

Catherine Lee

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The call in action

“The world is a book and those who do not travel read only one page.”

So said Augustine in 400AD, and it’s still true today. For the past six months in the UK, the world of my address book – or more importantly the people listed therein – has been my focus as I tried to visit as many family and friends as possible throughout the country, structured around CMS link church visits most weekends. I stayed in 56 different homes and if one of them was yours, then a big thank you! I could write a book about all the quirky showers, toilets, baths, doors, radiators (and people!) that I’ve encountered, and if you’re in a vicarage where the bathroom has no mirror or the door does not close because of an ill-fitting doorframe, then know that you are not alone. All vicars and their families deserve medals for their resilience and endurance!

I started my time in the UK by visiting Lambeth Palace in September. I was there on behalf of the Bishop of Taiwan, David J. H. Lai, to present an artillery shell cross to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby. It was a great visit! The cross was originally an artillery shell from Taiwan’s offshore island of Kinmen, an object of hatred and destruction now transformed into a cross, a symbol of peace and reconciliation. I also used one at the start of my talks on my church visits as a way of introducing the theme of transformation and presented one to each vicar, all gifts from the Bishop of Taiwan. My talk was about islands, comparing Taiwan and the UK, with examples from Taiwan on how God can transform intolerant attitudes and an island mentality. When I originally wrote the talk back in Taiwan, I hadn’t realised how relevant it would become given Brexit. From travelling around the UK, it’s clear that whatever side of the debate you are on, the whole process is a nightmare and it’s nowhere near over yet.

What else did I learn about the changes in the UK since my last visit? Well, clearly some of the rail networks have made commuting by train completely unreliable and the whole travel experience is no longer something to look forward to. It seems that everyone has their own disaster story to tell! So it was a pleasant surprise to spend five days in Northern Ireland, where they may have no functioning government but do have a wonderful train and bus service that coordinates so well together... imagine that! It’s interesting that Britain, once so famous for building railways across the world, should now find it so impossible to keep its own show on the road in the 21st century. Groan, groan!

And the roads? Well, I drove 8,408 miles (13,500 km) around the country, visiting every corner of England, North Wales and central and southern Scotland, and really had

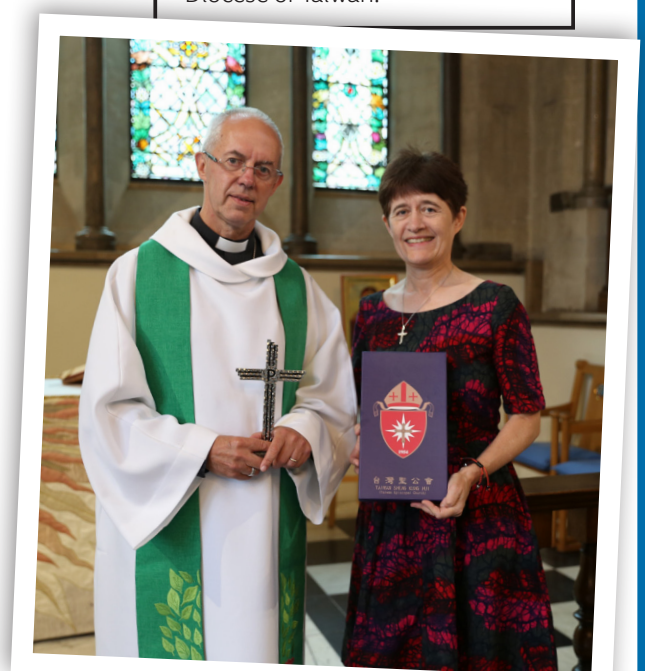


Name: Catherine Lee

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 support the church, chaplaincy and kindergarten ministry of the Diocese of Taiwan.



Presenting an artillery shell cross from the Bishop of Taiwan, David J. H. Lai, to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, September 2018

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no problems until I came to the very end of my trip on the Kent and Sussex coast, where there's multiple massive potholes. Even I was thinking that here was a genuine case for major roadworks!

More generally, my impression is that the media is driving society in a more secular direction, and under the guise of tolerance and inclusion is actually becoming very intolerant of anyone who questions this as being the right course of action. In contrast, state primary schools seem to be doing really well creating caring communities that are tolerant and inclusive and that show respect for all, including those of all religious faiths and none. At the same time, church primary schools have become far more conscious of their identity and responsibility in teaching the Christian faith – with wonderful things happening. I was very impressed!

In between all the visits to churches, friends and family, I also spent six days on Holy Island, from where much of our UK Christian heritage started, and managed to visit a few cathedrals, some for the very first time. These included Bradford, Sheffield, Lincoln, Gloucester and Derry. Cathedral Tower Tours are brilliant, as are art exhibitions and light installations in the cathedral and/or the grounds. Let's be honest, every medieval or Victorian cathedral needs something to brighten it up! Cathedral highlights on this trip were the Ely Lantern Tour, Lincoln Roof Tour, Peterborough's exhibition of Tim Peake's spacecraft, Bradford's "Counterflow" exhibition of ceramic shoes, Chester Tower Tour in the snow, Salisbury in the sun and, of course, Coventry which is always oozing with good stuff. Sadly, bottom prize as usual goes to Durham with its crazy no-photos policy, but I live in hope that by the next time I'm in the UK it might have changed for the better. Durham, please get your act together!

I am writing this in Sabah, Malaysia, where I started my home leave with a few days visit en route to the UK, and where I am finishing on my way back to Taiwan. Please do pray as I settle back into Taiwan, and take up my work and classes once again. Coming in this next year also is the election for a new bishop of Taiwan – your prayers are appreciated.

My grateful thanks to God that everything went so well in the UK, it was really great! And to everyone who offered me mugs of Yorkshire Tea, yummy meals (yes, I put on 5kg!), overnight stays and trips out 'n about – and to my wonderful churches for their financial support, prayer and encouragement – thank you all!

Catherine



Photos from top to bottom: With CMS staff during a visit to their Oxford office; my first link visit was to Thornham Magna, South Hartismere, Suffolk, where I presented artillery shell crosses to vicar Rev Julia Lall and the lay reader Jean Archdeacon, in honour of the 50th anniversary of women lay readers; at my last link visit, I presented an artillery shell cross to the Bishop of Huddersfield, Jonathan Gibbs, with Mike Wilkins who is the vicar of my CMS link church, Holy Trinity, Huddersfield; some of my cathedral highlights.

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If you would like to discuss your mailings with us or to receive this link letter on a regular basis, please email supporter.care@churchmissionsociety.org or call 01865 787400

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