

LTS NEWS

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信義宗神學院
LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY



Imagining the future

Editorial



Photo by Carolyn Schneider

The cover photo of the Easter issue of the LTS News, English edition, shows Piano Chow Yue Kam, one of our beloved students, helping to lead us in worship during the celebrations of the New Year. The banner behind her calls us to songs of praise to God who gives us new life. That new life is sealed in the resurrection of Jesus from the tomb. He was the same Jesus who seemed to have no future at all as he hung on the cross. The early church applied the words of Isaiah 53:8 to Jesus: "By a perversion of justice he was taken away. Who

could have imagined his future? For he was cut off from the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people."

But God has a great imagination, and what God imagines happens. God imagined abundant life for Jesus, and through him, for all of us. So, out of the depths of sin, injustice, violence, and death, Jesus rose up alive, carrying us all with him. In Christ we have a joyful future, even at times when it is impossible for us to imagine it. We can help each other glimpse that

future. In the words of Mitri Raheb, pastor of Christmas Lutheran Church in troubled Bethlehem, Palestine, "Faith embodies the view that we can imagine something that was not, until the present, part of our history" (*Faith in the Face of Empire: The Bible through Palestinian Eyes* [Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 2014], 127).

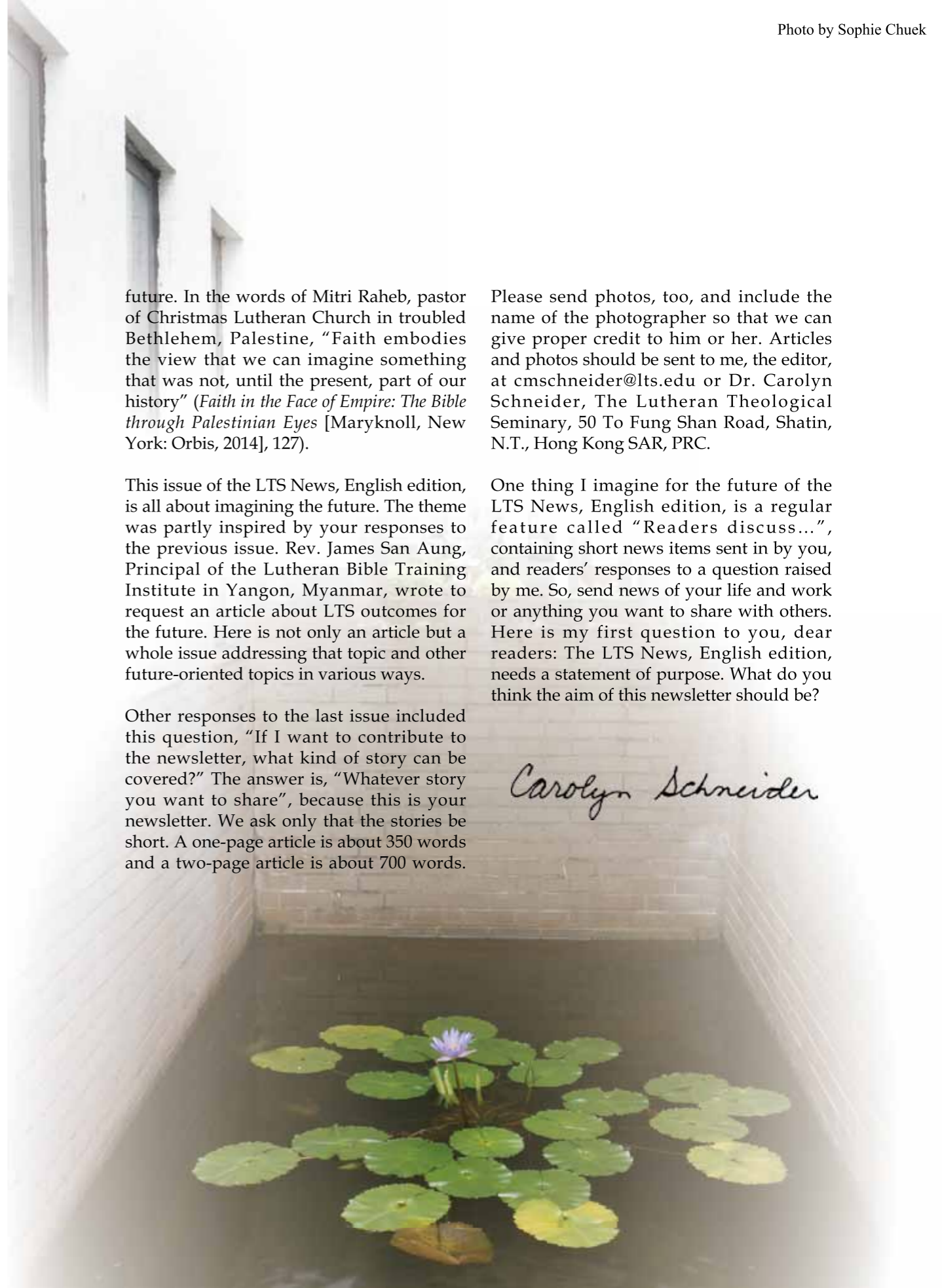
This issue of the LTS News, English edition, is all about imagining the future. The theme was partly inspired by your responses to the previous issue. Rev. James San Aung, Principal of the Lutheran Bible Training Institute in Yangon, Myanmar, wrote to request an article about LTS outcomes for the future. Here is not only an article but a whole issue addressing that topic and other future-oriented topics in various ways.

