



Lutheran Theological Seminary News

President: Simon CHOW Editor: Dieter MITTERNACHT Assistant Editor: Grace LUK Proofreader: Rebecca LEE Publisher: Lutheran Theological Seminary
Mailing Address: 50 To Fung Shan Road, Shatin, Hong Kong Tel.: (852) 2691-1520 Fax: (852) 2691-8458 E-mail: info@lts.edu Website: www.lts.edu

Not to be served, but to serve!

*The master's
challenge*

*You give but little
when you give of
your possessions.
It is when you give
of yourself that
you truly give.*

Kahlil Gibran

*New Master Program
in Diakonia*

Advent and Lent

looking forward to something wonderful...

by **Rebecca LEE**

In the church liturgical year we are entering the season of Easter and many of us are giving a sigh of relief. Why a sigh of relief? Before we can celebrate Easter we must go through the season of Lent; Lent is a time of sorrow and reflection on the last year, the wrongs we have done and how we can right them. Many people dread the season of Lent because it is so somber and also coincides with the dark and gloomy weather most experience in February and March. However, I personally look forward to the season of Lent as it has close personal ties, for me, to my favorite season, Advent.

Advent and Lent are not so different from each other – they both are looking toward the coming of something wonderful and they also are infused with light. In Advent, we use light to create warmth and brighten the darkest part of the year, while in Lent we use light for reflection and contemplation. The last congregation I worked at had a tradition, as do many North American Lutheran churches, of having Wednesday evening soup suppers and worship during Lent. I loved these events for a number of reasons. First, I love soup! When it is cold out, nothing tastes better than a hearty bowl of soup and some bread. These soup suppers were also a time of fellowship and renewal in the middle of the work week. I would usually sit with some of the elderly members of our congregation while eating and always came away filled with warmth - not just from the soup but from their generous company; knowledge - they had decades of experience in life on me; and also encouragement- their faith lives were so inspiring and were a push for me to keep going, even amidst the many struggles life hands us all along the way.

The beginning of Lent is marked by the Ash Wednesday service in which the imposition of ashes is performed. The imposition of ashes happens in the middle

or end of a service – usually linked with Holy Communion. Participants head to the front of the church to receive a cross of ashes, made from burnt palm leaves kept from Palm Sunday the year before, either on the hand or the forehead. As I go forward to receive the cross I am reminded of Christ's death on the cross for me, of this amazing, self-sacrificing gift for me!

This year I was able to participate in two of these services – one at LTS on Ash Wednesday itself and one at Christ Temple, my home congregation here in Hong Kong, on Sunday. As is my tradition, after each service I keep the cross on my forehead for the remainder of the day, but here this was an odd thing to do, I later found out. Many students commented that I still had the ash cross on my forehead throughout the day, for they had already removed theirs from their hands and foreheads. I explained to them that for me it is a constant reminder throughout all of Ash Wednesday of Christ's temptation and journey to the cross as we also begin this journey with Him each year. This tradition is new for many of our students here at LTS and I hope that by seeing, feeling, talking about and experiencing the imposition of ashes they, and you, will also be reminded of the humbling and wonderful gift Christ gave us by his death on the cross.

Ms. Lee is English Lecturer of LTS



A Different Kind of Service

by Simon CHOW Siu Chun

The nature of the Christian church has several important characteristics. First, the church is a body of believers (*koinonia*); second, its mission is to proclaim and witness the Good News (*martyria*); and third, it has the role of “serving” (*diakonia*).¹ In the past, different Christian bodies have had many different understandings of the participation of the church and individual Christians in the area of social service.² Some have emphasized that the church should understand that its role is to proclaim the gospel. In fact, active personal involvement in societal services has been criticized as a kind of “social gospel.” Today, this position has very few adherents; most churches understand that the proclamation of the gospel and serving society even on the structural level are two indivisible sides of the church's larger witness to the Lord that complement each other. Therefore, many churches today have established programs of service work.

What is the difference between service that the church and individual Christians are engaged in, and the social work of other organizations and individuals? And why are Christians and the church involved in social service? In short, it is an emulation of the spirit and actions of Jesus Christ's own service. Jesus said, “The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:45) The word “serve” here is the Greek word “*diakonein*,” which has the same root as the word *diakonia*. The former is an infinitive, the latter a noun, both denote action. The *diakonia* of the Lord Jesus involved actions such as “the word become flesh,” “self-emptying” for the sake of the gospel, and “witnessing to God's love.”

The example of Jesus gives us a clearer understanding of the participation of the church and of Christians in acts of service. Outwardly, there are similarities with ordinary social service, but at its core, Christian service should be different. The *diakonia* of Christians cannot simply be equated with “social service,” and ordinary social service is not what Jesus was speaking of when he spoke of *diakonia*, the reason being that Christian *diakonia* is an imitation of Christ's love for humanity and of his death on the cross for all people. Only this kind of service embraces the full meaning of *diakonia*.

Much of the social service work in Hong Kong has been established by the church and many Christians are involved in various areas of social service work. However, within this sphere of involvement, there are many Christian professionals who have not received theological training in *diakonia*. Consequently, social service is perceived by some as “just another profession” and its purpose simply as “getting the job done” in order to meet government or agency funding requirements. But can service that is content with meeting funding requirements and expectations truly be called *diakonia*? The answer is “No”. Can setting up institutional “evangelism committees” or creating posts in hospitals and schools for “chaplains” be considered the standard for *diakonia*? Again, the answer is “No”.

Christ's commission to *diakonia* includes a calling to witness (*martyria*), an inner strength and spiritual contentment that is nourished by the love and knowledge of Him and His *diakonia*. But how can we get in touch with this nourishment? What are the beliefs and convictions that Christians can use as a foundation for their *diakonia*? What characterizes a service that isn't content with “professionalism”, but also attains to holiness?

This year the Lutheran Theological Seminary has begun a one year Master of Arts in *Diakonia* program that has been born out of questions such as these.³ The purpose of the program is to assist ministers and laity involved in service work (including therapeutic, social work, education and workplace ministries) with theological training that is both holistic and diaconal, so that they may be equipped for a deeper and more powerful witness in their workplace.

