



Catherine Lee

Link Letter no. 93 | January 2025

Contact details:

Email: catherinelee234@yahoo.com

Blog: <https://catherinelee234.com>



Location: Taiwan



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



Equipping where faith in Jesus makes people outsiders

Happy New Year 2025!

“Polka dots are fabulous!” says Yayoi Kusama, the world’s top-selling female artist, and indeed they are! Black polka dots on huge bright pink inflatables form the basis of a new Kusama exhibition that has just opened in Taipei, right across the road from St John’s Cathedral. There’s always something happening in Taipei, but it’s not usually quite so colourful as polka dots!

Kusama, now 96, is very open about the mental health problems that drive her art, originating from her traumatic childhood in imperial Japan, and how she is constantly seeking “life’s bright sunshine”, with themes that run through her work of life and death, light and shadows. The exhibition is attracting huge crowds of mainly young people, and is set to run until May 2025.

It all resonates with Taipei’s increasingly disillusioned young city dwellers, thousands of whom gathered in our nearby Da’an Park on New Year’s Eve, not to cheer and toast the new year, but instead to cry, dubbed by international media as “possibly the world’s most unique New Year’s celebration.” Together they watched the 1994 film *Vive L’Amour*, by Malaysian director Tsai Ming-liang, shown on a huge screen, which ends with the main actress sitting alone and crying inconsolably for seven minutes on a park bench in the same Da’an Park, representing the loneliness of Taipei life in the 90s. We also went along, but didn’t stay until the final crying scene just before midnight, instead choosing to watch the Taipei 101 fireworks. In fact, the only one crying inconsolably in our group was three-year-old Eva, desperate for sleep!

Constant rain and several serious typhoons marked autumn 2024 in Taipei, so “life’s bright sunshine” was even more elusive than usual. Then, after several months of failing health, my dear mum died peacefully on Remembrance Sunday, 10 November. The last few years have not been easy for her or for us, and despite all the many trials and tribulations of caring long-distance for an ailing parent, she is much missed and was much loved. I returned to the UK on 29 November, and her funeral was held on Friday 13 December, followed by interment of ashes on Monday 16 December, all at Jesus Church, Troutbeck, near Windermere in the Lake District. Thank you to those who came to the funeral, to you all for your prayers and support, and to my Taiwan friends for financial gifts that in total exactly covered the cost of the airfare!



Polka dots galore at the Kusama exhibition

Support Catherine Lee:
churchmissionsociety.org/catherinelee

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



It was such a blessing that my parents had planned their funerals so carefully and made all arrangements well in advance, so my mum's funeral was almost exactly the same as my dad's funeral in 2017. They left written instructions for a traditional BCP funeral with the hymns Love Divine and Guide Me, O Thou Great Redeemer, readings from 1 Corinthians 15 and Psalm 121, a doctrinal sermon, no eulogies, and a focus definitely on "commendation" rather than a celebration of life. The celebration part would come later at the Mortal Man Hotel – most suitably named to host a funeral reception! Rev Mark Houston led a beautiful service, speaking movingly of my mum's Christian faith and of how, on his regular visits, she had always been so thankful and appreciative towards all the staff at her care home in Grange-

over-Sands; while the interment of ashes was led by the rector, Rev James Richards – and the sun came out!

I am grateful to my family for taking on the main burden of looking after my mum while I have been here in Taiwan. My brother David and his wife Anna, who live in Staveley, near Kendal, have been constantly at her side, visiting almost every other day, handling everything and answering every emergency call for help, while my brother Simon and his wife Evie have visited as regularly as they could. Simon works in Dubai, and the family live mostly in Sussex, but each time there has been a major emergency, Simon has flown back and they've made a special trip up to the Lake District. We've all been part of weekly video calls with my Mum on Sunday afternoons, UK time, along with the grandchildren, who have also provided lots of loving care, and it was great that they all played an active part in the funeral.

In Chinese culture, the mourning period after a death is 100 days; traditionally it's a time of deep sadness for family members, Christians too. While trying not to show disrespect, I was looking forward to the Christmas celebrations, which were in full flow when I arrived back in Taiwan on 20 December – and I am sure my dear mum would have approved! On Christmas Day evening we had a very lively party here for 25 of my student English Bible study group members and friends. Christmas Day is not a public holiday in Taiwan, so our cathedral doesn't have services on Christmas Day itself (except when Christmas is on a Sunday); our main Christmas service is always on Christmas Eve evening. Yet this Christmas, possibly for the first time ever, we planned for a small Christmas Day morning service here at St John's Cathedral, in English, not expecting many – we had refreshments prepared for 20 people. To our big surprise, over 80 people turned up to the service, nearly all visitors from Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong and USA, all on holiday in Taiwan over Christmas. Ah yes, thanks be to God, another Christmas miracle!

Thank you again for all your support and prayers, and wishing you all a new year ahead full of "life's bright sunshine" and God's abundant blessings!

Catherine Lee



Photos from top to bottom: Waiting for Taipei 101 fireworks on New Year's Eve; my mum on New Year's Day, 2019; funeral and interment at Jesus Church, Troutbeck; me with my 2 brothers, December 2024



Equipping where faith in Jesus makes people outsiders

I've been encouraged to hear stories from others who are part of my wider area of work. Recently in the Middle East, two young men were introduced to Jesus through a magazine, and in Asia a church fellowship is growing and sharing the love of Jesus in practical ways in their community. Read more at churchmissionsociety.org/equip