Other responses to the last issue included this question, "If I want to contribute to the newsletter, what kind of story can be covered?" The answer is, "Whatever story you want to share", because this is your newsletter. We ask only that the stories be short. A one-page article is about 350 words and a two-page article is about 700 words.

Please send photos, too, and include the name of the photographer so that we can give proper credit to him or her. Articles and photos should be sent to me, the editor, at cmschneider@lts.edu or Dr. Carolyn Schneider, The Lutheran Theological Seminary, 50 To Fung Shan Road, Shatin, N.T., Hong Kong SAR, PRC.

One thing I imagine for the future of the LTS News, English edition, is a regular feature called "Readers discuss...", containing short news items sent in by you, and readers' responses to a question raised by me. So, send news of your life and work or anything you want to share with others. Here is my first question to you, dear readers: The LTS News, English edition, needs a statement of purpose. What do you think the aim of this newsletter should be?

Carolyn Schneider



Farewell to Two Beloved Professors

By Carolyn Schneider

At the end of this academic year, the community at LTS bids goodbye to two long-serving professors as they move on to new futures. Dr. Charlene Chang Yu-Wen, who taught Spirituality and Worship, has already returned to Taiwan. Even as we pray that the next steps of her life are good and meaningful, we already miss her teaching and her wise, thoughtful guidance of our worship here at LTS!

Dr. Jonathan Tsoi Ting-Pong, Associate Professor of the Old Testament, wrote this farewell note to us:

By the end of 2016 June, I shall leave LTS after teaching here for exactly ten years. I and my wife will go to Germany in September, serving among the Chinese students as missionaries. Every year there are more than 20,000 Chinese students, mostly from Mainland China, as

well as from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore and other Far East Asian countries. Our two sons will join us and further their studies there. Since our oldest daughter will finish her final year in Hong Kong University, she will not go. This is a big change for our family, and other family members in Hong Kong. Please pray for us!

Besides thanking the present administration of the seminary, I especially like to express my gratitude to the former president Dr. Lam Tak-Ho for employing and entrusting me in different responsibilities. This is the longest serving jobs I ever have. I treasure every encounter here and will miss the faculty, staff and students, as well as the beautiful campus. God bless the seminary!

Dr. Charlene Chang Yu-Wen

Photo by Joyce Cheng



Dr. Jonathan Tsoi Ting-Pong and his wife, Emily



Dr. Jonathan Tsoi Ting-Pong and his family

Dr. Jonathan Tsoi Ting-Pong



Imagining the Future of LTS and Appreciative Inquiry

Since our August 2015 retreat at Cheung Chau Island, the faculty has been engaged in a process of imagining the future of the Lutheran Theological Seminary. We've read research articles on the future of Asian Theological Education predicting:

- A sharp increase in the Christian population from 352 million (2010) to about 595 million (2050) in eastern and southeastern Asia.
- The call for quality theological education.
- A more troubling development of many new seminaries and Bible schools which are institutionally unstable (no developed curricula, small libraries, and many teachers not fully prepared to teach).