Dr. Chow is President of LTS and Professor for New Testament

- 1 The Greek word *diakonia* is translated into Chinese with the two characters 服侍 in order to distinguish it from the term 服務 which denotes “social service” in terms of a profession in general.
- 2 Churches and individual Christians may also use 服務 to describe their social service when they wish to refer to the profession in general.
- 3 *Diakonia* has a long and established history in the church in Europe & USA, but is only in the beginning stages in Hong Kong.

Lutheran Theological Seminary

introduces two new Master programs that can be completed on a One-year Full-time or Three-year Part-time basis

Master of Arts in Lutheran Studies (M.A.1-yr)

Purpose:

The Master of Arts in Lutheran Studies degree is to equip persons, whether ordained or not, who already have a bachelor theological degree or other baccalaureate degree major in Christianity, for competent leadership in carrying out and supporting ministries in Lutheran churches. The primary goals are:

- i) growth in personal and spiritual maturity and in the ability to be a witness for Christ in this world;
- ii) adequate knowledge in the Lutheran heritage, history and theology;
- iii) the capacity for critical and constructive theological reflection to carry out Christian ministry in Lutheran churches in the context of denominational varieties.

Requirements of Admission:

B.Th. or B.C.E. degree or their equivalent.

Curriculum:

Eight academic courses (included four required courses and four electives); total 24 credits.

Required courses:

- Theology of Martin Luther
- Ethics of Martin Luther
- Contextual Luther Studies in Asia
- Luther Interpretations
- Lutheran Confessions
- Reformation Church History
- The Lutheran Churches: Past and Present
- Law and Gospel Distinction in Preaching
- Lutheran Worship: History and Theology
- Pastoral Spirituality from a Lutheran Perspective

Future Study:

If a M.A. degree holder wants to continue to study Master of Divinity at LTS, half of the credits can be transferred.

Master of Arts in Diakonia (M.A.1-yr)

Purpose:

The Master of Arts in Diakonia degree aims at equipping Christians who are working in diakonia related fields, including healthcare, social work, or school education etc., in the purpose of strengthening their theological foundation, with a view to practicing God's word and discipline in a diakonal context. The primary goals are:

- i) equipping students in Hong Kong and from the East Asian and Mekong River region for diakonal service in church and society and for further studies;
- ii) providing insights into and understanding the content and task of diakonia;
- iii) contribution so that the students may develop diakonal attitudes and identity as a basis for service in church and society;
- iv) equipping the students for leadership roles in major diakonal projects and institutions.

Requirements of Admission:

- Degree related to diakonia (for instance, healthcare, social work, education); or
- Degree related to administration and management; or
- Degree of B.Th. or B.C.E. or the equivalent.

Curriculum:

Seven academic courses (21 credits, included four required courses and three electives), and a diakonal practicum (3 credits); total 24 credits.

Required courses:

- Historical and Theological Foundations of Diakonia
- Biblical Perspectives on Diakonia
- Marriage and Family – System's Theory and Counseling
- Pastoral Ministry and Ethics
- Diakonia and Leadership
- Spiritual Direction and Christian Counseling
- Contemporary Missiological Models
- Church and Society

Future Study:

If a M.A. degree holder wants to continue to study Master of Divinity at LTS, half of the credits can be transferred.

Entrance Exam and Interview Dates:

- for local application; enrollment of 2011 Fall semester (September)

June 11, 2011 (Saturday)

Entrance Exam: 9:00am-12:30pm

Interview: 1:30pm-4:00pm

Application Deadline: May 27, 2011 (Friday)

or

August 6, 2011 (Saturday)

Entrance Exam: 9:00am-12:30pm

Interview: 1:30pm-4:00pm

Application Deadline: July 22, 2011 (Friday)

For details and application forms, please visit the website www.lts.edu; or contact the Registrar at 2691 1520.

Respect and Treasure The Difference of the Other

Interview with Dr. Peter LI Kwong Sang, Dean of Studies of Lutheran Theological Seminary

Interviewer: Dieter MITTERNACHT (Editor)

Editor: Dear Dr Li, you have now been the Dean of LTS for more than a year. How has this new function affected your personal life?

Li: Well you know, I have to admit that I am still green in this role, which means, for instance, that I have to become better in keeping the seminary's business and my family life apart. For the time being it is ok though, since my wife and son are presently living in the US. I also still have to find a manageable balance between administrative duties and teaching commitments. Even though I am responsible for the seminary's curriculum, I have up till now been teaching a full load for lack of colleagues in my field. Of course this means that my first year as Dean has been quite exhausting. But as I get more experience, things will change for the better.

Editor: How does the role of Dean and the power that comes with it affect your relationship to your colleagues? Would you like to comment on this?

Li: You are right in asking this question. There is a difference between then and now and sometimes it can even be a painful experience. At times, I may have to ask a colleague to take on some extra responsibility or teach a particular course that he or she, for plausible reasons, may not want to do. At other times I may have to execute decisions that were made higher up and this may not always be very popular. I have sort of made up my mind that my first priority has to be to care for the seminary and the students. At the same time, it is my heart's desire to have a brotherly and respectful relationship with my colleagues and to take everybody's concerns into account. In fact, for me all the power I have, I try to always link with duty. I try not to ask of others what I would not ask of myself. Another aspect of this is that I always try to negotiate and reason with my colleagues rather than give instructions. And I thank God that the cases, when such situations turn into a conflict, are very rare. My dominant experience is that our professors are highly committed to their job and much appreciated by our students. Thanks

be to God for each and every one of them.

Editor: In terms of dealings with students, I am sure that there are many very pleasant moments, especially when you can observe how individuals mature in heart and mind and profit from studying at LTS. But then there are cases, I suppose, when you have to make tough decisions. Does that come easy for you?

Li: Yes, you are right, we have a wonderful group of students, full of commitment, eager to serve and to learn. Even so, there are some tough decisions once in a while and they never come easy. Luckily, I can share this responsibility with our registrar, Queenie (Ms. P.Y. Wong). In fact, our policy is not to apply rules blindly, but to take students' concerns into serious consideration. If someone is purposely taking advantage of the seminary, we have to stop it. In all other cases we try to be very understanding and compassionate. In fact, on the whole we get along very well with our students.

