



# Catherine Lee

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**Location:** Taiwan



**What I do:** Working with the Taiwan Episcopal Church, supporting the church and kindergarten ministry of the Diocese of Taiwan

**Return to old watering holes for more than water; friends and dreams are there to meet you.” African proverb**

An oasis in the desert, a pub on an English village green, a teahouse on a busy Taipei street – all places where friends meet and dreams are shared, and we realise how much we missed these gathering places in the pandemic. Visitors from the USA, UK and elsewhere are gradually returning to Taiwan this year and many have shared with us their experiences of the pandemic, of weeks in lockdown and many more weeks in fear and isolation. With community spaces closed and church life reduced to the bare minimum, friendships have struggled to survive, and as friends have gone, so often have the dreams, visions, prayers and sometimes even faith itself.

Taiwan, thankfully, was spared much of this pandemic angst and seems to have escaped relatively unscathed. The angst is still there however, but less related to the pandemic and more to the economic and social situation, the uncertainties of Taiwan’s long-term political future, climate change, air pollution, an aging population and declining birth rate, even the upcoming US presidential election. Extreme weather has taken its toll with Typhoon Gaemi in July and Typhoon Krathon just last week, both serious enough to cause deaths, injuries and major damage, albeit in localised areas of Taiwan rather than across the whole country. Taiwan is used to such uncertainty; if it’s not typhoons, it’s earthquakes, and with all the sulphur-belching fumaroles and hot springs in the Yangmingshan mountains above Taipei, plus two retired nuclear power stations nearby, we can’t forget what scientists now believe to be true, that those volcanoes are less dormant and potentially more dangerous than originally thought.

Thinking of that African proverb above, the church is often thought of as a spiritual watering hole, where friends gather and dreams are shared too. The theme of “Returning home, to our Galilee; returning to the place where we were first called” has become a focus for our year of outreach as the Taiwan Episcopal Church celebrates its 70th anniversary throughout 2024. Bishop Lennon Yuan-Rung Chang and his wife Hannah have trained a team of over 40 lay people to lead special praise services around the diocese offering prayers for healing and blessing, appealing to non-Christians and those who have had some contact with the church, but are perhaps no longer active. At the church entrance, we even have special photo frames, saying simply, “I’m home”.



*Bishop and Mrs Chang*

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**With Jesus  
With each other  
To the edges**



Another related theme is “Sharing in Christ – Committed to Mission” and this was much in evidence at the main 70th anniversary Thanksgiving Celebration, held on 28 September at St John’s University (SJU). While the rest of the Taipei area that day was experiencing heavy rain, the sun came out for us, and we welcomed over 750 people to the event, including lots of our former SJU student fellowship members (see photo). Ten years ago I was asking you to pray for these students, so we were delighted to welcome them back home to SJU, the old watering hole of their youth! We also welcomed special visitors from overseas, a group from our companion diocese of Osaka, Japan, and three very lively and friendly bishops from Hawaii, Los Angeles and Mauritius.

The bishop from Mauritius, Bishop Roger Jaomalaza Chung, retired Bishop of Antsiranana, Madagascar and his wife Alice are my long-time friends, and for the last 10+ years, I’ve been visiting Alice’s very lovely mother, Mrs Hsu, who was living in a care home only a few miles from St John’s University. Sadly Mrs Hsu has recently died, and the family gathered from all over the world for the funeral and burial last week; fortunately, by God’s grace, they escaped the worst of Typhoon Krathon; when the typhoon was ravaging the south of Taiwan, the family were in the north, and when the typhoon outer bands swept through the north, they had already moved down south. Rest in peace dear Mrs Hsu, a woman of great integrity, faith and grace.

Earlier in the summer we welcomed the Cooper family to Taiwan, especially Katherine, who came to do a theological college placement at our new church plant in Hsinchu, the main home of Taiwan’s semiconductor industry. I originally got to know her father Rev Robert Cooper as former arts chaplain in the Diocese of Durham, UK and as vicar of my CMS link church in Sadberge, near Darlington, Co. Durham, so it was wonderful to welcome the family to Taiwan, though they too encountered the uncertainty of Taiwan’s typhoon season. They just loved sharing their calligraphy and craft skills, and also learning taiko drumming at an outreach event at St John’s Cathedral. This is run by our dean’s wife, Linda; we have about 100 people here every week for classes, from kindergarteners to teenagers to retirees!

And in other news, I have a new neighbour at St John’s Cathedral. The Rev Joseph Jui-En Ho was here with his delightful family, but they have now moved to St Stephen’s Church, Keelung. Instead, we have welcomed our new deacon and curate, Rev Claire Chia-Lin Wang, who has just graduated from Virginia Theological Seminary, USA, and is in charge of the English ministry and youth work here at the cathedral. We’re working together on a few projects, including our Student English Bible Study, so please pray for us!

As we give thanks to God for his faithfulness and blessing to the Taiwan Episcopal Church over these past 70 years, we look to the future with fresh vision and enthusiasm and rely on you all for your support and prayers, as always. Thank you everyone!

Catherine Lee



*Photos from top to bottom: Mrs Hsu; Cooper family sightseeing; Cooper family taiko; Taiwan Episcopal Church 70th anniversary – SJU students*



## Going further with Church Mission Society

**Jesus never gives up. Neither should we.** We live in a fractured, hurting world. It can be tempting to give up: on hope, on people, on the idea that things can ever change. Yet, Jesus invites us to follow him on a journey to the edges. Find out more at [churchmissionsociety.org/jesus-never-gives-up](https://churchmissionsociety.org/jesus-never-gives-up)

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