



香港浸信會神學院
Hong Kong Baptist Theological Seminary

Newsletter

2022.5



Starting from Theology camp for Youth...

Youth Theological Education

President's Message

**Friendships of the Heart and Spirit
on Christian Pilgrimages**

Faculty Sharing

Where is God in the Book of Esther?

Friendships of on Christian

Friends on a Pilgrimage

During the Spring Opening Convocation on January 19, 2022, I mentioned the idea of going on pilgrimages to our teachers and students, sharing with them the text of Hebrews 11:8-16, which gives an account of a famous pilgrimage started by Abraham and Sarah. They knew they were “foreigners” and “strangers” by nature and earnestly longed for the heavenly Jerusalem.

Abraham’s story is actually our story because we are also foreigners and strangers, who have to face the insecurities of the current circumstances. **On our pilgrimages, we need to become God’s faithful people, remaining focused on Him and facing sudden challenges and difficulties together.** Like the soul of the poet in the stories told in Psalms 42 and 43, our “souls” yearn for the presence of God, just as the deer that pants for streams of water in the parched land. We should focus our minds on seeking His help.

If our enemies mock us, saying, “Where is your God?,” we can run to the waterfall, where “deep calls to deep in the roar of (His) waterfalls.” The raging wild river may pour down and hit the hard rocks below, making a sound like thunder. However, even when oppressed by overwhelming experiences, our hearts and minds can become clear and be able to hear God’s voice. We have to focus our minds on seeking His help.

In addition, on our pilgrimages, we need friends to face difficulties alongside us. **A pilgrimage is more than a lone journey of an individual or the discipline of solitude; it is also a journey with other pilgrims.** Take the story described in Daniel 3 as an example. The three friends of Daniel stood together before King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon: they were not alone, but supported one another, refusing to fall down and worship the image of a god set up by the king (vv. 16-18). The result was: the three of them were thrown into a blazing furnace together (vv. 19-20). At this moment, the king saw a fourth man in the furnace and said, “Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego...” (v. 28). The only true God was also the friend of the three men, which accounted for their courage.

Paul’s List of Fellow Pilgrims

On his pilgrimage, Paul once said that he was already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for his departure was near (2 Tm 4:6). In fact, Paul had every reason to lose all hope because Alexander the metalworker had harmed him (v. 14); at his trial, no one came to his defense (v. 16); Demas loved this world and deserted him (v. 10); Paul did not have a cloak in the freezing jail (v. 13)... But Paul did not despair, nor did he hold any grudges. He said, “But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength.... And I was delivered from the lion’s mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen” (v. 17-18).

Paul’s faith and hope came from his memories. Paul remembered the names of all those who loved him in his life. The list included Luke, Mark, Priscilla and Aquila, Onesiphorus and his family, and Erastus. All these friends walked with him on his pilgrimage. For example, Luke went on missions to many places with Paul and was not ashamed of him when he was put in jail. Luke never abandoned him. Mark was also Paul’s missionary partner and he was on Paul’s mind even when Paul was in jail (v. 11).



the Heart and Spirit Pilgrimages

Joshua Cho

Paul once thought that Mark, at his young age, was neither mature nor trustworthy (Acts 15:37-39); however, they mended their fences afterward. Such reconciliation was uncommon yet exciting. Moreover, there were Priscilla and Aquila, who had once lived with Paul, preached with him and even put their own lives at risk for him (Rom 16:4). **Paul was filled with hope because of these friends.**

When Paul meditated on this list, he saw that God had left His mark through these people. What about you? Who is on your list? Your list is the soil to nurture your own courage and hope.



My List of Fellow Pilgrims

I have my own list of fellow pilgrims as well. When I first started my church ministry, I came across a very nice predecessor. More than thirty years older than me, he was the volunteer pastor of our church. After ministering to the church for about six months, I was appointed the associate pastor of the church. At that time, the interim pastor was also the principal of a language school and could deliver a sermon at our church only once a month. As the associate pastor, I also had to take up the chairmanship of the Personnel Committee, Church Affairs Committee, and the Board of Pastors and Deacons. Such arrangements were made and designed by the interim pastor.

Once a week, I went to meet him at his school. He always encouraged me by giving me the thumbs up for what I had done. During that period, I enjoyed having evening chats with brothers and sisters in Christ. He said, "Their meetings with you were better than those with a number of counselors." By so doing, he boosted my spirit and it was because of this that I managed to start my church ministry very smoothly. **I am a blessed person. How blessed I am to have met such a good predecessor!**

Another name that appeared on my list was that of a pastor coming from Singapore. **The years 2007-2008 became a turning point in my life, and God changed me.** In July 2007, I presented an academic paper at an international conference in Thailand. After the symposium, a pastor from Singapore came to chat with me. Sitting down somewhere for a coffee, we chatted over what we had learned from our studies. Unexpectedly, our chat lasted for over four hours! Although we had been talking about our knowledge, we also had an exchange of thoughts and feelings, and our mutual understanding deepened. In just a short while, we became very good friends. We even kidded that we must be blood brothers who had lost touch with each other. Later when he was on an official trip to Hong Kong, he found time to meet me late in the evening despite his very tight schedule. We did not have frequent gatherings; in terms of time, we had only met for a dozen hours but we had built a very deep relationship.



In 2008, I faced a major difficulty. Without the faintest idea of what to do, I could not but seek help from this pastor from Singapore. To my surprise, he promised to help right away. That was why I always said I owed him a big favor; he had helped me as well as the seminary. Every time we met, we talked about everything under the sun and shared our knowledge and our friendship became very strong. The grace he had given me was a kind of goodness difficult to find in humankind. It was a gift from God. When I assumed the presidency of the seminary, he gave me a metal bamboo sheet engraved with the pattern of bamboo leaves as a gift for the occasion. It was in such an amazing way that our friendship became rooted and grew deep.

A Shocking Spiritual Journey

2009 was the first year of my presidency at the seminary. After the first six months, seeing that the seminary was moving forward under God's gracious guidance, I went to Los Angeles and San Francisco in June to visit churches and alumni there. Meanwhile, I experienced a spiritual journey and the joy of friendship. On the day of departure from Los Angeles, I visited Rev. Timothy Lin, who was almost a hundred (he had been the president of the China Evangelical Seminary, Taiwan, for a decade), and asked him to pray for me and share with me in person some tips on being a seminary president. At the beginning of our chat, I expected him to tell me some stories about how to be a president; however, he talked about nothing other than the Bible. He encouraged me with three verses (Gn 1:26; Rv 3:21; Mt 7:21), reminding me to pay serious attention to voices from God's heart. Thinking that I was familiar with those verses, I felt disappointed at first. But when I humbled myself and listened to him carefully, I was deeply moved, feeling the presence of God's Spirit. After that, he laid his hand on me and prayed for the sound health of my spiritual life. I felt shocked at this point, my whole body quivering. To me, he was just a stranger but he had become a messenger from God, acting as my spiritual "abba," teaching and inspiring me. When I said goodbye to him, he stood at his door and watched me go in my car with a smile, which made me see the smile of my Heavenly Father.

Indeed, Rev. Lin knew more clearly who I was working hard to become. He had helped me to become myself and taught me what kind of president I was to become because he had faced God more wholeheartedly than I. As a result, ***I came closer to God through this friendship with my predecessor.***

Continuation of the Friendship of Heart and Spirit

In 2022, which was the beginning of another stage of my service to God, I put aside a lot of administrative work and focused my mind on teaching and research as well as personnel matters, working hard to nurture the pastors of the next generation. I had planned to meet two groups of young alumni per month in January and February this year, which means a total of four groups, or about 50 people altogether. Unfortunately, owing to the pandemic, so far I have met and talked with only one of the groups.

On January 3, Rev. Brian Lam, Ms. Michelle Chan, and I had a chat with seven alumni about what they had learned from pastoring and listened to the stories of their ministries. They gave detailed accounts of their basketball ministries, football ministries, large-scale preaching ministries, and the process of growth through Bible teaching. On my part, I shared with them some theological thoughts, covering those of great masters like Andrew Root, Paul Tillich, Deborah Hunsinger, and Douglas Hall. I enjoyed the sweet fellowship among us, which was also a "waiting room" (a platform for people of different generations to share their life stories). After that, I called them "the Blessed Seven." They are all my young friends, my fellow pilgrims.

I strongly hope that I can walk with them, teach them, and encourage them. Just as Paul said, "I am reminded of your sincere faith.... For this reason, I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline" (2 Tm 1:5-7). I hope they will become even stronger. In fact, I also need their company. ***I hope we can fight a good fight and finish the race that is set before us together, holding fast to our faith and beliefs.*** As the world needs hope, and the church is where the greatest hope can be found so far as I know, we have to become companions with God and with you.

On our pilgrimages, we do not move forward alone but with companions. I rejoice over the friendships in my life because we can laugh heartily amidst our friendships with God and with others. Happiness is the fruit of life borne by those who have the joy of experiencing God; it is the fruit reaped by disciples who practice the spiritual discipline of "friendship of the heart and spirit."

* All Scripture quotations are taken from the NIV.



Starting from Theology Camp for Youth...

How did HKBTS's inaugural Theology Camp for Youth come about?