Editor: What in your view, does LTS contribute to Christianity in Hong Kong and other countries in the South-East Asia region?

Li: The most apparent contribution is, of course, that we train ministers for the church and educators for seminaries in Hong Kong, mainland China and throughout South-East Asia. Several of our teachers at LTS, myself included, are graduates of LTS, who have then gone to Europe or the US for doctoral studies. Some others have done the same and are today serving as pastors or seminary teachers in other parts of the world. At the moment, LTS supports two alumni in their doctoral studies abroad. Hopefully they too will become colleagues of our seminary in the near future.

Editor: LTS is a seminary that is funded and governed by the Lutheran churches of Hong Kong. Yet, it is apparent that many of our students, more than half probably, are from other denominations. What is your explanation, given the fact that there are so many seminaries in Hong Kong?

Li: Yes, you are right. In fact, it is not just the students as individuals that choose to come to LTS. We require all our students to have recommendations from their home churches. This means that it is also their churches who want them to study at LTS. I am very pleased that LTS has this reputation of openness among Hong Kong Christians and it is something I support in any way that I can. Having said this, it is also a fact that most of our teachers have a Lutheran background and that as a faculty we share a commitment to respect and support the Lutheran heritage. But exactly that heritage teaches us not to impose our convictions on others and, instead, respect diversity in the church of Christ.

A second factor that attracts many students to LTS is the seminary's emphasis on spirituality, which has had a great appeal in this city for some years. Most important, I believe, the strong appeal of LTS lies in the fact that our faculty is recognized for being one of the best in the region. In addition to local faculty, we have, I believe the largest number of international faculty in Hong Kong.

Personally, I often think about the academic, cultural and geographical diversity at our faculty meetings. And I am amazed; all these different people with different backgrounds and expertise cooperating and working towards a common goal in friendship and mutual respect. I dare to venture that this is a testimony towards Christian unity that can be beneficial for our students, who often come from rather local contexts. In any event, it is my hope and prayer that our collegial relationship and tolerance sets an example of what the body of Christ is and should be.

I also want to say, and this may sound like a paradox, in its diversity LTS also has an important role to play in the spreading and strengthening of Lutheranism in the Asian context. The emphasis on grace alone, or on a dynamic understanding of scripture, or on the priesthood of all believers, tends to fall short in our Lutheran churches, and we constantly need to teach the fundamental principles and further their application in the daily life of the church.

Editor: *What is your vision for LTS, academically and spiritually?*

Li: Actually, an important concern is that I would like to see more critical thinking and awareness among our students. They are very diligent and work hard on their assignments, but to some degree there is a lack of critical reflection, both in relation to what is being read, but also in relation to traditions, ministry and personal growth. Maybe it's the pragmatic mentality of our city that leads into being preoccupied with doing things rather than reflecting on them.

The same challenge applies to teachers, of course. That is also one of the reasons why I especially appreciate it if we can attract colleagues with a broad and reflective perspective and an attitude towards teaching that encourages critical thought rather than a "true or false" mentality. To my mind, studying theology is a continuous reflection on what the church and I are doing, why we are doing it and how we can improve it. For instance, when I teach church history, one of my goals is always to make students aware of the danger of Constantinianism, or religious absolutism, you might say, and raise their awareness and respect for pluralism and tolerance. How can a society be harmonious unless you respect, even treasure, the difference of the other?

Editor: *How about the spiritual side of your vision?*

Li: Oh, no no, please don't get me wrong. Personality development and thinking is also spiritual. You cannot separate the two. God is the God of this world. I object to the dichotomy implied here between worldly and godly things. The two belong together.

Editor: *Soon LTS will celebrate its 100th anniversary. Looking back, we can see that the seminary has gone through many changes, such as the geographical move from mainland China to Hong Kong and the development of the local student body into a regional one. If you were to envision the character of the seminary 20 years from now, what would be your prediction?*

Li: Actually, if I try to project the present direction of LTS into the future, and that is all I can do, I would think that we will continue to be an important institution for the training of ministers for Hong Kong. As to our regional profile, some of the countries that need our help today may not need us in the future. We can already see some of those tendencies. On the other hand, the need for theological training of church leaders and seminary teachers in mainland China is enormous. You don't need to be a prophet to foresee – granted that the political situation remains somewhat stable – that our focus on helping with that task will increase, maybe even considerably and quite quickly. Who knows, God willing, the seminary may even establish an extension campus in the mainland at the right juncture. But LTS will retain its center in Hong Kong. This city is such a strategic place, I believe, both now and in years to come.

Editor: *Thank you Dr. Li for answering my questions openly and frankly.*

Marco Polo

And St. Peter

by Christa von ZYCHLIN

II Peter 1:16-21

Marco Polo (born in the year 1254) is one of the world's most famous travelers, reaching further into Asia than any Westerner before him, journeying beyond Mongolia into beautiful China itself. His travelogue from centuries ago is well known among school children and scholars to this day.¹

Even back in those days, in the 1200's, Marco Polo was amazed with China's enormous power and wealth. He spoke of its huge empire and massive economy, including such specific things as salt production and iron manufacturing, and of a canal-based transportation system which linked China's huge cities and markets in a vast network in which paper money and systems of accounting and credit extension were already highly developed. He also reported that the citizens could purchase paperback books with paper money, (both items unheard of in Europe in those days) and he spoke of how the Chinese ate rice from fine porcelain bowls and wore silk garments, and lived in prosperous cities that no European town could match.

From the beginning, however, skeptics have questioned the authenticity of Marco Polo's accounts of Asia. Some of his stories have clearly been outright fairytales: for example he spoke of monstrous birds which dropped elephants from a height and then ate the resulting, tenderized meat.

More recently, I was surprised to read that some people today believe Marco Polo may not even have made it to China at all. For example, his travelogue made no mention about the Great Wall. While supposedly living 17 years in China, Marco Polo never learned the Chinese language (although to be honest I think I can understand how that might be possible!)

But Marco Polo also never mentioned a number of things which would have been surprising to a European, but were part of everyday life in China, things such as women's foot-binding, calligraphy, or tea (!). Could he really have lived in China all those years and never mentioned the peculiar habit of pouring hot water over dried leaves to make a beverage, something that was unknown in those days in Europe?