Research on Global Theological Education points out:

- Presently, there are not enough theological schools in the regions of the world where Christianity is dramatically increasing.
- Although theological education is financially stressed in many places, at the same time, seminaries are educationally more effective than their stressed finances would suggest.
- The destiny of theological

schools mirrors the church bodies they serve. Where the religious community is thriving, usually the theological schools which support them are thriving as well (and vice versa).

What role will LTS play as a local and (inter-cultural) seminary? With this global regional research under our belts, the faculty became engaged in an "Appreciative Inquiry" evaluation of our own seminary, LTS. Appreciative Inquiry (A.I.), a product of Case Western University Department of Organizational Behavior, is both a philosophy and a process for creating organizational change.

The Appreciative Inquiry approach focuses on the strengths of the institution rather than its weaknesses. Organizational members, in this case our faculty members, were asked first to think about what is working well at our school and then to imagine what it might be like if "the best of what is" was able to take place more frequently. The A.I. process invites conversation and the sharing of personal stories, hopes and dreams for one's self, the community

* At the present, there is very little published research being done on theological education in the Hong Kong context.

and the organization. The stories and personal sharing during this retreat were magnificent as we began the A.I.'s four phase process:

- Phase 1 - Inquire - What "gives life" in our work at LTS? What works best? What are the processes that work well?
- Phase 2 - Imagine - What might be? What is God's vision for the future of LTS? How do our imaginings contribute to God's vision?
- Phase 3 - Innovate - What should be? How can we move from where we are now to the vision of the future? "Provocative Propositions" (also called design or opportunity statements) are developed.
- Phase 4 - Implement - This phase involves taking action and developing practical strategies and projects which will put the "provocative propositions" into practice.

We are presently in the 3rd phase which is reportedly the most difficult phase of the process. It involves many discussions on how to make the visions more concrete and how to shape the seminary systems differently as we move toward the future. By definition "Provocative Propositions" 1) stretch the realm of the status quo, 2) challenge common assumptions and routines and 3) suggest real possibilities for the LTS community.

What will LTS look like as we imagine the future? We are hopeful that the conversation will continue not only among the faculty, but with the administration, board of trustees, students, local supporting churches, alumni - all the stakeholders!

There is no space to share the provocative propositions here, but what follows are a few issues and questions that have been raised through our faculty discussions:

- LTS' primary focus is to train local Hong Kong leaders for ministry, but how

do we also more fully embrace and utilize our assets as a regional seminary with so many various cultures represented? How can we build better bridges between the many LTS constituents? How can we build a strong sense of community?

- How can we better serve the local Hong Kong churches? How can we better prepare these leaders for ministry?
- How can we prepare ourselves for the tremendous growth in Christian believers in Asia in the next 35 years?
- How can LTS' funding base become more financially secure? How can local funding sources be more fully utilized? What other international funding sources are available for our valuable and unique programs?
- How can LTS' administrative structure be strengthened to better empower team decision making - sharing power both in responsibility and accountability?
- How can the conversation between the faculty and board members be enhanced?

Faithful faculty conversations are being carried out! We ask for your prayers as we seek God's help (and your help too!) as we imagine the "realities unseen" of LTS' future.



The author ...after an Appreciative Inquiry session with the faculty. photo by Christa von Zychlin

LTS Founders' Day 2015

Written by: Sophie Chuek and Carolyn Schneider

Translated by: Jonathan Lee

LTS History-Central China Union Lutheran Seminary (1913-) (renamed As LTS in 1923), Shekow, Hubei Province, China

LTS annually celebrates its history on Founders' Day with many activities. This year (2015), the evening cultural displays and worship service were especially joyful and meaningful. International students prepared exhibitions and, wearing their tribal costumes, talked about the customs and practices in their mother countries, and even prepared some delicious snacks to share.