What is the "waiting room" style of pastoral ministry?

What is the "waiting room" style of theological education?

What is HKBTS's vision of theological education for youth? ...

The Hong Kong Baptist Theological Seminary (HKBTS) held its inaugural Theology Camp for Youth on September 18, 2021, and achieved results far exceeding our expectations. Our seminary has always placed a particular emphasis on theological education for youth, and we have paid increasing attention to this specific area in recent years. During the 70th Anniversary Thanksgiving Worship held on November 28 last year, President Joshua Cho employed the concept of a "waiting room" by Andrew Root, a theologian known for his youth ministry, to underscore our concern for the younger generation and look forward to our contribution to theological education for youth. President Cho pointed out that the seminary should undertake the mission of training the youth in theological thinking by providing them with a "waiting room" style theological education so as to help bring about changes in church and society alike.

The *Newsletter* invited President Cho, Chaplain Rev. Brian Lam, and two Associate Deans, Prof. Wong Fook-kong and Prof. Nathan Ng, to a zoom forum to discuss the topic "Theological Education for Youth." They started with a discussion of the inaugural Theology Camp for Youth and went on to explore the "waiting room" concept as well as the direction and future of the seminary's theological education for youth. We have put together the views of the forum participants and shared them here for our readers.

Theology Camp for Youth

Seeing Both a Need and an Opportunity



President Joshua Cho said the seminary has been talking about practical theology all these years, and youth ministry is an important part of practical theology. A few years ago he met with some alumni. At that time the city was in disarray. Young people were actively involved in

protests and expressing different views about the social situation; they needed others to respond and guide them. He deeply felt that given the way things were going, it was necessary to provide those alumni serving the youth with guidance and support.

In addition, having read Richard Osmer's works and being inspired by the 65th Anniversary Academic Conference of Christian Education, President Cho realized that "edification" as a pedagogical concept fits well with our current age. Hence, he began practicing the concept in different groups. He set up a number of small groups, such as the President's Council Group and the Alumni Group, to discuss theology with the participants. He started each meeting with a talk on a certain issue and then let others respond so that everyone could get involved in the discussion. After having organized such groups for some time, Ms. Melon Yeung and Ms. Katherine Liu, former secondary school principal and vice-principal,

joined the seminary as an Assistant to the President and a Project Officer (Learning and Teaching) respectively. They helped inspire fresh ideas and new thinking, suggesting the seminary organize an annual camp specifically for young people and try to carry out some theological education programs for them.

President Cho stated that HKBTS had long paid attention to the importance of theological education for youth, and in light of the changing social and political environment in Hong Kong, we would steadily increase our effort in this particular area in order to be able to respond to young people's feelings about the social unrest, allow them the space to express themselves, and walk with them as partners.

From Conception to Preparation

Rev. Brian Lam said he had been envisaging the birth of a Theology Camp for Youth for some time. He once read a book that mentioned how seminaries in foreign countries organized summer courses for young people and invited students to attend seminary classes. He felt that HKBTS could follow their example by hosting summer camps for youth to receive theological education. Later, when preparing for the seminary's 70th Anniversary celebrations, Ms. Melon Yeung brought up a similar idea, saying we could invite young people to the seminary to play ball games together and talk about theological issues with them.



A few years ago President Cho and Rev. Lam had the opportunity to meet with a group of young alumni. Subsequently, Rev. Lam set up focus groups to invite them to share their vision for serving young people and their ministry in general, as well as the difficulties they encountered and the support they needed. This group of young alumni held various views on how the seminary should go about organizing a youth camp. They came up with the details of a plan together and invited young members of their own churches to join the camp. They hoped to understand first-hand what young people thought about faith. Through the youth camp, the seminary also hoped to provide an opportunity for the attendees to know about HKBTS and its theological foundation, as well as for them to bond and share their experiences with us.

Altogether Rev. Lam held four focus group meetings and three online conferences to exchange ideas with more than 20 young ministers. Thanks to these efforts, our inaugural Theology Camp for Youth was held on September 18 of last year with over 100 young attendees. We were overjoyed at the success of the event.

Rev. Lam remembers vividly what happened on the closing date for registration of our inaugural theology camp. Since we had not widely publicized the event, it was up to those young ministers whom we had contacted earlier to invite young people from their own churches to the camp. We did not expect such a large turnout. At 2:30 p.m. on that day, only 58 persons from eight churches had signed up, but a few hours later at 6 p.m. the number went up to 115 and they were from 14 churches. We were greatly encouraged by the turnout which far exceeded our expectations. The attendees also came from different age groups, including secondary school and college students, as well as young Christians who had just started their careers.

Camp: Hope That Is Seen...

The theme of the inaugural Theology Camp for Youth was “Hope That Is Seen.” It was a day camp consisting of three parts.

- In the first part, five alumni, who are the pastors and ministers of the camp attendees, held a face-to-face talk with three of the seminary’s professors on the



topic, “**What is the Use of Theology?**” We hoped such an opportunity could stimulate young people to reflect on theology, and through the sharing of experience by our alumni they would know the kind of theology taught at HKBTS.

- The second part was group discussion. There were a total of 10 groups and each was led by a pastor. While attendees were discussing among themselves, seminary teachers just listened. The topic the groups shared was “**Feeling of Powerlessness and Faith.**” The young attendees discussed with fellow attendees from other churches faith-related issues, including those they found difficult to raise in their own churches, and any queries they had regarding religious beliefs.
- The last part was a face-to-face talk between five youth representatives and our seminary teachers. The representatives shared what they had learned from the exchanges in the first part and the previous group discussion, as well as commenting on the following **five faith-related questions**. Before the start of the youth camp, we had collected questions about faith raised by the attendees. We selected the five most commonly asked questions for discussion during this part. The representatives shared their views first; then the teachers gave their answers and explanations.

Five Most Commonly Asked Questions by the Attendees

1. Why go to church? What do you think God is like? How can I bring friends to church? How can I better serve the Lord?
2. For example, a Christian says one thing and does another, pretending to lead a spiritual life whereas committing numerous “grave” sins, and despite increasingly getting ensnared in transgressions, he or she is still actively serving God or joining a Christian organization that promotes worship. As a bystander, how should one react or try to help such a brother or sister in Christ? As fellow Christians, it would be unconscionable for us to see a friend caught in such a situation and decide to abandon him/her. But what if we find ourselves not having the ability to help?
3. The repression now faced by mainland churches does not bode well for the future of churches in Hong Kong. I would like to know how all the professors here in light of the present situation look at your own positions. Would there be any changes in pastoral care, teaching, or research? How should we, as individuals in society, respond when we are faced with political repression?
4. If the administration does not allow freedom of belief or freedom of religion, how should we as Christians respond?
5. Why did God make the tree of the knowledge of good and evil grow out of the ground if He did not allow its fruits to be eaten?

Those five questions involve our understanding of God, the role of the church, spiritual temperaments, and Christian identity and responsibility in a challenging political environment, as well as difficult theological issues in the Bible. Besides covering a wide variety of topics, the questions are also fairly down to earth, showing the struggles of young believers and their in-depth reflections on faith.

Of all the questions about faith the young attendees raised before they came to the camp, quite a few have to do with how Christians should respond in a changing political and social environment. This says a lot about their social concerns, and how important it is that they as Christians look at themselves and their mission along with the doubts they have about their identity and calling. From the questions posed and the responses given, we can understand young people’s perspectives on faith, their concerns, what faith means to them, and how they put it into practice. This is useful information for the seminary in planning its youth theological training programs and other pastoral ministry programs.



Feedback from Attendees:

Exploring Faith and Candid Conversations

In the post-retreat questionnaire survey, a number of young people candidly admitted that they left the camp with one big aspiration: *In the matter of faith, often there are no answers, but still, there is ample room for further discussion and communication as long as everyone is willing to ask and share honestly and openly.* We are convinced that the camp is able to encourage these young believers to seek more conversations about faith.

Of the three parts, the group discussion received the best response. Many young attendees appreciated and enjoyed the opportunity to have fruitful discussions and candid exchanges. They learned from the experience the art of listening and came to better understand the views of different Christians and the difficulties of different churches. **This shows the importance of having a faith community, and that we have a collective responsibility to nurture young believers and everyone must open their hearts to share sincerely with one another.**

**Thoughts from Teachers:
Youth Ministers and the Youth**



Prof. Nathan Ng took part in the group discussion. He felt that it afforded him an opportunity to better understand today's young believers and their temperaments. He was also deeply impressed by how important interpersonal relationship was to them, as many attendees told him afterward that it

was the words of their own pastors that left them with the greatest impact. **Hence, one cannot separate "education" for youth from "relationship building." If the approach is right, young people are willing to receive the teaching of the truth.**

In addition, Prof. Ng pointed out that the seminary should seriously consider how the camp may fit into our overall vision: the camp as a means for us to directly get in touch with young people or to assist our alumni in their youth ministry? For him in the long run, our mission had to be about the latter. Rev. Lam concurred that our task should focus on theological education, not youth ministry. He expected that our alumni's sharing in the camp enabled young people to learn about HKBTS and its theological foundation. As long as they were deeply impressed

by the sharing of their own pastors, he thought the camp had achieved its goals.