So did Marco Polo ever actually go to China? Or was he just a good listener when other travelers talked?

Does it really matter? Websites say no. Fiction or not, the accounts of his travels have captured the imagination of his readers throughout the centuries, and if it was a cleverly devised story he made up, well, then, it's a story still worth reading.

And, at least one on-line travel site assures me that Marco Polo's travels in China are also a story worth spending \$2,950 US dollars on, taxes and travel to and from China not included.²

The Marco Polo story, is a bit of fiction still worth reading, still worth spending money on.

Might it be the same with Christianity?

The little book in the New Testament called 2nd Peter is written to early Christians who found themselves surrounded by skeptics. Some of those skeptics even considered themselves to be Christians, but they were saying that essentially Christianity is a bit of fiction still worth reading. So inspiring. Jesus Christ, like Marco Polo, is a man so worth learning about.

Into this skeptical environment, we have words out of the mouth of a man, Peter, who is facing the end of his earthly life.

"Our Lord Jesus Christ has made it clear to me," he says...

Does he sigh as he says this? (in 2 Peter chapter 1 verses 13-14) – *"I will soon put aside the tent of this body."*

Did he know he was about to die?

Had his last appeal to avoid the death penalty failed?

Had he already made his choice known, to be crucified upside down, as Christian tradition tells us? Although it is mentioned nowhere in Scripture, Christian tradition says that St. Peter, once he knew he was to be executed, asked to be crucified upside down, because he said he was not worthy to be crucified in exactly the same manner as his Lord.

That may be a cleverly devised story. *That* may not be historically factual, although I like to think it is. *That* story, however, is not life changing for us.

The words of the canonical Scripture placed in Peter's mouth, these words say that Peter, in his last months or weeks of life, was overcome with the need to remind his fellow Christians (and no doubt he needed to remind himself) of the his-

1 My non-scholarly information about Marco Polo was gleaned from various internet sources such as Wikipedia, <http://geography.about.com/cs/marcopolo/> as well as a short discussion in *Poorly Made in China* (2011) by Paul Midler, pp.108-109.

2 Go to www.wildchina.com and check out its Marco Polo's Silk Road travel pricing.

torical truth of the story that is life changing:

That the man Jesus walked on the earth, taught his disciples, was crucified and then was shown to be, not only man, but God made human flesh and blood, so that human flesh and blood might share in the life of God.

Even old, sinful, failing flesh and blood like old man Peter, or like you and me.

Chapter 1 verse 16 reads *“For we did NOT follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty.”*³

We think he’s now going to talk about the resurrection.

But Peter goes back to an earlier time. The time which was the little Easter before the great Easter. The time *before* the explosive time when Jesus got up from the dead some time before dawn on the third day.

The old man Peter,

- The Jesus Denying - then - Sins - Forgiven Peter,
- The Crippled Beggar at the Beautiful Gate - Healer Peter
- The Jesus Loving - Feeding the Lambs - Caring for the Sheep - Shepherd Peter,
- The Once Fearful - now Death Defying - Prison Escaping - Filled with the Spirit Peter

This Peter is remembering what his eyes had seen and what his ears had heard on Transfiguration Day on the mountain

Peter goes back to a moment of glory, of which he was an eyewitness.

After two years of climbing the mountains of Hong Kong, I personally imagine, that even after all those intervening years, Peter remembers quite well, the gentle ache in his legs, the clarity of the air, the sense of wonder as he looked out, eye level with the sky, when *whooooo!*

Out of nowhere, Peter’s Rabbi Jesus begins to glow, and although he didn’t understand a thing at the time, *now*, now when he looks back, Peter knows exactly what his eyes saw and his ears heard. God made flesh. And flesh made God.

He understands it now, because now he is filled with the Holy Spirit.

The same Spirit which we too have received, a Spirit to distinguish life-giving truth from interesting tales, however cleverly and inspiringly, or provocatively told.

It is said that on *his* death bed⁴, Marco Polo said:

“I have not told half of what I saw.”

Maybe that is true.

On her deathbed, Mother Teresa is **reputed to have said:**

Jesus, I love you. Jesus, I love you.

It sounds like what she said in life, so I’m guessing this one is true, that is what Mother Teresa said just before death.

Frida Kahlo, a famous Mexican painter, a baptized (but skeptical) Catholic Christian who led an extremely hard yet extremely creative life, is reputed to have said on her deathbed:

I hope the exit is joyful and hope never to return.⁵

I kind of like that one, too.

Another of my favorite among deathbed sayings is one said to have been spoken by Dr. Martin Luther himself:

Wir sind alle Bettler. (We are all beggars) This is true.

Yes we are. But quite confident beggars,

With hands and hearts open to receive the Spirit with joy, paying attention to the canonical Biblical witness.

Until, as St. Peter says in these most beautiful words, attributed to him shortly before his death: (let’s read them together)

2 Peter 1:19

*“We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.”*⁶

May this light of God’s Word and Spirit and Truth glow brightly in you and in me, transforming our lives and the lives of those we are empowered to serve, today until the day Christ is revealed to us in the true fullness of his glory. Amen.

Rev. Zychlin is part time lecturer for Stewardship of LTS

3 II Peter 1:16 NRSV.

4 “Famous Last Words” <http://www.2spare.com/item_61729.aspx>.

5 <http://www.fridakahlofans.com/biobrief.html>.

6 2Peter 1:19NRSV.

VISITING PROFESSOR

Dr. Bas PLAISIER

Professor for Missiology and Ecumenical Theology



Moving to Hong Kong is the second longer stay abroad for my wife Henny and I. From 1977 to 1984 we lived on the island Sulawesi in Indonesia where I was a missionary/teacher at the Theological Seminaries in Rantepao and Makassar in the areas of Systematic Theology and New Testament. We were young then, I had just graduated from the Theological Faculty of the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands and we had a small family with a son and daughter. Later on our third and fourth child was born - a boy and a girl. Currently we have seven grandchildren. Our four children are all living in the Netherlands.