International students also took a leadership role in the evening's worship service. Sophie Chuek shares the highlight of the service for her:

I was inspired and moved by the hymn "Joy," sung by the international students, as this is the first hymn which I learned in church and it is also my favourite. I think of how these students of different backgrounds and different experiences have come to Hong Kong inspired by the calling of the Lord from different countries. They sang with joy and behind them was the abundant love and grace of God! To worship God should be a natural response like that but it is something which we often forget.

Carolyn Schneider shares another highlight from the service:

I learned something important from the retired librarian of LTS, Mrs. Anna Hsiao, who was the speaker at LTS's Founders' Day evening festivity. In her speech Mrs. Hsiao recalled the history of the seminary and the people who have shaped it over the years. She described many times of crisis for the seminary. But she explained that in Chinese the word "crisis" (wēijī = 危机) is composed of two characters. The first (wēi = 危) means "danger." The second, however, (jī = 机), means "opportunity." In a time of crisis there is a chance for something to change for the better, but courage is required.

Sometimes we forget that our life is given by God when we are striving for living. As the event drew to a close, Sophie's prayer was that all of us might present our praise of thanks to the Holy God in whom we trust.



Mrs. Hsiao



Alisa He Ai Xia and De Lai Li celebrate mainland China



Korm Leakdyla and Ry Channlyda celebrate Cambodia



David Yeung Hok Chi and Rita Tsai Pei-Chun celebrate Taiwan



Lung Awng, Nang Than Than Nwe, Dr. Tjeerd DeBoer, Naw Myatt Hsu Mon, and Umnai Kui celebrating Myanmar

The Celebration of the Chinese New Year at LTS

By Hellen Bok
DTh candidate, LTS

LTS's international community is comprised of a diverse faculty and students. We encounter various intercultural experiences in our everyday life. So how did we celebrate the Chinese New Year?

Closing off the old and welcoming the new, the chapel and both dorms were brightened with lanterns, fish, fans and stars created by our international students, Cho, Mar Lar, Lyda, A Seng, Phoo Plet and Dawt, out of thousands of recycled red lai-see envelopes donated by Carmel Bunnan Tong CYC. In the Lower dorm garden, Uthen and Pasa, the RELI students, dressed a bamboo tree with lights and toy monkeys for welcoming the Year of the Monkey. The decorations were predominantly red because the Chinese believe that this color and the loud noise of firecrackers can drive away evil spirits and bad luck.

The main celebration began with a Chinese New Year Communion which had a special liturgy featuring festival prayers, hymns and customs. To the noise of electronic firecrackers, the processional started with a traditional Chinese New Year song, "Gong xi gong xi, gong xi ni ya!" (Good wishes to you)

Everyone greeted each other happily. After receiving the "New" and "Good" Gospel (sermon), we met in union in the Holy Communion. The Benediction, similar to receiving the lai-see envelopes, showed that as we had obtained God's blessings, we should also share all the good wishes with the people around us. This Chinese New Year Communion was an occasion for spiritual renewal.

The New Year's Eve dinner is the biggest event in this season. It is a special time for family reunions. As usual, the RELI students hosted students, visitors, staff and faculty staying on campus. This celebration used a smorgasbord of food, music, dance and games to explore the cultural customs but with a Christian overtone. It was a time for us to give thanks and praise to God and to witness our Christian fellowships together in the LTS family. From a New Year Candy Box to roasted piglets to an oversize monkey dancing and the distribution of lai-sees, this amazing Gathering highlighted all the traditions and Christian love found in such a celebration!



CNY LTS, Photo by Kathleen Ferrier



CNY LTS, Photo by Tjeerd DeBoer

2017: Five Hundred Years of Reformation

By Dr. Carolyn Schneider
Associate Professor of Church History, LTS



On February 29, LTS was pleased to host the Special Envoy of the Evangelical Church in Germany for the 2017 Reformation Jubilee, Rev. Dr. Dr. h.c. Margot Käßmann. Dr. Käßmann gave a lecture outlining ten foci of the upcoming celebrations of the Reformation in Germany in 2017. She noted that on October 31, the traditional date of the start of the Lutheran Reformation, all of Germany will have a holiday in recognition of the influence that Martin Luther's Reformation had on his country. But the theme of the Jubilee is not the German Reformation; rather, it is the Global Reformation. After all, as she pointed out, there is a Lutheran seminary even in Hong Kong!