Talking with pastors who had taken part in the group discussion after the camp, President Cho felt that they enjoyed serving in that area very much. He believed the focus groups had done a wonderful job and the team of youth pastors had become a force helping the seminary to grow. Moreover, he was happy to be able to get to know a group of young people in the camp, which was a beautiful thing. He had initially planned to have a mini-conference around June or July at the new academic building which was recently completed, inviting our alumni to share the success of their youth ministry. It was intended to be an occasion for an exchange of views and for learning from one another; and at the same time giving guidance to our alumni. Because of the ongoing pandemic, plans for the conference have been shelved, but President Cho is looking forward to seeing the project come to fruition in the future.

Indeed, the theological education camp only lasted for a very brief period and was just the beginning. Apart from creating an opportunity for the seminary to directly understand what young people are thinking and what situations they are facing, more importantly, President Cho thinks it helps our alumni to practice what they have learned, giving their ministry practical applications so that they can explore what feasible methods and approaches they can use in teaching and pastoral care. **The camp also provides a valuable platform for our alumni, the youth, and the seminary to have an inter-church exchange, enabling everyone to know and learn from each other.** In the future, if we hold another camp of a similar nature, our teachers think the target group should be more focused and narrowed down to college students and Christians who have just entered the workforce. The number of attendees can also be reduced, and more timeslots can be set aside for small groups to allow young people to ask questions and exchange ideas, instead of listening passively. Some recreational activities can also be arranged in the camp.

我對浸神的印象(短語)



Increased interaction on and off stage through mobile apps



Waiting Room

Reconsidering Youth Ministry

In the last issue of our *Newsletter*, President Cho mentioned on several occasions Andrew Root's views of youth ministry, saying they were worthy of consideration and serve as a reference to the situation faced by churches in Hong Kong. In his book *The End of Youth Ministry?*, Root uses a fictitious story to illustrate the youth ministry in the contemporary United States, in which he brings up the concept of the "waiting room." The "waiting room" in the story functions as a platform where people of all ages, young and old, come to this particular space to tell their life stories honestly, as well as pray for and build up the lives of one another. Based on the true reality of America, Root constructs the story of a young female evangelical worker, J., and uses her experience **to diagnose the challenges facing the churches today, which are busy organizing activities to attract young people to church, while ignoring the most important thing in youth ministry – sharing lives and walking together with them.** Although Root's viewpoints are derived from specific circumstances, our teachers think they are relevant to the situation we face in Hong Kong.

Like in America, there are quite a number of Hong Kong churches whose youth ministry only emphasizes holding various kinds of activities to appeal to young people, while overlooking the importance of providing them with an education in faith. Youth ministers easily get worn out by too much activity, leaving them little time to spend or walk with young people. Despite all the physical exertion, the ministry can be disappointing.

How to Walk with Young People

Prof. Ng thinks Andrew Root's criticism is mainly against churches that hold too many different kinds of events, forfeiting an opportunity to see God's work in the lives of young people. Prof. Ng considers that the right amount of activity and programs such as discipleship training will not be of concern. Contact outside the church setting, like having meals together and interacting with young people in order to build up relationships with them, is equally important. Churches,

therefore, need to balance between having "too few" and "too many" activity programs. Moving toward either extreme is not ideal. He strongly feels that a successful youth minister often spends time with young people, walks with them, and is actively involved in their lives outside of church functions. The most important and effective pastoral care often takes place not in formal fellowship and gatherings, but in engaging in the lives of young people. A hectic activity schedule will hinder efforts to build a true rapport with them.

President Cho points out some misleading ideas about youth ministry, saying some people believe that they must be fully responsive to young people's aspirations and needs, but avoid lecturing them about right and wrong when walking with them as partners. But to him, it is in fact necessary for them to also get the right guidance along the way. In addition, from talking with youth pastors, he deeply feels the importance of establishing a relationship with young people, which is the key to youth ministry for every generation. Both youth pastors and young people can share their viewpoints on the basis of a healthy relationship, making teaching possible and effective. Some alumni have shared with him that **young people do not need adults acting as "teachers" to instruct them. Rather, they need them to walk and establish a bond with them and based on that give them advice and instruction. Indeed, young people are drawn to spiritual things.** These insights gave him much food for reflection and inspiration.

Prof. Wong Fook-kong

also agrees that relationships are important, adding that every youth pastor has his/her disposition and style. **It is necessary to discover and make good use of our gifts when it comes to shepherding young people, and establishing rapport with them according to our character strengths will yield twice the result with half the effort.** In his sharing, President Cho speaks of an alumnus who has a very good relationship with young people from his church. The way he goes about forging close ties with them is not by holding all kinds of activities, but primarily by having meals together and chatting with them, as well as enjoying regular Bible studies with them. Prof. Wong also mentions that this alumnus talks humorously, which is his advantage. Pastors should, therefore, recognize how their strengths can be used in their ministry to maximum effect.





Envisaging Theological Education for Youth

Nurturing Youth Pastors in “Waiting Room”

Our teachers all agree that young people are an important asset to society and churches, a key group that needs to be faced by the seminary. Both President Cho and Rev. Lam hope that the seminary in the future continues to hold camps specifically for young people annually, or even invite them to the focus groups for a meaningful faith dialogue as a means of carrying on the ministry.

In the meantime, our teachers understand that, due to resource constraints and the seminary’s positioning, HKBTS cannot afford to settle itself for a long period in a “waiting room” to share stories with young people for direct interactions. Hence, it is imperative for the seminary in the long run to nurture youth pastors who can wait in the “waiting room.” Every generation of youth culture undergoes rapid transitions. It takes time to work among young people in order to understand and empathize with them. It is more practicable for us to develop a group of youth pastors willing to go to the front line to carry out youth ministry.

Prof. Ng contends that every youth fellowship has its unique language and cultural background. The seminary needs a group of youth pastors to act as “adaptors” to communicate

with these young people, transforming the teachings and theology they have learned from the seminary into a language young people understand so that the message can effectively reach their flocks. No doubt, this is the most feasible way of theological education for youth going forward. Prof. Wong concurs, adding that ***instead of directly getting in touch with young people and educating them, it is better to assist youth pastors in their pastoral ministry, which is a far greater commission for us. They can instill the theology and teachings of the seminary in the hearts of the younger generation through “life influencing life.”***

Walking with Youth Pastors

President Cho also regards large-scale evangelical meetings and direct contact with young people as inconsistent with HKBTS’s positioning and role. Providing theological education is the mission of the seminary. ***In keeping with the situation in society and church, the seminary will continue to uphold the guiding principle of “edification and meticulous teaching.” Leveraging on the close relationship with our alumni and walking with them as partners, the seminary will build up their lives to help them shepherd their flocks so as to assist churches in the development of the ministry.*** One of the goals



of the “Networking Initiative” and “President’s Classrooms” introduced by President Cho in recent years is to unite our alumni, many of whom are youth pastors, and be their partners. Initially, the seminary contacted over 20 alumni; now the number has grown to 80. We expect the scheme to continue to expand into the future, enabling the seminary to get more feedback, gather more resources to develop theological education, and design training programs accordingly.

Prof. Wong suggests the seminary strengthen its education programs in pastoral care for young people by, for example, offering short-term courses and training on youth ministry by professionally trained and experienced persons, who can help resolve the kinds of practical pastoral issues faced by youth pastors. It is also worth considering the possibility of including those courses in the curriculum as electives.

Establishing an Exchange Platform for Youth Pastors

Our teachers think that ***besides giving youth pastors guidance and walking with them, the seminary can play a leadership role in assembling a group of pastors devoted to youth ministry, and proactively establishing a platform for them to interact with one another.*** Moreover, through interactions, the seminary can understand their needs and see what resources can be deployed to support them.

Rev. Lam concedes that in the past the alumni had positive feedback about the focus groups. They appreciated having someone lead them to discuss their ministries, and the opportunity to interact with other pastors and take other churches’ experiences and approaches as references for their ministries. Rev. Lam believes that this mode of support will benefit the alumni’s ministry and their service in the long run. The teachers, therefore, advise the seminary to continue to launch focus groups to interact with our alumni, assisting them in their pastoral care for young people and walking with them along the way.

Looking Ahead: Expanding the “Waiting Room”

President Cho stresses that a “waiting room” is actually a space for people of various generations to tell stories, and should not be a domain exclusively for youth ministry. Indeed, a “waiting room” includes people of different age groups, young

and old, who can share their life stories in it. As a seminary endorsing the “waiting room” style of education, HKBTS has to offer theological education, not just pastoral care for young people. ***Theological education for youth is a part of practical theology. What we are looking forward to on the road ahead is the expansion of this “waiting room” to provide support for our alumni who are serving different groups of people. A broader and freer space for communication will enable them to better serve Christians from different generations.***

Prof. Wong recommends the seminary host camps or gatherings for our alumni, bringing them together for an exchange of ideas. President Cho is happy with the proposal, hoping to invite our teachers to share their professional expertise with our alumni and offer them guidance.

