Tsang together with Ms. Hellen Bok, assistant coordinator of Mekong Ministry, and Ms. Katherine Siu, secretary, visited Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, to assist in organizing the Mekong Ministry Annual Conference. Dr. Stefan Gradl, Dr. Jukka Helle, and Dr. Dag Oredsson were also in attendance at the conference (November 9-15).

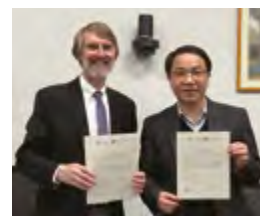
FACULTY

- ▶ Dr. Friedemann Barniske, assistant professor (Systematic Theology, Lutheran Studies), was promoted to associate professor, effective July 1.
- ▶ Dr. Stefan Gradl, assistant professor (Missiology, Christian Education, Pastoral Theology), was promoted to associate professor, effective July 1.
- ▶ Dr. Angel Lam, associate professor (Clinical Psychology and Counseling, Christian Counseling), was promoted to professor, effective July 1.

- ▶ Dr. Sin-pan Ho, professor (New Testament), was appointed academic dean, effective July 1.
- ▶ Dr. Sin-pan Ho was accepted as a full member of The Society for New Testament Studies (SNTS) in August.
- ▶ Dr. Angel Lam was invited to deliver two professional counselling training sessions at the summer camp of the Nordic Chinese Christian Church from July 9-13.
- ▶ Ms. Sandee Stadler sent by the ELCA joined our teaching team as an English lecturer this semester.

EVENTS


- ▶ June 19, our seminary signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Lutheran Theological Seminary, Saskatoon, Canada, aimed at providing opportunities for students to study and engage in academic exchange at each other's institutions.



- ▶ 2025 Theological Lecture, themed *The Spirit of God in the Public Space*, featured Prof. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen from Fuller Theological Seminary as keynote speaker. The events included a seminar on October 17, "Christian Pneumatology as Public Theology," and a lecture on October 18, "Christian Witness as Lighthouse Keeper." Over 200 attendees joined the two events.

VISTORS

- ▶ May 20, Rev. Dr. Edwin Tay Ed Min, president of Trinity Theological College (Singapore), visited LTS together with his faculty members and joined morning prayer.
- ▶ May 23, Rev. DMIN Hanns Hoerschelmann, director of Mission EineWelt (Germany), visited LTS.
- ▶ May 24, Dr. Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, professor emeritus at Friedrich Schiller University of Jena (Germany), visited LTS.
- ▶ May 27, Dr. Thu En Yu, president of Sabah Theological Seminary (Malaysia), and Dr. Chong Vui Leong Calvin, vice president, visited LTS.
- ▶ July 17, Rev. Dr. Andar Parlindungan, general secretary of United Evangelical Mission (UEM), visited LTS.
- ▶ August 6, Dr. Ilse Paakkinen, senior programme advisor of Areopagos and NMS, and Dr. Terese Bue Kessel, head of the Theology Department at VID Specialized University (Norway), visited LTS.
- ▶ August 15, Rev. Hing-tong Lui and Dr. Pongsak Limthongviratn, president of Bangkok Institute of Theology, visited LTS.

▶  September 27-October 4, Dr. Terese Bue Kessel and Ms. Mari Sæverås from VID Specialized University (Stavanger, Norway) visited LTS. During the visit, concrete plans for faculty and student exchange programs between the two institutions over the next three years were discussed.

▶ September 29, Dr. Ilse Paakkinen and Ms. Ingeborg Sæbø Oluka from the Norwegian Mission Society (NMS) visited LTS.

▶ October 9, Bishop Matthias Der and clergy from the Anglican Diocese of Hong Kong Island visited LTS.

▶ October 21-31, Dr. Uwe Vetter from the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) visited LTS. During the time, he served as the speaker for our non-credit training course "Ten Commandments of Leadership: Biblical Wisdom for Leaders." The course was co-organized together with the Kowloon Union Church.

