



Name: Catherine Lee

Location: Taiwan

My call: To serve, share, and support the ministry of the Church in Taiwan.

My role: Working with the Taiwan Episcopal Church, based at St John's University, Taipei, I am supporting the church, chaplaincy and kindergarten ministry of the Diocese of Taiwan.



Greetings for a Happy Chinese New Year of the Rooster to you all from Taiwan!

"I think, therefore I am single". These were words we saw on a man's t-shirt in a restaurant in India a few weeks ago. He was there with his two very small and very lively children who were dropping tin plates on the floor and laughing in delight at the deafening noise. The t-shirt made us smile for days!

"I'm on vacation!" These were words we saw on another t-shirt, this time worn by a woman outside a restaurant, also in India, surrounded by a group of seven adults and three children. When I heard her talking in Chinese to her daughter, I commented on the T-shirt and she was delighted when I told her what the words meant, and yes they were going on vacation! They were Chinese expats living in India, working in the IT industry and celebrating Chinese New Year with a weekend away.

We were also there on vacation, celebrating Chinese New Year. I first visited South India at Chinese New Year in February 2013, and

this was my second trip. Both times, we were guests of my good friend Jyothi, who was with me in Tanzania all those years ago, and she warmly welcomed us to visit her at her home in Bangalore. This time I had the most wonderful opportunity to invite two of my very best friends and colleagues from Taiwan to come along with me.

Shu-Jing 薛淑靖 is my colleague here at St John's University Chaplain's Office, and Hui-Ling 許惠苓 is Bishop Lai's secretary and my colleague in the diocesan office in Taipei. Both are the first, and so far only, Christians in their families; both are devoted long-time members of Advent Church and, very importantly, both very good friends with each other. It was their very first visit, and it was oh so fascinating to see India through Taiwan eyes!

Working among students at St John's University, it is noticeable that many of our male students



Photo top: Shu-Jing, Hui-Ling and myself in Kochi, Kerala, India

Photo above: The three of us from Taiwan together with Jyothi and friends at St John's Church, Bangalore. The pastor, Rev G. Wilson, had studied for a year in Taiwan in 2004 - ah it's a small world!



Top left: Advent Church Community English class

Top right: St John's University Chaplaincy English Bible study class



here wear shorts all day, in both winter and summer. Despite signs of disapproval from the university, church and society in general, they also wear shorts if they come to church or attend any formal events, and culturally-unacceptable flip-flops make an appearance all too often also. In contrast, we went to hot and sunny India, and saw hardly any men wearing shorts – and yet, flip-flops or similar style sandals are culturally-acceptable. No wonder we were fascinated! Then there's face masks, ubiquitous in Taiwan for all sorts of every reason, but only worn in India by a few traffic police at major road junctions. And as for smoking, well, we hardly saw anyone smoking, anywhere or anytime. Amazing!

And then there were glasses, or lack of them. Fifty per cent of 12-year-olds and 80 per cent of university students in Taiwan are nearsighted and wear glasses. This is attributed to long hours of study in cram schools in the evenings and weekends, as parents push their children towards ever higher levels in education. In India that was about the first thing my Taiwan friends commented on, that hardly any young people were wearing

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glasses. It seems it is possible to study hard without ruining your eyes, as proved by India's young people who excel in the IT world, and Bangalore is India's IT capital.

But the most noticeable difference was in English. Indian people are largely a friendly and outgoing group, and not only could everyone we met communicate in English, all seemed confident in using their English to meet foreigners. This is one of Taiwan's biggest challenges, and also one of its biggest paradoxes. Long hours spent studying English (and the test scores and nearsighted eyesight to prove it) means that in theory, all should have excellent ability in English. Taiwan people are largely

friendly and outgoing, so how come many are so reluctant to speak the language? Sadly, a fear of losing face in front of a foreigner, being overly apologetic in words and attitude about their “poor English” and a culture of self-deprecation which emphasizes excessive modesty, together they result in a major, collective inferiority-complex in the world of English communication.

So one of the main aims of all my English classes among students, clergy, church members and those in the local community is to build self-confidence. Being confident in spoken English opens many doors locally and globally, and improves self-confidence in all areas of life. After all, perfect English grammar is not necessary for normal conversation, and we can start with what people know, not with what they don't. As I tell my students, a perfect American accent is not the key to paradise either! Nobody will laugh at a Taiwan accent, but no one should laugh at another's either. As long we can understand each other, that's good enough for now, and we can work on the rest later and over time.

And so, please pray for my two weekly community English classes, one here at Advent Church, and one at St John's Cathedral, Taipei, where we work on confidence-building together. We discuss, debate and share about all sorts of topics, as



Above: St. John's Cathedral Community English class

well as doing a bit of roleplay, kindergarten-style, and listen and tell Bible stories. Little by little, we are making progress. We have a lot of laughs too and the classes are designed to be relaxed and fun! New members from outside the church also come along, and we pray and hope that they may be drawn into wanting to know more about the Christian faith.

We also have a lunchtime English Bible study group for our students here at St John's University, this one with translation (otherwise nobody will come!), and we encourage the students to be brave and try to speak a little English. This ministry is greatly enhanced by the arrival in recent years of quite a few Chinese-speaking Malaysian students who are used to speaking English in Malaysia, but want to improve further. They are naturally confident in speaking English and don't seem to care about making mistakes; their confidence has rubbed off on some of our own Taiwan students, who find themselves a little envious of the Malaysians, but then realise that actually they have a similar level of ability and just need a little more confidence to speak out.

The Malaysian student who translates for me, Vincy, has just been elected as the new chairperson of our student

fellowship, the first female leader for a decade and the first ever from Malaysia. Please pray for her as the challenges for our

student fellowship leaders are many. Encouraging our students in spoken English is only the tip of the iceberg; instilling confidence in them as leaders is a major challenge, as is encouraging all the student fellowship to keep on searching, enquiring, attending, reading, praying and worshipping.

We see answers to prayer on a daily basis, but we also face many crises and problem situations, and it is the task of our chaplaincy team, Rev Wu Hsing-Hsiang, Shu-Jing (who came with me to India) and Ruo-Han (our newest staff member, replacing Yu-lin who left in January for the Chinese-speaking mission field in Europe) to listen and counsel and try to resolve things as they come up. God is gracious, and we have the privilege of seeing many students becoming Christians, baptised and growing in the faith, getting involved in churches and fellowship groups, and doing outreach and mission themselves. Your ongoing prayers for them are always appreciated.

And finally, and in case you're wondering, my parents have returned to the north of England after their brief sojourn in the south. They are back in South Lakeland, and I'm grateful to members of my family for their time and energy, help and support in making it all happen. Your continuing prayers requested for them please.

And otherwise, thank you as

PLEASE PRAY...

- For good health - for my parents and myself, and for safety in travel
- For the outreach ministry of English classes in schools, church, university and the local community
- For Bishop David J. H. Lai, our clergy and church members of the Diocese of Taiwan, and for all our many visitors
- For opportunities to share the gospel, for people willing to take the good news out into our communities, and for open hearts and minds to receive Christ
- For wisdom and good judgement for Taiwan's TV and media, and for all Taiwan's political, civil and religious leaders in an insecure, unstable and increasingly intolerant world.

always for your prayers and support, for your cards and messages, for all Facebook, blog and Instagram views, comments and likes!

With love

Catherine

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