Prof. Ng also greatly appreciates the suggestion, thinking that in addition to hosting activities for youth pastors, the seminary can organize camps and mini-conferences for alumni devoted to pastoring other groups such as families, couples, and the elderly. These meetings can specifically address the needs of our alumni and can be led by our teachers who will provide the theological basis for discussion. Alumni will be invited to share their successful experiences with those who attend. Each individual brings their own unique experiences and insights for participants to learn from. The collective wisdom they then acquire can be skillfully applied to their flocks and pastoral situations. President Cho also considers that sharing successful experiences can generate successful experiences for alumni, helping them to grow.

Faced with a rapidly changing world, the teachers all agree that HKBTS has to be resolute in walking with churches and our alumni, assisting and guiding pastors who provide pastoral care and theological education for different groups of people. The seminary also needs to do its best to nurture pastors in the “waiting room” to become ***thoughtful, down-to-earth Christian leaders who are willing to face the world and care for others.*** HKBTS must pass on its legacy as a rock-solid base for nurturing faithful servants for the Kingdom of God and a strong backbone for pastors of different generations.



Where is God in the Book of Esther?

Craig Ho

Visiting Associate Professor of Old Testament

A Biblical Scroll without “God”?

It is obvious that the book of Esther does not mention God. Believers and scholars alike usually think that this is due to a unique rhetorical technique used by its author. They infer this from the fact that Esther is a biblical book, so its author has to be a Jew, meaning he has to be a theist, or to be exact, a monotheist. Since all other biblical narratives feature God playing a significant role in their story-telling, the absence of “God” is actually just the absence of his name. The divine presence must have been expressed through a special theological point of view. The Old Testament refers to God using seven names, which in transliterated Hebrew forms are as follows: YHWH (Yahweh), El (God), Elohim (God), El Shaddai (God Almighty), Elyon (Most High), Tzevaot (Hosts or Armies), and Yah (short for “Yahweh”); sometimes two names are used together, for example: YHWH-Elohim (Yahweh God), El-Elyon (Most High God), and YHWH-Tzevaot (Yahweh of Hosts). Intriguingly, none of these names appear in the book of Esther!

The book of Esther not only does not refer to God using any known biblical names or appellations, its author also seems to have deliberately suppressed anything religious in the story. For example, when Esther requests Mordecai to tell the Jews to fast for her, we expect that she would also ask for their supplication for God’s deliverance in their prayers. Yet, Esther asks only for support from her

The book of Esther ... seems to have deliberately suppressed anything religious in the story.

own people, the Jewish community, through their fasting while she herself will also fast with her attendants. Esther does not demand her people to pray, but only to fast with her. The author thus seems to have deliberately left



out mentioning the much-needed supplicatory prayers in Esther’s dire situation so as to avoid any implied association with divine intervention in the resolution of Esther’s extremely dangerous situation. However, the fact that the Jews are on the brink of ethnic extermination is clearly due to their distinctive laws, which are largely religious in nature and “different from those of every other people” (3:8). Mordecai’s refusal to bow down to Haman in violation of royal decree (3:2) is very probably due to his adamant insistence on bowing down only to God (or the king?) but not to other gods or idols. And King Ahasuerus’s command for those under Haman to bow before him has effectively transformed his status into that of an idol. This seems to be the real reason for Mordecai’s refusal to bow down to Haman.

Is God to Be Found in the Unlikely Coincidences of the Story?

It may seem that the author wants to hint at a divine presence through many crucial coincidences in the story, without which Esther would be unable to have the opportunity to see Ahasuerus and to request that the

lives of the Jews and her own be given to her (7:3). It thus appears that each of the following coincidences in the story did not happen by mere chance, but were arranged by a God who was deeply concerned with the well-being of the Jews: (1) that Esther could be selected as one of the king's concubines was due not only to her beauty, but **more importantly, to Vashti's unexpected refusal to comply with King Ahasuerus's demand** to show off her beauty to the public and officials at the king's banquet; (2) **Vashti's disobedience led directly to her disposal and Esther's chance to be selected to enter the harem**, and Esther soon won Ahasuerus's favor and devotion and as a consequence the royal crown to replace Vashti as queen; (3) **Mordecai learned by chance of a plot devised by two eunuchs for Ahasuerus's life**; (4) **Mordecai earned credit for saving the king's life, but had neither received recognition nor any reward**; (5) Mordecai refused to bow down to Haman, making him feel deeply offended, so Haman planned to destroy Mordecai and murder the entire Jewish community of the Persian Empire; (6) after learning this horrific news, Esther accepted Mordecai's request to risk her life to see the king unsummoned in order to plead with the king for the lives of the Jews; Esther asked the Jews to fast with her for three days and three nights; (7) Esther was granted a favor by the king, who was willing to take Haman to her banquet; (8) **Ahasuerus couldn't sleep, and arose to read history**, finding out then that Mordecai had saved his life without receiving any reward; (9) in the meantime, Haman was waiting in the royal garden to meet the king and asked him to have Mordecai hanged on a wooden frame made especially for this purpose; (10) the king consulted Haman

for advice on how to reward Mordecai; (11) Mordecai rode a royal horse, led by Haman to tour the city to show the king's favor on Mordecai; (12) the king took Haman to Esther's banquet for the second time. During the banquet, the queen revealed Haman's conspiracy to exterminate the Jewish people to which Esther belonged; upon hearing Haman's plot, the king left the banquet with indignation and went out to the garden; (13) returning to the banquet hall from the royal garden, and **seeing Haman lying on the couch Esther was leaning on, begging for mercy, the king thought that Haman was harassing the queen**; (14) Haman was executed and hung on the wooden frame he had prepared for Mordecai; (15) the king granted permission to Esther and Mordecai to write an edict to the Jews, allowing them to use force against those who were prepared to harm them. Seven out of the above fifteen incidences (the parts marked in bold) were not deliberately planned by any characters in the story, but are thematically indispensable to the account of the deliverance of the Jews from Haman's genocidal plot. The absence of any of these seven incidences would prevent the execution of Haman by the king and thus the reversion of the fate of the Jews.

One may also reason that since everything is ruled by God, nothing therefore happens by chance. It follows from the belief that "the king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will" (Pv 21:1) every seeming "coincidence" in the book of Esther should be understood as ensuing from divine intervention. So, while the book of Esther does not directly mention God, should we not infer from the narrative in Esther that the hand of God is working quietly behind human affairs to work out the deliverance of his people by means of "coincidences"? However, a reasonable interpreter may also think that since the author has deliberately and successfully avoided any mention of divine intervention at any of the seven critical moments mentioned above, why should we deliberately try to seek God out among them against authorial intention from a belief that may not be his own? The author of Esther might hold a similar view which one finds in Ecclesiastes concerning the existence of genuinely coincidental events which seem to fall outside divine intervention. In such events what one could find is not God but the snare of death:

... since the same fate comes to all, to the righteous and the wicked, to the good and the evil, to the clean and the unclean, to those who



sacrifice and those who do not sacrifice. As are the good, so are the sinners; those who swear are like those who shun an oath. This is an evil in all that happens under the sun, that **the same fate comes to everyone.** ... (Eccl 9:2-3)

What the preacher can be sure of is the commonality of suffering in the world; no one can avoid suffering through morality or religion. He also denies that we can use our efforts or talents to change the course of chance or to avoid disaster:

Again I saw that under the sun the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favour to the skillful; but **time and chance happen to them all. For no one can anticipate the time of disaster. Like fish** taken in a cruel net, and **like birds** caught in a snare, **so mortals** are snared at a time of calamity, **when it suddenly falls upon them.** (Eccl 9:11-12)

The preacher points out that whether winning a race or a battle, getting food or wealth, or other people's favor; things that we all enjoy, it has nothing to do with our efforts or talents. It is not through our efforts or talents, the preacher claims, but through chance and luck that we encounter these delightful things; just like how through chance, fish or birds meet their fate and eventually fall into the snare of death.

If one asks the preacher, "Then who is in charge of chance?" he has no answer, and Ecclesiastes 9:2-3 denies rather unambiguously that one can find God in chance, otherwise religious people who offer sacrifices regularly would have a better chance of leading a happy life. The preacher ponders life and comes to the conclusion that work and death are things that no one can escape; since we cannot work when we die, we have to look for God and his gifts in our work:

There is nothing better for mortals than **to eat and drink, and find enjoyment in their toil.** This also, I saw, is **from the hand of God.** (Eccl 2:24)

So I saw that there is nothing better than that **all should enjoy their work, for that is their lot;** who can bring them to see what will be after them? (Eccl 3:22)

This is what I have seen to be good: it is fitting **to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil** with which one toils under the sun the few days of the life God gives us; for **this is our lot.** Likewise all to whom God gives wealth and possessions and whom he enables to enjoy them, and to accept their lot and find **enjoyment in their toil—this is the gift of God.** (Eccl 5:18-19)

So I commend enjoyment, for there is nothing better for people under the sun than to eat, and drink, and enjoy themselves, for this will go with them in their toil **through the days of life that God gives them** under the sun. (Eccl 8:15)

Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that are given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun. **Whatever your hand finds to do, do with your might;** for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going. (Eccl 9:9-10)

With the concept of only one earthly life to live, the preacher keeps repeating the theme of a God-given lot for all humans, which is found in his repeated advice to the readers "to eat and drink" (i.e., to live happily), to work hard, and to enjoy the rewards of our work. Ecclesiastes is

not interested in nor has tried to explore the possibility of an eternity that cannot be experienced in this life. The teaching of Ecclesiastes seems therefore to be based entirely on the belief

... the author of Esther would likely agree with the preacher of Ecclesiastes in the latter's denial that God is to be found in fortuitous events.

of a single life. Interestingly, it appears that the author of Esther would likely agree with the preacher of Ecclesiastes in the latter's denial that God is to be found in fortuitous events.

