



# Catherine Lee

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**Location:** Taiwan



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

Dear all,

Greetings to you all from St John's Cathedral, Taipei!

It's 7:00pm and our Wednesday Bible study group has just started reading aloud together the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30). We get to verse 21, and read aloud the words of the master to the first servant, "Well done, good and faithful servant! ... Come and share your master's happiness!" At that exact moment, the door opens, and in comes Rev Joseph Ho with a McDonald's delivery for Pin-En, one of the young men in the group. The timing of that McDonald's delivery was perfect, totally unplanned, but so funny; here was the master coming to share his happiness, rewarding his servant with a McDonald's! Like many in the group, Pin-En's long work hours mean he can only just get to the class on time, so Joseph helps out by buying a dinner box for him, but this time it was special, he'd ordered a McDonald's! Adapting the parable to the scene we had just witnessed, we discussed how kind it was of Joseph to reward Pin-En for his faithfulness and hard work in the church. Everyone acknowledged it was true, after all Pin-En runs the livestream; but, well, not that we're jealous, of course, but why should that talent or ministry deserve a McDonald's when the rest of us work hard too, and we didn't even get a glass of water?! Ha ha, it raised so many good points for discussion!

This group is officially called the St John's Cathedral English Student Bible Study, with an upper age limit of about 35, and each week we have 10-15 people, many of them studying nearby in Taiwan's top universities. In order for everyone to feel welcome whatever their English level, I prefer to keep it all quite practical, personal and light; and it's complemented by a monthly student Friday-night event with food and testimonies shared by church members, which often attracts 30+ students from all over Taipei.

Starting this Bible study was one of the reasons why, when I returned from the UK to Taiwan in January, the Bishop of Taiwan, Lennon Yuan-Rung Chang, asked me to move to St John's Cathedral. He also asked me to help the dean, Philip Lin and Joseph with the cathedral English service ministry, so I do the sermon on the first and third Sundays of each month. If any of you in the UK find yourselves wide awake in the early hours of a Sunday morning, do join us on the cathedral livestream for the English service at 9:00am Taiwan time or watch the video later: <https://stjohn.episcopalchurch.org.tw/> See you online!



*St John's Cathedral student English Bible study group*

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



St John's Cathedral also has a small kindergarten, with lots of lovely children, aged 3–6, and I'm encouraging them to speak a little English. Before the pandemic there were 80 children on the roll, now down to 44, with half of those due to graduate this month to go to primary school. Living in this area of Taipei is so prohibitively expensive that extended families live together, three generations in one apartment, and with families wanting to reduce the risks of COVID, they have delayed sending their children to kindergarten until they're a little older. That means numbers are way down, so our kindergarten is now remodelling the classrooms to make them more attractive and actively recruiting more pupils, so I can help by offering some English conversation. There is a huge thirst to learn

English in Taiwan and especially from native English speakers. When the parents ask who I am, I hear the children saying I'm their resident foreigner, though we also have one of our former Malaysian students from St John's University working here as cathedral secretary, so there's two of us!

I'm living here on the same floor as Joseph and his very musical family, and I spend quite some time playing with his two delightful children, aged three and six, who are learning English as we go along. Their current interest is their Happy Birthday Hotel where they make pretend juice, coffee and bubble milk tea using all sorts of small coloured fluffy balls that I gave them. Ah, we have a great time together! I quite missed them last week when I went on the diocesan trip, led by Bishop Chang, to attend the centenary celebrations of our companion diocese of Osaka on Sunday 11 June; my first visit to Osaka. During the Japanese colonial era in Taiwan (1895-1945), the Japanese Anglican Church had their own churches and services for their citizens here, and Taiwan was then part of the Diocese of Osaka. That all finished in 1945, and as the Taiwan Episcopal Church was not established until 1954, so their church buildings were given to other denominations. The dioceses of Taiwan and Osaka reconnected in 2004 and ever since have prayed, worked, served and shared together.

The Diocese of Osaka is known traditionally as a CMS diocese, so I was delighted to also attend their centenary celebrations on behalf of CMS. One of our aforementioned Bible study group members runs a church supplies business and he made me some prayer bead bracelets (Anglican rosaries) using beads of the Paiwan indigenous tribe on Taiwan's east coast as gifts for the bishop and clergy in Osaka, symbolising the essence of our partnership being one of prayer. It was perhaps an especially meaningful gift also because Taiwan's indigenous people suffered greatly in the Japanese era, yet many also became Christians at that time, and continue to be so today.

Prayer is so important. Please do pray for our diocese, cathedral and all the different ministries here. Thank you for all your support, it is much appreciated!

Catherine Lee



*Photos from top to bottom: Fun at the Happy Birthday Hotel; visiting Osaka with Bishop of Taiwan Lennon Yuan-Rung Chang and his wife; presenting the prayer bracelets to Bishop of Osaka Andrew Haruhisa Iso and his wife*



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