Before the calling of God led me into theology, I had already studied to be a teacher. Becoming a theologian was therefore a second carrier choice in my life. After the completion of my theological studies, I began my work in missionary service. Working and living among the Toraja people in Indonesia proved to be one of the most decisive experiences in my life. We learned a great deal from living among the Toraja people, such as the great diversity of God's people, to understand and enjoy the variety of cultures, customs, spiritualities and as well different views of the church.

After those years I began my dissertation research and fieldwork on the mission work in the Toraja region of Indonesia. At the same time I was

a pastor in The Hague (a city in the Netherlands) where I could practice what I had learned in Indonesia. The Reformed congregation was in the process of changing towards more of a mission oriented and united church. These new developments meant that I could practice helping to bring churches together - for me this is only possible when there is a common passion for mission. My wife and I started with ministries for children and in close collaboration with the schools in that part of the city. There I learned that leaving the traditional ways and following the call of our Lord to share the Gospel with people outside is very fruitful for the Church and its members. After 8 years we could celebrate the unity of the congregations and as a special gift receive a life-giving and vital Church!

Our life changed dramatically when in 1997 I was called by the synod of our national Church to become the new General Secretary (this position is comparable with the bishop in Lutheran Churches). I was given the special task to lead the national Church after a long and almost impossible process of unification. Two Reformed and one Lutheran Church (together more than 2 million members) were in the process of moving "together on the way to unity." I faced many challenges and could use my experiences in mission, my knowledge in confessional and systematic theology and the gift of optimism and hope.

And the miracle happened! The three Churches found each other. The Reformed and Lutheran Confessions could be accepted in the Church Order of the new Church as a gift of our common ancestors for the present and the future. In 2004 we could celebrate the merger of these Churches in our national cathedral in Utrecht. The Protestant Church in the Netherlands was a reality. I remember my deep emotions of the presence of Christ during this service. Leading that celebration I saw in front of me the united body of Christ!

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A Personal Passion of Ministry

Ms. J. J. JOHNSON LESSE
Lecturer for New Testament Greek



Ms. J. J. Johnson Lesse holds an M. Div. from Fuller Theological Seminary, and an S.T.M. from Concordia Seminary, both US. In 2008 she began her doctoral studies at Durham University (England). Her dissertation focuses on the Pauline view of creation in light of the Christ event and its implications for Christians today.

I am very happy to begin teaching Greek 1 and 2 at Lutheran Theological Seminary. I moved to Asia eight years ago from the United States; first to India and the past seven years in Hong Kong. Upon moving to Hong Kong, the first invitation our family received for a meal was from the LeMonds. This immediately connected our family with LTS and Tao Fung Shan, a retreat center I have personally benefited from on several retreats. My husband, Bill and I moved to Hong Kong initially as secondary religion teachers at Hong Kong International School (HKIS). At that time, Bill also served as part time youth pastor at Church of All Nations, Repulse Bay. Our membership at Church of All Nations provided opportunities to interact with LTS students which has continued throughout the past seven years.

My time in Asia has been a rich and diverse experience having led student trips to the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Mongolia, Vietnam, China and India. These include service trips building homes, working in orphanages and educational experiences teaching about Christianity and Buddhism. One of the most rewarding ministry experiences has been working with New Life Center in Thailand learning about and interacting with young women whom have been exposed to human trafficking in SE Asia. This continues to be a personal passion of ministry for me.

My husband Bill continues to teach religion at Hong Kong International school and we have three children. Our oldest, Nate is a second year student at Valparaiso University, a Lutheran University in the United States and our daughter and son, Pragati Janae and Sanjay are high school students at HKIS.

Visiting Professor (continued)

I have been worked as General Secretary for four years in this united Church. In that period, another miracle took place: the Church became more oriented towards mission than ever! Really, mission and unity are close related.

In 2008 I resigned from this office but accepted the task to explore the possibilities of a closer relationship with the Church in China. My wife and I have travelled many times in China to find new ways of realizing these goals. Having gratefully accepted the invitation of LTS to become a visiting professor my hope and wish is for collaboration in different areas between the Dutch Church

and the Chinese Churches in Hong Kong and mainland China.

Finally, last year I was elected as one of the vice-presidents of the new Communion of Reformed Churches with the special task of developing the relations between European Churches, the Churches of the Middle East and China.

I enjoy the contact with the students very much. They encourage me and give me hope for the future of the Church. My wife and I are grateful to God that we have received this wonderful opportunity to live and work among you!

The Journey From Kadesh to Mt Hermon



Jonathan LEE

**2011 Graduate Student
for Master of Art (Theology)**

In the early morning on 13 January 2003 I fell into the lowest ebb in my life as an accident occurred to me. My left elbow was seriously injured, incurring more than 90 percentage incapability. After further operations and prolonged therapeutic treatment, my left arm could resume no more than 50 percentage of its original capacity. Subsequent mishaps and tragedies came as twin brothers, striking a severe blow to my confidence, leading me into the wilderness of Kadesh. My motivation to praise the Lord disappeared though I carried no dissatisfaction with God. Joy and happiness faded out even though I was not saddened. I continued to attend church despite my new affiliation with the Laodikeia community. It took me more than five years to come out of the valley of sorrow and despair.

In 2009 I retired from the Hong Kong Police Force after more than thirty-one years of service, and chose to pursue theological studies as the goal of my remaining years. When I applied for enrollment at LTS, I lacked confidence. In my own view, I lagged much behind in competence and determination and did not believe that I could manage a full curriculum. I therefore applied for the Graduate Diploma, hoping that the unfamiliar terrains of theological studies and service in the Church would be better manageable after conclusion of the Diploma program. To my surprise, the Seminary asked me to switch to the MA curriculum. I accepted the challenge, filled with shock and shiver. However, I soon found myself deeply immersed in the wonderful Providence of the Lord and I gradually adopted a healthy lifestyle in faith.

In the past thirty odd years, I have attended different university curricula, but the Seminary campus life was brand new to me. In order to ensure survival, I fell into my previous mode of study at the university, which was to meet professors' requirements according to course outlines. "Not in my neighborhood" was my basic approach to all other problems. Yet, new challenges with new insights arrived every day. First of all, I was called to serve with the Interpretation Team, a difficult task as I thought. Not only was the frequent commitment to the interpretation service a heavy burden to me. Things were even more difficult, as I had to get used to the tight schedule of speakers. Later on, I was asked to also help with the translation service of the English version of the Seminary Bulletin. It often came to my heart, "God, why is the service becoming more and

more difficult?" However, now, I enjoy the translation service and have a strong sense of belongingness after each successful completion of the translation task.