The one place in the book of Esther where the author may be understood as suggesting a theological interpretation of events is in Mordecai's message delivered to Esther where he takes great pains to confront Esther with the dire consequences to herself if she refuses to entreat the king on behalf of the Jews. Mordecai also challenges Esther to take her responsibility as the Jewish queen of Persia and help prevent the impending catastrophe from happening (Est 4:14). It has thus been suggested that the sentence "relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another quarter" in Esther 4:14 is a hint of divine intervention in the absence of Esther's initiative. However, such a "hint" could also be understood as purposeful avoidance of mentioning divine activities, similar to the avoidance of mentioning "praying" (4:3, 16; 9:31) which would clearly refer to God. Therefore, the wording of Mordecai's message is better understood as the author's attempt to dissociate it from any reference to possible divine activities.

Is God to Be Found in the Actions of the Characters in the Story?

If God is not to be found in unplanned or contingent events in Esther and Ecclesiastes, perhaps he is to be found in purposeful or planned human actions or activities that are necessary for solving the problems of living. According to Ecclesiastes, to work and to enjoy life is our God-given lot in being human. Work is hard but a necessity because through work we can harvest the fruits of our toils as food for survival and enjoyment. Work and enjoyment are therefore God's common graces to humanity. The preacher's view that "the same fate comes to all, to the righteous and the wicked, to the good and the evil" (Eccl

9:2) sounds very much like Jesus' teaching about a loving God who "makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous" (Matt 5:45).

So, perhaps we should not look for divine activities in contingent events in the book of Esther; however significant they are in its narrative, because God is not there, otherwise the author would not have suppressed any hints of religious or divine activities in the narrative. Perhaps we should look for God in non-verbal psychological forces that drive purposeful actions or activities carried out by Esther, Mordecai, and the Jewish people, to see how they point to a divine presence in the narrative. "Non-verbal psychological forces" refers to non-verbal human dispositions upon which human actions or decisions are based without which inter-personal interactions simply would not have happened. The story in Esther has not mentioned Mordecai's strong conviction that Jews do not bow down and do obeisance to anyone but their God; and it is precisely this conviction—the first psychological force—that has occasioned Haman's plot to kill Mordecai and all his fellow Jewish people. The story has also not mentioned what brings about Esther's change of mind to become so brave as to risk her life for the deliverance of her people. Perhaps she has been convinced to see a new meaning in her life—the second psychological force—as a Jewish queen in Persia revealed to her at the juncture of the life and death of her own people upon hearing Mordecai's message. Neither has the story mentioned the collective faith—the third psychological force—displayed in the solidarity of the Jewish people as a response to Esther's demand of fasting three days and nights with



her. Religious conviction, a new meaning of one's life, and the faith of the Jewish people are all indispensable psychological forces that drive the narratorial flow of the story in the text of Esther. They must be assumed to exist as the basis or driving force behind human actions, otherwise, the Jews would not be facing the possibility of genocide nor would they be "miraculously" delivered from it through many very unlikely coincidences.

It thus seems clear that we cannot find God in what has been narrated in the story in the book of Esther, because the author does not seem to think that God exists in physical events as narrated. We are then left with the possibility of "seeing" the divine presence in what has not been said but must be assumed, i.e., the driving forces of human actions described in the narrative. Are there other examples of the divine presence mediated through psychological forces in the Bible?

We are then left with the possibility of "seeing" the divine presence in ... the driving forces of human actions described in the narrative.

Intertextual Insights from Jesus' Parables

Matthew 25:31-46 seems to be such a passage. In the parable of the sheep and the goats, the king commended the righteous on his right side who were going to inherit the Kingdom of God as a reward for their kindness extended to the king when he was in need. The sheep were astonished and claimed that they **had never seen** the king in need and cared for him (vv. 37-40). Then the king rebuked those who were on his left hand because they had not extended a helping hand to him when he was in need. The goats on the left side expressed the same astonishment as the sheep and claimed that they **had never seen** the king in need and refused to take care of him (vv. 44-46). Thus, neither the sheep nor the goats in Matthew 25:31-46 have ever seen God and treated him kindly or ignored him.

When the king says that treating another person kindly (or ignoring him blindly) is the same as treating the king himself kindly (or ignoring him blindly), he means that we should treat another person as if they were infinitely important or had infinite value, i.e. like God.[†] Although it is impossible to measure the true value of a person in

quantitative terms, God regards compassionate actions as infinitely valuable and therefore worthy of the reward of eternal life. Thinking along this line, it becomes clear that when a person treats another person kindly, that person is regarded as important and valuable, in fact—from the perspective of the king—as important and valuable as God himself.

The meaning of the parable in Matthew 25:31-46 is that although the "sheep" have never seen God, their kindness extended to a person in need has been felt and infinitely appreciated by God. Their loving actions have reached God, meaning loving people is equivalent to loving God.

In the same vein, when Mordecai takes up the responsibility of bringing up Esther as stepdaughter, he is treating her as a very important and valuable person. Mordecai's love for Esther must have been felt and infinitely appreciated by God. When Esther makes up her mind to risk her life for the lives of her own people, she is treating their lives as valuable as that of her own. Her love for her people must have been felt and infinitely appreciated by God. When the Jews fast for three days, night or day, as demanded by Esther, their love for their queen and for each other must have been felt and infinitely appreciated by God.

Although neither the word "God" nor its equivalent appears in the book of Esther, we have to infer from Matthew's parable (25:31-46) that the loving actions of Mordecai, Esther, and the Jewish people have been felt and infinitely appreciated by God. **God works through their loving actions and brings about the deliverance of the Jewish people.** John the apostle would say, "God is in their love."

John the apostle would say, "God is in their love."

[†] Without this view of the infinite value of a person, it would be very difficult to understand the biblical teaching of eternal life (i.e., infinite time-span living with God) and eternal punishment/separation from God (Mt 25:46).

* This article was adapted from a sermon delivered by the author at our chapel service (October 7, 2021). All Scripture quotations are taken from the New Revised Standard Version, and the words in bold are the author's emphasis.

Academic Affairs News

- **2021-2022 Spring Opening Convocation**

The spring term this school year began on January 17. The Spiritual Formation Day was held the next day. A talk with the theme "How to Promote Devotion in Local Churches?—A Baptist Pastoral Perspective" was delivered by Mr. Ng Chi-hoi, the pastor-in-charge of the Abounding Grace Baptist Church.

- **Faculty Movement**

Dr. Curie Qu joined our serving team in the spring semester of this academic year as Visiting Assistant Professor of Christian Thought. Dr. Qu obtained his M.Phil. from the Hong Kong Baptist University, and his Ph.D. from Brunel University London. His research interests include contemporary theology, Barthian theology, apologetics, eschatology, time and eternity, biblical ethics, theology and Chinese culture. May God lead his service at the seminary and help him work with our faculty as a team for the mission of Christian education and research.

- **Experiencing Seminary Life Day Camp**

The "Experiencing Seminary Life Day Camp" with the theme "Wherever He Leads" was held from March 9 to 10 through online programs and video conferences. Its programs included sit-in-class lessons, talks with professors and current seminary students, testimonies of God's calling, a workshop, an introduction of the seminary's programs, etc. Through the day camp, participants gained an in-depth understanding of God's call and full-time ministry.

- **Spiritual Revival Concert**

Due to the severe epidemic situation in Hong Kong, and in response to the government's call for the public to reduce social activities as a way to fight COVID together, the Spiritual Revival Concert originally scheduled to be held at 5:30 pm on April 10 (Sunday) at the Kowloon City Baptist Church has been postponed until the following year.

From the Chaplain

Rev. Brian Lam Chaplain

Walking Together across Generations

Recently, President Joshua Cho has talked about youth ministers and youth ministry on several occasions. Some think that the Hong Kong Baptist Theological Seminary (HKBTS) has changed its direction and switched to focusing on youth ministry, while some alumni think that the seminary only pays attention to the youth ministers amongst them.

As a matter of fact, HKBTS does not mainly develop the youth ministry. On the one hand, this is due to resource constraints, and on the other hand, HKBTS clearly understands that its mission is theological education and training the next generation of pastors.

Recently, President Cho has talked more about youth ministers and youth ministry; he is in fact practicing what he is advocating, namely, that HKBTS should be a seminary "for the church as well as responsive to the times." In response to the fast-changing situation in Hong Kong, President Cho has organized a number of "Theology Salons," in which he has been engaged in conversations with our faculty, reflecting on contemporary situations and exploring ways forward for the church. He also began a "networking initiative," meeting and connecting with church elders and deacons, and our alumni. President Cho also started the "President's Classrooms" to do theological reflection with the alumni and church leaders, each time in a small group setting. Several groups of alumni have already joined the "classrooms." President Cho felt that there was a great need for the alumni to have fellowship with each other and to support each other on their journeys of ministry.

