

Link Letter No.64 January 2014

Dear friends,

Happy New Year 2014 to you all!

Way back in 1985, I launched into the world of teaching with four years as a reception class teacher at Heighington Primary School in County Durham within the north east of England. Heighington became my “home church” and in 1989 they kindly sent me on my way to CMS and life in far distant places, and eventually to Taiwan.

In 2008, the Bishop of Taiwan, Bishop David JH Lai, and his wife Lily, accompanied by the Rev Charles CT Chen and his wife, MaryJo, from St James’ Church, Taichung, visited Heighington for several days before the Lambeth Conference. Highlights included a visit to Heighington Primary School and Bishop Lai’s tea ceremony in Heighington Church.

So in October last year, I was delighted when my first ever visitor from Heighington came to visit me in Taiwan. Stephanie was teaching at Heighington School when I first arrived there in 1985, and stayed on there until her recent retirement. In fact I even taught her four-year daughter

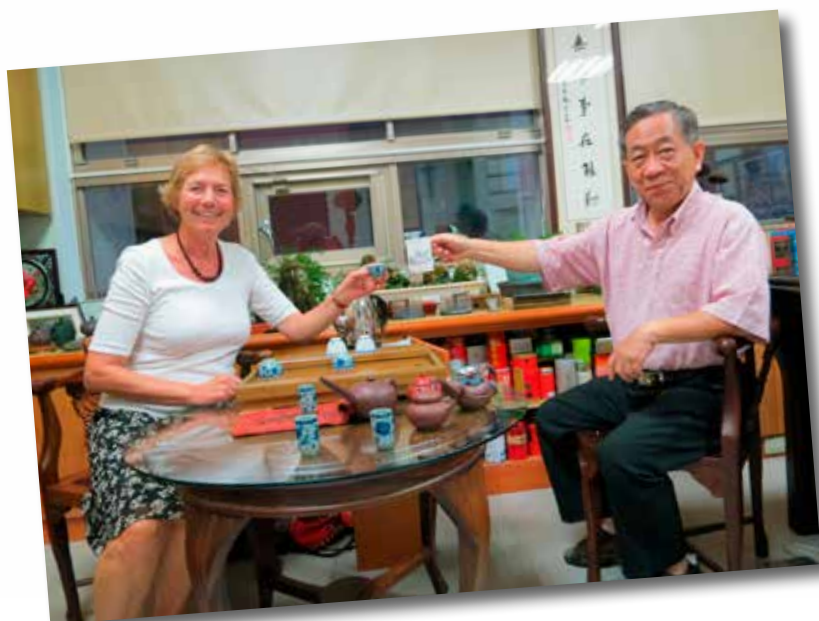
(she’s now 29!) in my last year there. On her retirement, one of Stephanie’s dreams was to come to Taiwan. YES YES YES!

Not only did she come bearing photos of us long ago, which everyone loved looking at (groan!), but also gifts for Bishop Lai and Rev Charles CT Chen – mugs from Heighington Church and tea-towels from Heighington School... which we duly delivered. In return she was presented with boxes of Chinese



Catherine Lee
CMS mission partner
Taiwan

Catherine Lee is a CMS mission partner in the Taiwan Episcopal Church, based at St John’s University, Taipei. She serves in the church, university, chaplaincy and kindergarten ministry of the Diocese of Taiwan.



Stephanie having tea with Bishop Lai (note the Heighington mug)



"Relaxed English" class at my house

singing lessons and showed them cards and letters written by children at Heighington School. I even got her involved here at St. John's University in my "Relaxed English" class for students and a photoshoot for our new university promotional DVD – she fitted the role perfectly, so elegant!

It was a wonderful 10 days and I really appreciated her visit. As most of the children I had taught at Heighington, and many of their parents, are on Facebook, it was great to keep them all updated with photos and reports during the visit. Stephanie then went home and off round Heighington to see all our mutual friends (and even my parents!) to share about her trip. If any of you would like to do the same, a big welcome to you all (*just don't ask Stephanie about my house spider – I don't want to put you all off ha ha!*)

My last link letter of 2013 told you all about a brand new outreach ministry starting up in Yilan County on the east coast of Taiwan. Many of you commented on this, and have asked for an update. The good news is the homework classes started on October 7 with six children, and within a few weeks the number had gone up to 14. This coming term, starting after Chinese New Year, there will be 30 children, all places taken! Outreach has also started to families of these

tea and Chinese calligraphy scrolls to take back to give to Heighington School and church as gifts from Taiwan.