In order to cut down my expenses, I minimized driving to the Seminary during semesters and began walking uphill more often. In the beginning this meant some heavy breathing and fast heartbeats. Though the walk was less than thirty minutes, I felt a heavy burden on my shoulder. But after some practice things improved a lot. Now I enjoy the serenity of these twenty minutes of spiritual walk. Sometimes I walk slowly and use the time for praying, using the repetitious prayer: "Lord, have mercy on me!" On arriving at the car park, opposite the Lower Dormitory, I gaze at the Cross at the end of the 121-step staircase and realize my source of help.


Campus life at the Seminary has affected my stubbornness tremendously. My previous experience of so called "morning prayers" was from the Hong Kong Police. There, I had to report, in uneasiness and worries, to my senior officers about events during the past day. Now, hymns, proclamation, creative presentations and prayer of the day, etc. seem to lead me to find the daily hidden manna. While my curriculum incurs no compulsory choir practice, I enjoy very much to participate in the Wednesday afternoons rehearsals. All in all, I am not only able to learn the secret skills of the professors, but I can also immerse myself entirely with each and every musical note of praise.

There is a lot more like the above that I could share about my gains outside the classroom. Every day I am able to lead a healthy lifestyle in faith. I am in my 50's but after these two years of study at LTS, I feel that I am still going strong. I feel that I am as young as I was years ago, serving the Lord and seeking His face.

What I have shared with you is only the first part of a story. The second part will be completed on conclusion of the next theological curriculum when I hope to be able review my efforts to strive for a life as a servant of the Lord. The third part will be concluded in a few years. It is my heart's desire that, when seeing the Lord, I will not be empty-handed.

13 January 2003 is history, but every new year, that very day is like a new start for me.

Four years on!



Mckie Mathieson
2011 Graduate Student
for Bachelor of Theology

Even now when I think about graduating I can hardly take it in that I have reached this day! Life as a student in Lutheran Theological Seminary has moved along and it seems at times with such speed.

The memories are as rich as the knowledge that has been gained and the friendships that have been made. Within these memories are ones which bring with them sadness and others joy. We have stood as one as we have given thanks to God for those who have left this earthly life. We have stood as one and with joy as we have welcomed new life into this world. Our community never 'missing out' on the realities of life and the realities of being part of that which we call life!

From the beginning of this journey I recollect the new world that was opening before me, having thought I would never be in this position, I moved on as the veils of the unknown were removed one by one; and with their removal, most issues with which I had wrestled became clearer and better known. These new avenues brought with them times of decision, times of action and times simply to 'be'. Times when reaching a crossroads or a 'dead end,' a solution could always be found with the help of a friend; fellow students and faculty alike, giving their time taking an interest in you; offering a listening ear- a welcome word- a knowing smile. Being there willing to walk with you and give you encouragement when the times were rough, reminding you always that you are not alone!

On retreats, as on campus, this has been ever present, this knowing and feeling that you are not alone!

At our annual retreat on Cheung Chau we are able to be reunited with brothers and sisters after the summer break. It is also the time we come to realise the faces that are missing from the gathering, belonging to those who have begun the work they have been preparing for and will no longer be

with you on this journey.

It is an opportunity to welcome new faces to our community and it is above all, a time to be One in the love and worship of the Living God.

The tranquil moments on campus have often been shattered by the banging of food trays by our cook as he wards off the families of monkeys who visit us from time to time. Or perhaps you have been shocked as the roar of the victor rises from the table tennis room or indeed the wails of the loser of the same table tennis match!

Then there was the 'stool breaking' challenges in the canteen; a contest with no fixed date or a particular time of meet. Nevertheless, this contest, though unspoken of, exists for all. With each breakage the invisible score sheet tally was added to and we all once again thanked God that only a stool was damaged!

I remember the joy and the fascination of watching and listening as members of our community displayed works of art and shared their musical talents in the library and in the central courtyard. Or on a Wednesday afternoon, sitting by the fishpond being lulled, not only by the sound of the water but also by the singing of the choir.

With graduation coming soon, I enter into the last stretch of this part of my life's journey; I do so carrying with me all that has been shared in studies, conversations, duties and in fun! Being part of the community of Lutheran Theological Seminary has added to the composite me and will never leave me.

When I was asked to write this memory of LTS I was amused and grateful for the opportunity to do so because after my first retreat in Cheung Chau, I was asked to write something for the magazine and here I am in my last term writing again. Creating my own 'Inclusio' I find myself yet again in the same place I was four years ago, about to start on another leg of the journey that is life, that is my life in Christ Jesus.

Special Days in April



Elsie, TUNG Oi Lee
2011 Graduate Student
for Master of Arts (Theology)

When the month of April is approaching, two special festivals are on my mind. First, the Ching Ming Festival, where the Chinese visit the cemetery and remember their relatives or ancestor. Secondly and quite similar in many ways, Easter, where Christians recall Jesus who gave up his body but was revived in the eternal world. Most Hong Kong people, even if they are not Christians, welcome Easter because they benefit from four consecutive holidays.

In fact, I have never gone to the cemetery exactly on Ching Ming Festival because the gridlock of traffic around the cemetery areas is very frustrating. More importantly, most of my close family members are still alive. At Easter, like most churchgoers, I attend the service of Good Friday unless some pressing engagements prevent me. Sometimes, I take the chance, just like other Hong Kong people, to get a breath of fresh air by travelling outside Hong Kong.

Spending time and money on "Easter Feast" packages offered by hotels, or on shopping in malls that are hijacked by bunnies and eggs, is part of the life in this metropolitan city. For businesses, the Easter holiday is another golden opportunity to make money after the Chinese New Year which mostly falls between January and February. As a Christian, I am torn between the Good Friday service and the "Easter Feast."

This year, I am quite anxious as these two festivals are getting closer. My brother died with cancer last September and

my old aged dad also passed away a few months ago. My relatives tell me, that visiting the cemetery is not only a must, but a special time to recall the sweet memory of our beloved ones who have passed away. I will taste the bitterness of separation, sorrow and grief will overwhelm my heart.