The mission of HKBTS is theological education, focusing on nurturing the next generation of pastors. In addition to nurturing and teaching our students at the seminary, we also have the responsibility of walking with our alumni pastors during this difficult time. President Cho has been meeting the alumni, starting with our graduates in recent years, each time with a small group, for fellowship and mutual learning. It so happened that most of the recent graduates are relatively young, and most of them oversee youth

ministry in their congregations; hence President Cho began to read the relevant books in the hope of helping them to think theologically in their ministries. (Currently, President Cho and I are using the works of Andrew Root and Chapman Clark as a guide to youth ministry.) Consequently, President Cho has talked more about youth ministers and youth ministry. As our network gradually expands and our connection with alumni pastors in charge of other ministries (e.g. ministries for children, young adults, adults, families, and senior adults) is made, we will also study the recent research and publications relevant to their ministries so as to better walk with them.

When it comes to youth ministry, there was a time when "age-specific ministry" was popular, and there have been different ministries for different age groups. However, in recent years many scholars began to examine and develop the concept of "intergenerational ministry," which allows believers of different generations to come together, walk, and grow together on their spiritual journeys. There is still much to be explored in this area.

Distance Education Program

Charis Chan Executive Officer (Administration)

Curriculum Reform

Since January 2022, the Distance Education Program (DEP) has been undergoing a curriculum reform, which covers the curricula, the study period of the certificate programs, and the mode of learning of the diploma programs. We hope these changes will be conducive to more effective and systematic student learning. Meanwhile, we offer discounts for elective students that motivate them to enroll as a small group or fellowship. By reading one book of the Bible each term and discussing questions during their fellowships weekly, the students can develop more in-depth spiritual relationships with one another and broaden their horizons. More new elements will be introduced soon and we hope all these will give our students a promising future.

Thanks to the Lord that He brings us Mr. Timmy Or and Mr. Ho Man-chiu as our DEP tutors. They teach diploma courses "The Fundamental Doctrines of the Christian Faith" and "Hermeneutics" respectively. May God bless their teachings.

The 2022 spring term diploma programs commenced on March 1. Student Orientation was held online on February 26, and the tutorials on various subjects were held within three weeks of orientation. The certificate programs for the summer term will start in May and are now open for enrollment. All applications or inquiries are welcome.

We sincerely invite you to join us in partnership through prayers and donations for our educational ministry so that more people will be blessed amidst the pandemic.

Student Union

Jason Tong Chairperson

Changes in the Pandemic, Leaving Room for God, and Walking Together

The Executive Committee of the Student Union (SU) 2022 was inaugurated in January. We have some first-year students as committee members this year and a new teacher as our advisor. Our committee members are Tong Chun-kit (Chairperson), Chan Ho-sing (Vice-chairperson), Ngai Ching-yiu (Head of Secretary Department), Cheung Chau-ming (Treasurer), Ng Wai-yin (Head of Spiritual Devotion Department), Ho Chi-kin (Head of Mission Department), and Law Chui-ying (Head of Daily Living Department). We are honored to have the following teachers as our advisors: Prof. Wong Fook-kong (Student Union), Prof. Andres Tang (Secretary Department), Chaplain Brian Lam (Spiritual Devotion), Ms. Grace Chan (Spiritual Devotion), Dr. Eric Kwong (Mission), and Dr. Bernard Leung (Daily Living).

The theme of the SU this year is "Changes in the Pandemic, Leaving Room for God, and Walking Together." During these past two years, the pandemic has brought about dramatic changes unlike any we

had ever experienced; no one would have expected that surgical masks are now a daily necessity. “Work from home,” “E-classes,” and “Online Sunday service” are now part of our daily vocabulary. During the pandemic, our relationship with God is found to be more significant than before. Our mode of living may have to change, but changes in our lives are more important. We hope that our fellow students may experience positive **“changes in the pandemic”** in the strength of God: even amidst the pandemic, our lives can still be renewed and our relationship with God can become closer. These days, everyone is trying to adapt to the “new normal.” We have been trying to follow all the precautionary measures; however, “even the best-laid plans can fail.” For example, the swift spread of the fifth wave of COVID-19 has been affecting our internships in this new school term. At the beginning of the internship, we could still attend in-person services in churches for the first Sunday, but then church events switched to online on the following Sunday. Recently, churches have had to close their premises temporarily. These are unexpected changes.

At this moment, we need to learn how to look upon God more than usual. **“Leaving room for God”** does not mean that we do nothing; instead, we must conscientiously carry out our duties and leave the result to God, waiting on Him who will do His own work. We must entrust our works to God wholeheartedly and focus on what He is doing. In addition, HKBTS emphasizes community fellowship, and we are a community of disciples. We not only need to receive theological training at the seminary but also need to build each other up; we cannot achieve all this alone. Therefore, we must learn how to **“walk together”** with others, so that we may support each other on the path of theological study, particularly during this challenging time. Let’s experience God together. He is working among us and walking with us.

Despite being affected by the pandemic, the SU still holds on to our mission and serves our fellow students in various aspects. The Secretary Department keeps on publishing the *Soul Wind*, through which fellow students dialogue in writing. In this new school term, the Spiritual Devotion Department holds Morning and Lunch Prayer Meetings online for

fellow students to pray together in one heart. The Mission Department organizes online Lunchtime Sharing Meetings, so fellow students may learn about the development of various ministries worldwide. The Daily Living Department continues assisting students and facilitating them to have pleasant living experiences on campus. As the chairperson of the SU, I hope that we can assist students in building up relationships and enjoying their seminary lives through these activities. I also hope that the connection between fellow students and the seminary will be strengthened through our services. Although the pandemic has affected our campus life, I wish that the committee members and I would make our best effort to create a better seminary life with our students. Let’s serve together and work for God.



Publication News



The seminary's biannual academic journal, *Hill Road* (issue 49) will be published in June with the theme "**Anthropology.**" There will be five thematic articles: "A Psalm for Nurturing Desires: The Shaping of Desires in the Psalm 63" (Simon Cheung), "Paul's Anthropology in First Corinthians 15" (Bernard Leung),

"An Examination of Pannenberg's Fundamental Theological Anthropology and Its Breakthrough of Barth's Formal Anthropology" (Keith Chan and Li Haoyu), "The Political Implications of the Christian Concept of Person: Rereading Dietrich Bonhoeffer" (Lee Man-yiu), and "In the Beginning Was the Drama: Balthasar's Theatrical Anthropology" (Peng Sheng-yu). In addition, there will be miscellaneous articles and book reviews.

Hill Road is available at the seminary, its town centres and Christian book stores. For inquiries, please call the Publication Office at 2768 5168.

Faculty News

- **Dr. Nathan Ng**, Professor of Christian Thought (Church History), spoke on the topic "A Survey of the History of the Early Christian Church in Hong Kong" at the Lectures on History of Religion in Hong Kong held by Modern History Research Centre, Hong Kong Baptist University on February 28, 2022.

Alumni News

- Alumnus **Lam Chun-yin** (class of 2020) married Ms. Yu Hoi-tung in a wedding ceremony held at the Kwun Tong Baptist Church on November 21, 2021.
- Alumnus **John J. C. Wong** (class of 1968, 1975 & 1983) rested in peace on December 13, 2021. Please pray for his family. May the Lord give them condolences and peace.
- Alumnus **Cheung Wai-man** (class of 2014) rested in peace on January 31, 2022. May the Lord's consolation, grace, and peace be with his family.
- Alumnus **Wong Shut-kwan** (class of 1982) rested in peace on March 10, 2022. Please pray for his family. May the God of all comfort be with them.
- Alumnus **Chiu Sin-yung** (class of 2008) was ordained as a pastor by the Shek Wu Hui Baptist Church on February 20, 2022.
- Alumnus **Chiu Shun-kin** (class of 2013) was ordained as a pastor by the Sydney Chinese Alliance Church on February 27, 2022.



Lay Theological Education Department

Student Recruitment 2022-23

Master of Arts in Christian Studies

- This master-level degree, part-time evening program enables students to lay a solid biblical and theological foundation.
- Students may select courses according to their interests and needs.
- Students may choose “Biblical Studies” or “Communication” as their major or they may choose not to pursue any specific major.
- Some credits acquired in this program can be exempted when being admitted to the Master of Divinity or the Master of Christian Studies degree programs in the seminary’s Main Programs.

Application Date for Admissions: From early May
Class Start Date: Early October

Bachelor/Diploma/Certificate Program in Christian Studies

Certificate Program: Christian Studies, Music Ministry

Diploma Program: Christian Studies, Biblical Studies, Music Ministry, Caring and Counseling Ministry

Bachelor Program: Christian Studies, Biblical Studies, Music Ministry, Caring and Counseling Ministry

These are part-time evening programs.