The Jubilee will not be limited to one day, but throughout 2017 events will be happening all over Germany. Many will emphasize ecumenicity, especially between Lutherans, Catholics, and Anabaptists. These conversations will aim at finding ways to live together with differences as opposed to living divided. Other conversations will be interfaith, particularly involving Christians, Jews, and Muslims in religious dialogue.

Dr. Käßmann noted that many Europeans find it difficult to talk about faith

because they live in a secular culture. In such an environment, how can Luther's cry to be justified by a gracious God still mean something to others? Dr. Käßmann suggested that perhaps in an overly competitive society, people may still be struggling with this question in a new form and may still need to hear the gospel to assure them that they have worth and their lives have meaning.

Dr. Käßmann herself embodies the fact that the current celebration of the Reformation will include the leadership of women, both as ordained clergy in the church and also as leaders in other areas of society. This reflects Luther's theological insight that life outside the monastery was just as holy as life inside the monastery. Thus, Luther insisted that societies should provide good education, both for boys and for girls.

Finally, the Jubilee will celebrate the freedom of faith and conscience that were so important to Luther. This was exemplified in East Germany prior to 1989, when the churches opened up space for non-violent criticism that eventually brought down the Wall. Dr. Käßmann invited us to think about how Luther's ideas might be agents of change around the globe today.



By Dr. Nicholas Tai Ho-Fai
Dean of Studies and Professor of Old Testament, LTS

LTS is launching a cellphone devotional app for Christians called *be'emuna* ("through faith" in Hebrew). We hope to have it available later this year. This idea was put forward by our alumni. They hope to have a spiritual connection with our professors and through this app they may know more about faith and be connected with the seminary. The daily devotion will only have two verses, one from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament, from the "Christian Watchwords" of the Moravian community of Herrnhut, Germany. The Moravians have been practicing this reading tradition for more than 280 years. They believe that just by meditating on these two verses one may have a blessing from God's word.

We believe that daily devotion and meditation on God's word is an effective way to come near to Christ. However, for a busy Christian it is not easy to have daily devotion. With the above

condition in mind, this app, *be'emuna*, was created. We don't know whether this app can be a blessing to Christians, but we do believe that we can serve the Lord with this app, and it will be the beginning of blessings.

Each day the app offers a short but brilliant devotional message written by one of our professors. The writers are from different countries with different Christian traditions, and the devotions will appear in English and in traditional and simplified Chinese. This provides us a variety of spiritual nutrients for improving our spiritual life. We also have a selected picture and a few minutes of music for meditation. If we do not have the mode to read, we can be comforted by listening to a beautiful melody. And when we are feeling down, we can still be peaceful when we look at a beautiful picture. We hope that Christians find *be'emuna* a helpful tool for treasuring God's word.

By Rev. Yu Choi-Kam

Translated by Lee Wai Ling, and Cassie Cheng Ka-Hei

The Second Mile of Service in LTS's Development Office

"I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God-what is good and acceptable and perfect."

Romans 12:1-2 NRSV

Rev Yu, photo by Lee Kwok Wah



Rev. Yu writes: In September, 1997, I began my studies at the Lutheran Theological Seminary. The four years of campus life and studies still linger in my memory. Up to now, the best companions in my life of service are my ex-classmates. Thank you, my Lord!

never heard of "empathy" or "listening". The Counseling professor, Dr. Lam Man Ping, enabled me to form solid foundations in personal growth, pastoral care, and counseling. I served at the Thanksgiving Church

The four-year theological education not only helped me clarify my life goals and direction, but also, at that time, Rev. Wu Ming Chieh and President Andrew Hsiao helped me deeply understand the bible and pastoral care. Before my studies in the Seminary, I had

in Kowloon for 34 years. Starting from the end of July, 2015, I followed the Regulations of the Hong Kong and Macau Lutheran Church to have my retirement from full-time pastor's service.

the five months that I have served in Lutheran Theological Seminary. Thanks be to God for His grace and guidance during this period of time. Looking back, even this five months of time seems short. I already have experienced the works of God done in my life.