Who wouldn't try to negotiate with God in times of life and death? Jesus went to pray the whole night. In his last breath he uttered His seven words from the cross. How can we, like Jesus, use seven words and end our lives in the presence of others? If it had not been God's will, but His own will, how could he have faced the end with seven words on his lips and accept the separation?

Easter reminds us that Jesus's experience was a human experience and that he can understand and help us as we face separation and death. Easter also reminds us of what happened after Jesus' death on the Cross. It tells us that death is only the end of the body. It is NOT the end of relationship with others, especially the relationship with God.

Even this year, April is a time of tears and a time of joy, a time to mourn and a time to regain hope. I will graduate from LTS this year, but I will never graduate from learning to live between life and death. It is a Life Curriculum that never ends, and that I am always especially aware of when the two April festivals are getting closer.

Invitation to the 34th Graduation Service of the Lutheran Theological Seminary

Sunday, June 5, 2011

Shamshuipo Tsung Tsin Church, 58 Tai Po Road, Kowloon.

Theological Education by Extension Program (Evening School): 2:30 to 3:30pm

Day School: 4:30 to 6:00pm

The Board of Directors and Faculty of LTS



Lutheran Theological Seminary (Day School)

2011-2012 Enrollment

Full-time & Part-time Programs

Here I am.

Send me!

1) Ministerial Leadership Programs

Bachelor of Theology (B.Th.)

Requirement for admission: secondary school Form 6

Bachelor of Christian Education (B.C.E.)

Requirement for admission: secondary school Form 6

Three-year Master of Divinity (M.Div.3-yr)

Requirement for admission: a baccalaureate degree or equivalent

Two-year Master of Divinity (M.Div.2-yr)

Requirement for admission: a B.Th. or B.C.E. degree or their equivalent

Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.)

Requirement for admission: 1) a M.Div. degree or equivalent; and
2) three years of ministerial experience

One-Year Master of Arts (M.A.1-yr)

Master of Arts in Lutheran Studies (M.A.1-yr)

Master of Arts in Spirituality (M.A.1-yr)

Master of Arts in Pastoral Counseling (M.A.1-yr)

Master of Arts in Mission (M.A.1-yr)

Master of Arts in Diakonia (M.A.1-yr)

Master of Arts in Theological Librarianship (M.A.1-yr)

Requirement for admission: a B.Th. or B.C.E. degree or their equivalent

2) Academic Theological Leadership Programs

Master of Theology (M.Th.)

Requirement for admission: a M.Div. degree or equivalent

Doctor of Theology (D.Th.)

Requirement for admission: a M.Th. or S.T.M. degree or equivalent

3) Lay and Special Ministry Leadership Programs

Diploma in Theological Studies (Dip.T.S.)

Requirement for admission: secondary school Form 6

Diploma in Theological Librarianship (Dip.T.L.)

Requirement for admission: secondary school Form 6

Two-Year Master of Arts in Theology (M.A.2-yr)

Requirement for admission: a baccalaureate degree or equivalent

One-Year Master of Arts in Diakonia (M.A.1-yr)

Requirement for admission: a degree related to diakonia (for instance, healthcare, social work, education) or a degree related to administration and management or equivalent

Graduate Diploma (Grad.Dip.)

Requirement for admission: a baccalaureate degree or equivalent

Entrance Exam and Interview Dates:

- for local application; enrollment of 2011 Fall semester (September)

June 11, 2011 (Saturday)

Entrance Exam: 9:00am-12:30pm

Interview: 1:30pm-4:00pm

Application Deadline: May 27, 2011 (Friday)

Or

August 6, 2011 (Saturday)

Entrance Exam: 9:00am-12:30pm

Interview: 1:30pm-4:00pm

Application Deadline: July 22, 2011 (Friday)

Entrance Exam and Interview Dates:

- for local application; enrollment of 2011 Spring semester (January)

December 3, 2011 (Saturday)

Entrance Exam: 9:00am-12:30pm

Interview: 1:30pm-4:00pm

Application Deadline: November 18, 2011 (Friday)

Any enquiry, please contact the Registrar Ms. Wong at 2691 1520.

Training
God's Servants
for Asia and
Beyond

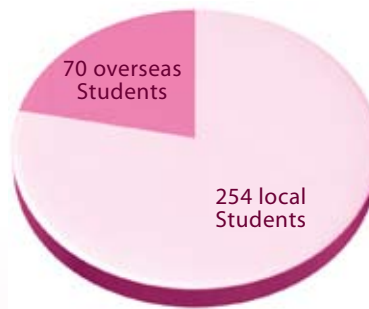
Registrar Reports 2010-2011

The academic year 2010-2011 maintains the record in terms of enrollment. Currently 542 students (day school and evening school) are studying at LTS. The Day School records a total of 324 students, including 92 new students in the Fall and 19 in the Spring semester. The Evening Theological Education by Extension Program (TEE) records a total of 218 students, including 71 new students.

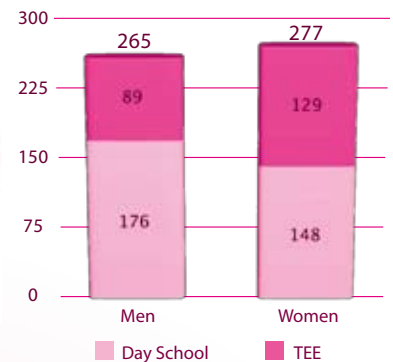
This academic year 22% of the student body comes from outside of Hong Kong. Of the 15 students from Mainland China, two are in the Master Degree Program and five in the Advanced Studies Program. The other eight are exchange students (postgraduate students and doctoral degree candidates) from Peking University, Renmin University of China, Nanjing University, Nankai University, Henan University, Zhejiang University, Tongji University and Shanghai Normal University. 23 students come from the Mekong River Region: Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. In addition, LTS welcomed students from Macau, Taiwan, Korea, Nepal, Malaysia, Germany, Sweden, the United States, England, Pakistan and Cameroon to its growing and colorful family.