Application Date for Admissions: From early May

Class Start Date: Early October

Lay Theological Training Diploma/Certificate Program

May-June 2022 (admission is now open; auditing is welcome)

Subject	Lecturer	Date/Time
Church History: Looking Back and Moving Forward	Rev. Au Pak-ping	3/5-21/6 (8 lessons) Tue 7:15-9:30 pm
Life-giving Devotions against Feelings of Depression: Daily Devotions in an Ever-changing Time	Rev. Au Pak-ping	5/5-23/6 (8 lessons) Thur 9:30-11:45 am
Church Administrative Management	Mr. Vincent Cheung	5/5-23/6 (8 lessons) Thur 7:15-9:30 pm
Youth Ministry Seminar: Ministry and Sexuality	Mr. Jason Chan	16/5, 23/5 (2 lessons) Mon 7:15-9:30 pm
Youth Ministry Seminar: Emotional Support	Mr. Solomon Hoh	30/5, 6/6 (2 lessons) Mon 7:15-9:30 pm
Youth Ministry Seminar: Devotional Art	Ms. Ng Chung-yin	13/6, 20/6 (2 lessons) Mon 7:15-9:30 pm

All the program courses above are conducted in Chinese online.

For inquiries or registration, please call 2711 2552, email ltedinfo@hkpbs.edu.hk or log on to our web page at www.hkpbs.edu.hk/lted to download the application form.

Distance Education Program

Exploring Truth · Reflecting upon Faith · Equipping for Ministry

Admissions Open: Certificate Programs (Summer 2022) and Diploma Programs (Fall 2022)

Program	Description	Admission Requirements	Date of Commencement	Registration Deadline
Diploma in Biblical Studies Program	Focusing on the context and interpretation of the Bible.	Secondary school graduates with their pastor's recommendations.	March and September	Spring semester : <i>Hong Kong:</i> February 10 <i>Overseas:</i> January 10 Fall semester : <i>Hong Kong:</i> August 10 <i>Overseas:</i> July 10
Diploma in Christian Studies Program	Focusing on Christian faith and doctrine.			
Higher Diploma in Biblical Studies/Christian Studies Programs	Further studies for diploma graduates.	Diploma graduates with their pastor's recommendations.		
Certificate in N.T./O.T. Studies Programs	Introductory programs in biblical studies, guiding students to study the Bible systematically.	All are welcome	January, May, and September	Spring trimester: January 20 Summer trimester: May 20 Fall trimester: September 20

Elective students: Students can choose their interested courses in the programs.

All the programs can be taken online or by mail. Trial online programs: <http://elearning.hkbts.edu.hk>

For inquiries, please call 2768 5105, email deinfo@hkbts.edu.hk or log on to the Distance Education web page at www.hkbts.edu.hk/dist.

Pastoral Continuing Education Centre

Courses and talks offered from May to June 2022

Course/Talk	Lecturer	Date	Time
Meaningful Communication Before Death	Ms. Marcella Lo	23/5	9:30-12:30 pm
Henri Nouwen Spirituality Series (1): From Mindfulness to Contemplation	Dr. Andy Chiu	23/5	2:00-5:00 pm
How to Promote Devotion in Local Churches?	Rev. Brian Lam Mr. Ng Chi-hoi	30/5	2:00-5:00 pm
Visiting Feelings@Ministry Reconsidered	Ms. Ivy Wan	6/6, 13/6	2:00-5:00 pm
A Theme in Biblical Theology: Divine-Human Relationship	Dr. Craig Ho	20/6, 27/6	9:30 am-12:30 pm
What Is the Future Development of the Teaching Ministry in a Post-pandemic Church?	Dr. Lam Chi-yeung	27/6	2:00-5:00 pm

Fee concessions

- (1) *Early Bird Reduction:* those who pay the full fee for the enrolled course a week before the course begins may enjoy a reduction of HK\$20 (for a 3-hour course) or HK\$30 (for a 6-to-9 hour course).
- (2) A 10% discount for graduates from HKBTS degree programs, pastors of member churches of the Baptist Convention of Hong Kong, and current part-time students of HKBTS.
- (3) A 20% discount for valid cardholders of HKBTS Alumni Association members.
- (4) A 50% discount for full-time seminary students from the 16 member seminaries of the Hong Kong Theological Education Association.

Instruction Mode Face-to-face/video conferences/pre-recorded videos

Venue 8/F., Christian Centre, 56 Bute Street, Mong Kok, Kowloon

Registration Application forms can be downloaded from the seminary website, or you may enroll online at www.hkbts.edu.hk/pce/apply2.html

Inquiries Tel: 2768 5179
Email: pce@hkbts.edu.hk

* One cannot enjoy both the Early Bird Reduction and fee discounts.

† There may be special arrangements for or rescheduling of the face-to-face classes due to the pandemic. Please check our latest announcements.

Financial Report
General Fund, 1 January - 28 February, 2022

	HK\$
Income	3,963,257.41
Expenditure	<u>(5,685,315.79)</u>
Deficit	<u><u>(1,722,058.38)</u></u>



Reply Slip

I/We would like to support the Hong Kong Baptist Theological Seminary by

- praying for the Seminary's theological education ministry
- contributing \$ _____ to the
- Educational Fund Campus Extension Project Other: _____
- Name: _____ (Mr. / Ms. / Rev. / Dr. / Mr. & Mrs. / Alumnus / Alumna)
- Church Affiliation: _____
- Address: _____
- Contact Phone No.: _____ E-mail: _____
- I/We do not wish to receive a hard copy of the Seminary's Newsletter
- I/We do not wish to receive any information from the Seminary by email

Donation Methods

- Crossed Cheque** payable to "Hong Kong Baptist Theological Seminary"
- Direct Transfer:** our Hang Seng Bank Ltd. (024) account no.: 787-471721-883
- Fast Payment System Identifier** (FPS ID): 166215137
- Monthly Autopay:** an autopay authorization form will be sent to you (You may terminate this monthly donation at any time)
- Credit Card:** VISA Master Card
- One-off Donation Monthly Donation (You may terminate this monthly donation at any time)
- Cardholder's Name: _____
- Cardholder's Signature: _____
- Card No.: [] [] [] [] - [] [] [] [] - [] [] [] [] - [] [] [] [] Expiry Date: _____ / _____ (MM/YY)
- Amount: HK\$ _____

- I/We do not wish my name to be shown in the Seminary's Newsletter.

- Please send the crossed cheque or bank receipt along with this completed reply slip to the Seminary by post, email or fax.
- Official receipt will be issued and donation is tax-deductible in Hong Kong.
- Your personal data will only be used for issuing a receipt and the Seminary's administrative purposes.
- Please tick the appropriate box
- Inquiry: Tel: (852) 2715 9511 Fax: (852) 2761 0868 Email: inquiry@hkbtn.edu.hk
- Address: 1 Nin Ming Road, Sai O, Sai Kung North, N.T., Hong Kong Website: <http://www.hkbtn.edu.hk>

Thank you for your support!

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香 浸信會神學院 Hong Kong Baptist Theological Seminary hkbtn_1951

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DONORS REPORT FOR JANUARY 2022