Off we went to see the sights of Taiwan, and to meet all my friends, and to visit some of our churches and my classes, including the community English classes, one in a community centre and one in a local factory. We also spent a day at a local primary school where she shared with all 160 children some



Rev Charles CT Chen and his wife MaryJo, Ms Chiu, Stephanie and me, all at Sun Moon Lake with gifts from Heighington

children, and at the Christmas Party eight of the parents came along, and also quite a few came to a church weekend hosted by Trinity Church from Keelung and held in Yilan. Thanks for all your prayers, but please do continue with them. We are personally connected to this outreach, as the youth worker there, Mr Wang Jung-Sheng, is the boyfriend of Yu-lin, my colleague here in the St John's University Chaplaincy office. The social worker there,

Yu-Ru, is also the girlfriend of our evangelist here at Advent Church, Mr Wu Shing-Shiang! Ha... such is the Taiwan Episcopal Church, that everyone is related to everyone else!

And so to New Year's Eve 2013 and for the first time ever I had the opportunity to be in central Taipei City for the concert and fireworks at Taipei 101. Amazing! The concert featured live performances from almost every famous pop star in Taiwan, plus a live link to Japan's New Year celebrations in Tokyo, and an appearance by Taipei's mayor and in the final countdown, by Taiwan's president himself. The fireworks were lit on the stroke of midnight by a laser beam fired by a 4mtre sculpture of superhero Spiderman from his outstretched finger to the top of Taipei 101 which then exploded into a blaze of light and colour lasting for a whole

218 seconds!

And so to 2014, and we are looking forward to the Chinese New Year celebrations for the Year of the Horse on January 31, and at last some time off ha ha! By the way, thanks for all your Christmas cards, and your hopes that I might have some time off at Christmas... but Christmas is not a holiday in Taiwan, so classes and work continue as normal. Term ends with exams in mid-January, and starts again in mid-February, so a break is coming yippee!

This year 2014 marks the 60th anniversary of the Taiwan Episcopal Church and the main



Taipei 101 New Year's Eve concert - the Mayor of Taipei says Happy New Year!



Taipei 101 New Year's Eve concert

celebrations will be on Saturday, April 26 in Taichung. The Diocese of Taiwan is part of the Episcopal Church, which includes all of the USA and parts of Central America, and we are honored that we are hosting the autumn meeting of The Episcopal Church House of Bishops, September 16-24, in Taipei. Although my home leave is due to start this coming summer, I am delaying until October for this reason, in order to be on hand to welcome all the bishops and

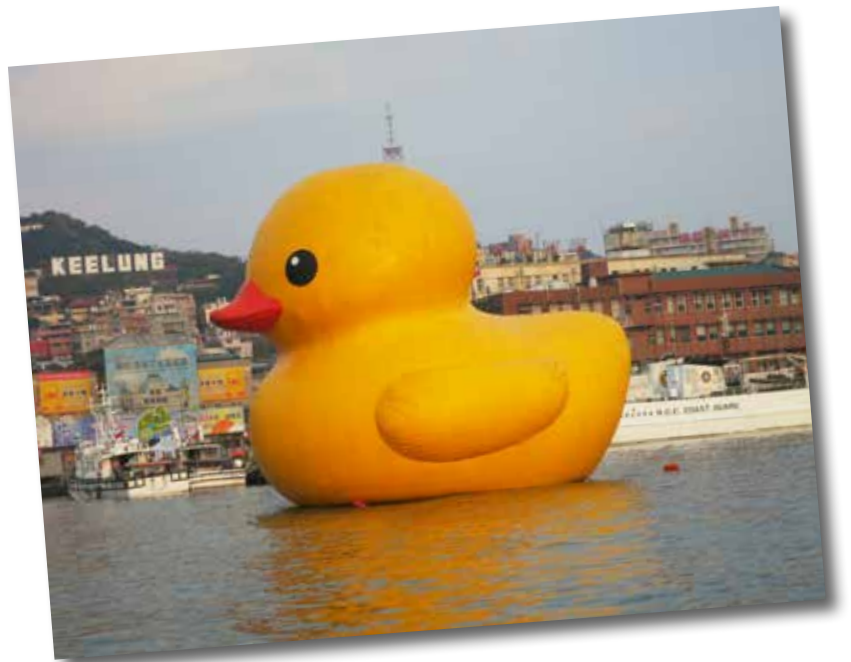
spouses, plus archbishops and primates from Asia, possibly about 200 in total. That's a lot of purple shirts!

So I hope to see many of you later in the year, or early next year, and if all goes well, this time I might even be in the UK for Easter, which might just mean spring. My first spring in the UK for well over a decade, I can't wait!

And finally, I mustn't forget to tell you about the latest happenings in Taiwan which centre around one very small gorgeous baby panda, born six months ago and now charming the whole country on TV and live at Taipei Zoo! Also, one very large amazing yellow rubber duck, currently starring at Keelung Port just up the road, and charming everyone by its sheer size and, well, general yellowness!

With love to you all,

Catherine



One yellow rubber duck, currently in Keelung Port

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Church Mission Society

Watlington Road, Oxford, OX4 6BZ Tel: 01865 787400 Fax: 01865 776375
Email: info@cms-uk.org www.cms-uk.org Registered Charity Number 1131655