▶ October 27, Rev. David Tin from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada visited LTS.

▶ November 3, Dr. Michael Vilain from Evangelische Hochschule Darmstadt (Germany) visited LTS.

STUDENTS

▶ Elaine Ka-ling Law (BTH, Year 3) received the a scholarship offered by the Hong Kong Chinese Christian Churches Union on October, 20. The union awards scholarships annually to outstanding theology students. Each seminary in Hong Kong may nominate one student for consideration.

▶ Hosanna Hei-wai Lai (MDIV, Year 3) received sponsorship from Kerk in Actie (Netherlands) and went to the Netherlands this semester to participate in Bridging Gap, an exchange program jointly organized by Free University Amsterdam and Protestant Theological University.

ALUMNI

▶ Thuy Joseph Keo (MDIV 2009) was ordained as a pastor by the Lutheran Church in Cambodia on November 15. May God bless and uphold him as a faithful servant, empowering him to proclaim the gospel.

ACKNOWLEDGE

▶ We gratefully acknowledge the following legacy gifts to LTS for operational expenses:

The late Ms. Shermain Lai, our former Christian Education lecturer, bequeathed approximately HK\$121 thousand dollars.

The late Ms. King-kam Chow bequeathed approximately HK\$290 thousand dollars.

We express our heartfelt thanks and pray for God's blessings upon their families.

PUBLICATION

▶ Edited by Stephanie Dietrich, Knud Jørgensen, Kari Karsrud Korslien, and Kjell Nordstokke; translated by Po-chu Groenvold and Ng Meise Mazy. The Regnum Studies in Mission, *Diakonia as Christian Social Practice: An Introduction* in Chinese version has been published recently. Please contact the Development Office to place your order.



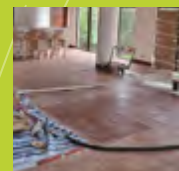
WORDS OF THE PRESIDENT

The gradual deterioration of our campus facilities has become increasingly apparent. We initially considered it would be more preferable to replace both the seats and floor tiles in the chapel in one go. Although the discussions were still in their preliminary stages, upon returning from the Chung Yeung Festival holiday on October 28, we found that a small area of floor tiles in the chapel had cracked. This unexpected development prompted a



re-consideration of the urgency and scope of our renovation project. Given that such work would require an extended holiday period to ensure timely completion, the earliest feasible time for large-scale renovation would be next summer.

However, the immediate issue of cracked floor tiles necessitates a quick response. Despite plans to replace the flooring in the near future, it is essential to allocate resources for urgent action of partial repairs, as the chapel remains a frequently used venue.



Thanks to God, this incident also reminded me of an Advent teaching: although we long for the return of our Lord Jesus to perfectly resolve all the problems of a sinful world during the waiting period, we cannot simply do nothing. People are still living in the world. Though we can only make some corrections at a time, we must be willing to do so.

Dr. Kenneth Tsang



信義宗神学院
Lutheran Theological Seminary



2026-2027

ENROLLMENT

Christian Leadership Program

Master of Arts in Theology (MA-T)

Pastoral Enhancement Programs

Master of Divinity with Theological Degree (MDIV-T)

Master of Arts in Classical Judaism (MA-CJ)

Master of Arts in Mission (MA-M)

Advanced Study Programs

Master of Theology (MTH)

Doctor of Theology (DTH)

Overseas Applications

[Deadline 15 JAN 2026]

Local Applications

* Entrance Exams for Fall intake

25 APR 2026 (Sat)

[Deadline 6 APR 2026]

27 JUN 2026 (Sat)

[Deadline 8 JUN 2026]

1 AUG 2026 (Sat)

[Deadline 13 JUL 2026]

* Entrance Exam for Spring intake

14 NOV 2026 (Sat)

[Deadline 26 OCT 2026]

* The above programs can be completed in English.

Curriculum Application



Inquiry: registrar@lts.edu

LTS, 50 To Fung Shan Road, Shatin