Education Fund (Church / Organization)				Distance Education Program	
九龍國際浸信會	13,779.00	曾慶忠	500.00	馬德明	1,000.00
上環浸信會	6,500.00	馮德華、鄧如玉	200.00	溫祥、黎琮珍	400.00
大角嘴浸信會	8,786.00	黃永康	5,000.00	鄭鵬程	300.00
大埔浸信會	13,166.00	黃念施	200.00	無名氏	444.00
大埔國際浸信會	20,000.00	黃華娟	100.00	無名氏	100.00
屯門浸信教會	700.00	黃雅忠	20,000.00	無名氏	100.00
尖沙嘴浸信會	80,000.00	楊謝金玉	7,000.00	無名氏	100.00
尖沙嘴國語浸信會	10,000.00	溫恩智伉儷	20,000.00		HK\$ <u>2,344.00</u>
竹園浸信會	8,000.00	溫祥、黎琮珍	500.00		
阡陌社區浸信會	5,000.00	葉煥章	300.00	Lay Theological Education Program	
香港(西區)潮語浸信會	5,000.00	葉麗芳	1,500.00	陳國權	1,000.00
香港仔浸信會	17,530.89	劉永生、鍾梓萍	300.00	蔡艷桃	500.00
香港西區浸信會	1,507.00	劉玉珍	1,000.00		HK\$ <u>1,500.00</u>
香港浸信教會	125,000.00	劉建紅	100.00		
香港堅尼地城浸信教會	1,000.00	蔡慧英	200.00	Campus Maintenance and Repairs	
朗福浸信會	600.00	盧德忠	200.00	申融融	300.00
粉嶺浸信會	50,000.00	薛聲明	1,000.00	楊美玲	300.00
彩坪浸信會	50,000.00	羅佩珊	100.00	無名氏	1,000.00
深荃浸信會	500.00	羅凱慈	1,000.00	無名氏	500.00
置富浸信教會	3,000.00	關廣智、鄧慧然	500.00		HK\$ <u>2,100.00</u>
錫安浸信會	13,869.00	無名氏	30,000.00		
觀塘浸信會	3,507.00	無名氏	10,000.00	Campus Extension Project	
香港華人基督教聯會	80,000.00	無名氏	8,400.00	香港西區浸信會	1,507.00
基督教宣道會大埔堂	500.00	無名氏	4,000.00	王永珍	2,000.00
基督教宣道會華基堂	2,000.00	無名氏	3,000.00	申融融	300.00
啟關基金	500.00	無名氏	3,000.00	陳慧冰	5,000.00
	HK\$ <u>520,444.89</u>	無名氏	3,000.00	黃永康	10,000.00
		無名氏	2,500.00	鄒小寶	1,500.00
Education Fund (Individual Donor)		無名氏	2,000.00	趙振興伉儷	6,000.00
方志強	200.00	無名氏	2,000.00	蔡慧英	2,000.00
王紹良	700.00	無名氏	2,000.00	鄧輝祥	500.00
王群	800.00	無名氏	1,000.00	黎穎儀	10,000.00
申融融	400.00	無名氏	1,000.00	鄭振華伉儷	1,200.00
朱活平伉儷	300.00	無名氏	1,000.00	羅凱慈	2,000.00
何仲儀	1,000.00	無名氏	510.00	關履端	500.00
何家強	3,000.00	無名氏	500.00	無名氏	300,000.00
何錦燕	1,000.00	無名氏	500.00	無名氏	282,225.00
吳炳榮伉儷	8,000.00	無名氏	500.00	無名氏	30,000.00
吳國傑伉儷	1,000.00	無名氏	500.00	無名氏	20,000.00
李國雄伉儷	1,000.00	無名氏	500.00	無名氏	10,000.00
李新蘭	200.00	無名氏	400.00	無名氏	10,000.00
林嘉鴻	500.00	無名氏	300.00	無名氏	7,000.00
洪鷹輪	100.00	無名氏	250.00	無名氏	5,000.00
殷振強伉儷	1,000.00	無名氏	200.00	無名氏	2,500.00
馬德明	2,000.00	無名氏	200.00	無名氏	2,000.00
曹啟明伉儷	400.00		100.00	無名氏	2,000.00
梁兆津伉儷	50,000.00		HK\$ <u>214,960.00</u>	無名氏	1,000.00
梁明財伉儷	500.00	Connie Pong K. L. US\$	<u>500.00</u>	無名氏	1,000.00
梁錦松、郭詠文	1,500.00	Faculty Support		無名氏	1,000.00
許鋒威	1,000.00	茶果嶺浸信會	10,000.00	無名氏	500.00
陳少君	300.00	Lau Sau Hing	2,000.00		HK\$ <u>716,732.00</u>
陳美德伉儷	1,000.00	歐陽穎鋒伉儷	12,000.00	In Memory of the late	
陳偉倫	200.00	無名氏	13,000.00	Mr. Zachary C. S. Hsu	HK\$ <u>10,000.00</u>
陳毓倫	800.00	無名氏	2,000.00		
陳麗英	700.00		HK\$ <u>39,000.00</u>		

DONORS REPORT FOR FEBRUARY 2022

Education Fund (Church / Organization)		陳守強	1,000.00	Distance Education Program	
大埔浸信會	13,166.00	陳明輝、梁美鳳	5,000.00	馬德明	1,000.00
屯門浸信教會	700.00	陳偉倫	200.00	溫祥、黎琮珍	400.00
牛池灣竹園潮語浸信會	8,000.00	陳喜萍	100.00	鄭鵬程	300.00
牛頭角潮語浸信會	1,000.00	陳麗英	1,000.00	無名氏	500.00
以馬內利浸信會	10,800.00	陸澤浩伉儷	1,000.00	無名氏	444.00
佐敦浸信會	10,000.00	曾慶忠	500.00	無名氏	100.00
沙田浸信會	8,000.00	馮德華、鄧如玉	200.00	無名氏	100.00
香港(西區)潮語浸信會	5,000.00	黃念施	200.00	HK\$	<u>2,844.00</u>
香港西區浸信會	1,412.50	黃華娟	100.00		
香港浸信教會	125,000.00	溫祥、黎琮珍	500.00	DE: Special Need Training Program	
香港堅尼地城浸信教會	1,000.00	葉煥章	300.00	無名氏	HK\$ <u>20,000.00</u>
荃灣浸信會	75,000.00	葉榮根	500.00	Lay Theological Education Program	
將軍澳浸信會	500.00	劉永生、鍾梓萍	300.00	葉吳秀華	632.50
深荃浸信會	500.00	劉玉珍	1,000.00	劉惠容	632.50
愛群道浸信會	17,500.00	劉建紅	100.00	蔡艷桃	500.00
置富浸信教會	3,000.00	蔡慧英	200.00	HK\$	<u>1,765.00</u>
銅鑼灣浸信會	3,500.00	鄧幸榴	500.00		
廣源邨禧年浸信會	15,000.00	薛聲明	1,000.00	Campus Maintenance and Repairs	
基督教宣道會大埔堂	500.00	羅佩珊	100.00	申融融	300.00
基督教宣道會華基堂	2,000.00	羅凱慈	1,000.00	楊美玲	300.00
啟關基金	500.00	關綺文	500.00	HK\$	<u>600.00</u>
HK\$	<u>302,078.50</u>	關廣智、鄧慧然	500.00		
		蒙恩家庭	2,000.00	Campus Extension Project	
Education Fund (Individual Donor)		不記名	100,000.00	荃灣浸信會	600.00
Cheung Chau Ming	400.00	無名氏	5,000.00	田智聰	6,600.00
方志強	200.00	無名氏	4,000.00	申融融	300.00
王紹良	700.00	無名氏	2,500.00	朱浩一	1,000.00
王群	800.00	無名氏	2,000.00	鄒小寶	1,500.00
申融融	400.00	無名氏	1,000.00	周慧蓮	500.00
朱活平伉儷	300.00	無名氏	1,000.00	周錦華	100,000.00
何仲儀	1,000.00	無名氏	500.00	蔡淑儀	1,500.00
何錦燕	1,000.00	無名氏	500.00	鄧輝祥	500.00
吳炳榮伉儷	8,000.00	無名氏	500.00	羅凱慈	2,000.00
吳國傑伉儷	1,000.00	無名氏	500.00	不記名	100,000.00
李國雄伉儷	1,000.00	無名氏	400.00	無名氏	202,000.00
李新蘭	200.00	無名氏	300.00	無名氏	7,000.00
周偉信伉儷	1,000.00	無名氏	200.00	無名氏	1,500.00
周國高	800.00	無名氏	100.00	無名氏	1,000.00
洪鷹輪	100.00	無名氏	100.00	無名氏	900.00
殷振強伉儷	1,000.00	無名氏	90.00	HK\$	<u>426,900.00</u>
馬德明	2,000.00	無名氏	20.10		
區振光	1,500.00	HK\$	<u>163,310.10</u>	Faculty Support	
曹啟明伉儷	400.00			茶果嶺浸信會	10,000.00
梁明財伉儷	500.00	Pandemic Prevention Supplies		Chong Sau Fa Emily	1,000.00
梁淑德	2,000.00	梁羅黎光	HK\$ <u>2,000.00</u>	HK\$	<u>11,000.00</u>
梁錦松、郭詠文	1,500.00				
許鋒威	1,000.00				

Campus Extension News

The Occupation Permit of the new academic building under the “Faith, Hope, and Love Project” was issued on April 22, 2022. At this stage, our limited budget permits us to acquire only basic teaching equipment for the new premises.

By God's grace, we have received not only naming donations from churches and individuals but also gift donations of furniture as well as curtains for the whole building.

The whole project is budgeted at HK\$70 million, of which HK\$10 million is for the expansion of the library and provision of additional faculty offices, and HK\$60 million is for the construction costs, interior renovation, facilities, furniture, etc. HKBTS has been blessed by our Lord through churches and individuals with HK\$52 million to pay for the latter.

Your continuous support is essential to the educational and academic development of HKBTS. Please pray for us and make monetary donations as an addition of HK\$18 million is required before we meet the fundraising target.



January 18, 2022 Spiritual Formation Day

The second day of the spring semester in the 2021-22 school year was the Spiritual Formation Day on the theme of “How to Promote Devotion in Local Churches?—A Baptist Pastoral Perspective.” A talk was delivered by Mr. Ng Chi-hoi, the pastor-in-charge of the Abounding Grace Baptist Church.

January 20, 2022 All Seminary Prayer Meeting

With videos, hymns, and Scriptures, Rev. Brian Lam led us to review 2021 from the perspectives of HKBTS's story and God's story and look forward to the new year. Echoing President Cho's message at the spring opening convocation, Rev. Lam pointed out the importance of Christian friendship for our spiritual development. Finally, we prayed for each other in groups.



Precious Moments



Hong Kong Baptist Theological Seminary

Student Recruitment for 2022-23

Wherever He Leads

Application Date for Admissions

Hong Kong : January 3-June 2

Overseas : January 3-April 29

Admission Test Date

By individual arrangement during
the seminary's office hours.

Bachelor of Theology Master of Divinity

Master of Divinity (Further Studies) Master of Religious Education

Master of Christian Studies Master of Theology Doctor of Theology

For Inquiries Telephone: 2768 5130 | Email: admissions@hkbts.edu.hk | Website: www.hkbts.edu.hk