Number of Students as Candidates in Various Degree Programs	
Bachelor of Christian Education (B.C.E)	1
Bachelor of Theology (B.Th.)	55
Master of Divinity (M.Div.)	90
Master of Art (Theology) (M.A.)	28
Master of Sacred Theology (S.T.M.)	2
Master of Theology (M.Th.)	28
Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.)	43
Doctor of Theology (D.Th.)	27
Graduate Diploma (Grad. Dip.) & Diploma in Theological Studies (Dip.T.S.)	6
Diploma of Theological Librarianship	3
English Diploma	3
Non-degree	38

Distribution of Day School Students at LTS



Total Number of Students in Day School and TEE at LTS



News and Dates

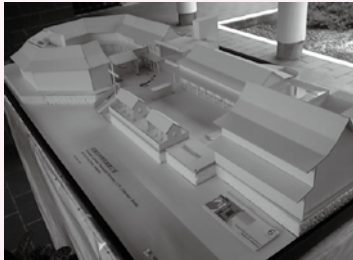
- On January 14-31, President Dr. Simon CHOW visited our partners in Helsinki in Finland, Lund in Sweden and Oslo in Norway for consultations regarding the LTS teaching ministries. We are thankful for the pledge of teaching support from Diakonhjemmet University College, Diakonova and Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology; and also for the financial support from Lund Mission Society.
- On January 21, February 19 and April 8, three Friday Lectures of the year were held. The speakers were Dr. TANG S.K. Andres (Professor of Hong Kong Baptist Theological Seminary); Dr. CHAN Sze Chi (Senior Lecturer of Hong Kong Baptist University); and Rev. Dr. KWOK H.B. Benedict respectively. The topic was "The Wrongs and Rights of Luther's Theology"; Dr. Tang approached the topic from a

cultural point of view, Dr. Chan gave a political perspective while Dr. Kwok applied a theological insight. The lectures have widened the students' knowledge and perspectives on Luther studies.

- On February 9, a Chinese New Year gathering in the dining hall was organized by Student Association. Professors, international and local students celebrated the joyful atmosphere of the Chinese New Year together.
- On February 16, a mission lecture on "Mission in Thailand" was conducted by the Mission Concern Committee. BTh student, Naomi LAM, shared her 3-year mission experience in Thailand. On March 30, another mission lecture was presented by Ms. Tong, a missionary in East Africa. The topic was "Muslim Ministry! Why me?!" Many Students

were impressed and inspired by the missionaries' work for the spread of the gospel and also their insights about politics and culture.

- On March 4, was "The 2010-2011 Graduates Photo Shooting Day". The weather was wonderful with lots of sunshine. Students were taking photos in a delightful atmosphere. As an opening ceremony, President Dr. Simon CHOW and Mrs. HSIAO presented to the model of the planned seminary extension.



- On March 18, the Student Association held a prayer gathering for Japan regarding the earthquake and tsunami. Professors and students gathered in the Ming Yee Lecture Hall and remembered the victims of the disaster. Before the prayer, a video of the devastation of the tsunami was shown, as the participants remembered the victims in silent meditation. The prayers also included the victims in Christchurch, New Zealand and in Sichuan, China.
- On March 21, faculty candidate, Ms. LAI Shuk Mei returned to Hong Kong for one month conducting some interviews for her thesis research. Ms. Lai is a doctoral student in Christian Religious Education at Durham University, UK.
- On March 30, students, faculty and administration met for a "Family Talk". Students were enthusiastic to share their ideas for the Seminary and their needs. President Dr. Simon CHOW, Dean of Studies Dr. Peter LI, professors and staff attended.
- On March 31 to April 18, the fourth year in a row, the Student Association arranged the Campus Arts and Performance Festival. The opening ceremony was conducted by President Dr. Simon CHOW, Dean of Studies Dr. Peter LI and Chaplain Rev. Angus WU. Art from students and professors was exhibited in the Library and personal and group performances took place in the beautiful seminary courtyard. This year we again had a demonstration of Chinese Calligraphy by Dr Patrick CHAN and folk songs singing by the "Tao Fung Trio" (Drs. Ted ZIMMERMAN, Dieter MITTERNACHT and John LEMOND). Dr. LEMOND also performed his very amazing and funny magic show.

- On April 11 to 14, President Dr. Simon CHOW and Dr. Dieter MITTERNACHT represented LTS to attend an international leadership training conference which was arranged by the Overseas Council International at the Evangel Seminary in Hong Kong. Dr. MITTERNACHT gave a lecture on the topic "Faculty Research, Writing and Publication".
- On April 15, the Annual Sacred Music Worship was held at the Shamshupo Tsung Tsin Church. The theme of the worship was, "By His Love, We are Healed". The LTS Choir, with Ms. Mabel WU as the conductor, performed different musical interpretations of Love and Healing. The preacher was Dr. John LEMOND. Around 700 people from different churches attended the worship.

News Feed on Professors

- Dr. Pilgrim LO's article "Menschenwürde aus chinesisch-konfuzianischer Sicht" is now published in Theologische Literaturzeitung (136. Jahrgang, Heft 1), in Germany.
- A new hymn book "The New Hymns Of Praise" with hymns from different parts of the world has been published in March. Ms. Mabel WU, music and worship lecturer at LTS, is the chief editor of the hymnal. It is our prayer that the hymnal will enrich the worship life of the church.

Acknowledgement

- With the support of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission, Ms. Judy GRANBERG has returned to LTS this January, in order to work in the Library on a part-time basis.
- On March 24, BTh student Roy NJUABE's wife, Lisa has given birth to a baby girl named NJUABE Mizpah Belumeh. Congratulations to Roy's family.
- On 26-30 April, Dr. Simon CHOW visited Sichuan Theological Seminary in order to discuss the cooperation on theological education in the future. Dr. Chow also visited the CCC/TSPM of Sichuan for a time of sharing.

Thinking of You

- On March 19, BTh student Rosanna KWAN Yuen Man's mother, Ms. TAM Ngun Yuk has passed away. Please remember her and her family in our prayers.
- On April 3, MA student WAN Fook Gun's father, Mr. WAN Chuen has died in a car accident. Please remember him and his family in our prayers.
- On 20 April, Professor Dr. Ted ZIMMERMAN's mother has passed away at the age of 88 in the USA. Please remember him and his family in our prayers.