God's love attracts me. Therefore, I hoped to work in the Seminary as a volunteer after my retirement to begin the second mile of my service as a way to repay the Seminary for the nurturance and nourishment that was given to me. I thank President Simon Chow for his trust and acceptance in arranging for me to start working in the development unit since September, 2015 (Part-time/volunteer). My main job is to liaise with alumni and churches, inviting brothers and sisters in Christ to pray and donate for the needs of the Seminary. I also promote the annual activities of the Seminary, such as the Walkathon in October, 2016, and Family Day in November, 2016.

Rev. Yu is ably assisted in her work by her full-time colleague Cassie Chen Ka-Hei. Cassie writes this about herself: The scripture from Romans 12:1-2, written above, is one of my all-time favorite scriptures from the Bible. I received the above scripture during three retreat trips that I have taken in





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Lutheran Theological Seminary

Coming Up

- 15/4 The Annual Sacred Music Worship "Pass It On" will be held at the ELCHK Truth Lutheran Church while the Head Pastor Rev. Bob LO will be preaching. May the Lord keep us.
- 30/4 The "Truth/False" Series of Seminars on "Investment or Opportunity - Asset Management of Christians" will be held at the ELCHK Yuen Long Life Church. Dr. Matthew YIU Siu Fung, Senior Manager of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority and Dr. Pilgrim LO Wing Kong, professor of Historical Theology, LTS will be the speakers. Free admission and may the Lord bless this event.
- 6/5 Commissioning service. May the light of the Lord shine on His servants and their light will shine the world wherever they go.

Looking back

- 29/2 Rev. Margot Käßmann from Germany visited the Seminary and preached during the morning prayer.
- 5-6/3 Seminar on Commitment was completed smoothly. May the Lord call His servants.
- 14/3 The Rev. Daniel Wong Lecture on Pastoralia was completed successfully. Thanks be to the Lord.

President's Itinerary

- 20-25/2 Visited the church and the Bible School at Zhoukou, Henan, followed by teaching at the Wunan Bible School, Zhangsha, Wunan.
- 28/2 Preaching at the Yuen Long Kam Kwong Church on 28/2, preaching at the ELCHK Eternal Grace Lutheran Church on 6/3 and ELCHK Yuen Long Life Church on 13/3 with special briefing on and appeal to support the ministry of the Seminary. Special thanks to the Yuen Long Kam Kwong Church for a donation of \$120,000HK to support Mainland China theological education ministry.
- 19-22/3 Preaching at the church at Hangzhou and teaching at the Zhejiang Theological Seminary.
- 11/4 Met Ms. G. Raddum, representative of the Aeropagos Foundaton
- 23-24/4 To lead devotion seminars and evangelical meeting at the Macau Christian Zion Church.

Teachers & Alumni

- 1/3 Rev. SHAM Koon Yiu (36th Class of the Lutheran Seminary) passed away in the arms of the Lord. May the Lord comfort the family members of Rev. SHAM.
- 7/3 Mr. TANG Hung, beloved father of Mr. TANG Sui Tung (17th class), the Head Librarian, passed away in the arms of the Lord. May the Lord comfort Mr. TANG and his family members.

TEE News

- 4/3 TEE Alumni FONG Haau Kan's wife gave birth to a new baby girl safely. May the Lord bless them.
- 16/4 The TEE Alumni Association will hold a hill walk event along the ancient path at Tung Chung. All TEE teachers, alumni, students and their families are welcome to join. Details at <https://www.facebook.com/ltstee/>

Ordination & Commissioning

- 13/3 Mr. CHOW Hon San (TEE 2th class) was ordained as pastor of the Hong Kong Evangelical Church. May the Lord bless him and use him.
- 20/3 Alumni Mr. LEUNG Kin Chung (2014 DMin) was ordained as pastor of the Conservative Baptist Ming Chung Church. May the Lord bless him and use him.
- 10/4 Preacher NAM Kin Ming (37th class) will be ordained as pastor of the Conservative Baptist Ming Chung Church. May the Lord bless him and use him.

Staff News

- 16/1 Mr. LUI Woon Man took up as a part-time driver. We welcome him to join us.
- 28/3 Mr. CHU See Yee passed away in the arms of the Lord on 26/2 and funeral service was held on 28/3. May the Lord comfort the family members of Mr. CHU.

