Refugee Pastoral Care Handbook
Hong Kong
About the Refugee Ministry Group

Beginning from 2001, Christian congregations in Hong Kong were approached by destitute asylum seekers for assistance. The congregations responded to the best of their ability, but they were not in a position to sustain their assistance indefinitely. Christian Action was moved by this emerging need and established the Centre for Refugees located in Chungking Mansions. The congregations who have refugees among their members continue to meet every two or three months for joint action, exchange of information and sharing. The Refugee Ministry Group is an informal gathering of those who care about these most vulnerable brothers and sisters in our midst. You can contact us through the chairman, Rev. Hans Lutz at lutzshen@netvigator.com.

I. Vulnerable Social Group in Hong Kong - Refugees and Asylum Seekers

According to the Refugee Convention adopted by the United Nations in 1951, a refugee is “someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.” Hong Kong is one of the
few developed countries or regions that has yet to sign the Convention. Before the refugee status is recognized, those seeking protection are known as asylum seekers. Nonetheless, the review process for refugee status is not an easy one. It can take a few years or even up to a decade. This means that asylum seekers face more challenges such as daily survival, mental stress, cultural differences and powerlessness in regards to their future.

Hong Kong is a signatory to the Convention against Torture since 1992. To date (early 2016) there are about 10,000 asylum-seekers in Hong Kong, but less than 1% have been successful torture claimants. In the past when the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees screened asylum seekers independently, 10% of applicants have been given refugee status. Even after gaining refugee or torture claimant status, they will still need to wait in Hong Kong until another country is willing to resettle them. In other words, asylum-seekers are unable to see the road ahead as they have not been able to move to countries hosting refugees, nor can they work or go to school in Hong Kong. They can only squander time in the lengthy review process.

**Life Pressure**

Refugees and asylum-seekers do not have the right to work in Hong Kong. Even if they have professional expertise in their own country, here they are unable to contribute to the society. The Hong Kong government gives a monthly allowance through the International Social Service, but it is insufficient. With the high living cost in Hong Kong, $1500 for housing and $1000 for food is not nearly enough. Some refugees and asylum seekers have to live in squatter huts or tin-roof shacks in remote areas in the New Territories under poor living conditions. In addition, monthly transportation expenses become another burden as they commute for refugee approval and procedures with government agencies. Some asylum seekers fled their country with their children. Some asylum seekers are middle-aged. They are vulnerable to malnutrition and health problems in Hong Kong. Long term mental pressure builds up from being uprooted to a foreign land,
being subject to prejudice, coping with the lengthy review procedures, and dealing with cultural differences encountered in Hong Kong.

**Prejudice against Refugees**

It is already difficult to leave one’s homeland. If you add living in Hong Kong with minimal allowance and facing social discrimination and misunderstanding, the situation is even harsher. Hong Kong people are not familiar with refugees. Most residents gain their knowledge about them only through newspapers and magazines. However, mainstream media often use terms such as "fake refugees" and "illegal immigrants" to refer to refugees, furthering the impression that these people are associated with “crime", "unauthorized employment" and "welfare cheat". Rarely is there mention of the difficulties they face, which is not really fair. They suffer various degrees of discrimination due to their skin color and ethnic identity, and lack of trust from their neighborhood and the community. Thus, they are pushed to the brink of despair. Being of a different race and unknown status in the society, along with the difference in language and culture, it is hard for them to communicate with local people and often they receive a lower standard of service.

**Caring and Sharing**

Refugees and asylum-seekers have great needs in terms of body, mind and spirit. But sadly there are very few local support groups for them. At present, there are only a small number of churches and non-governmental organizations that provide them with basic clothing, food, and financial assistance, as well as spiritual and pastoral care.
Countries of Origin of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Hong Kong

Total number of refugees and asylum seekers in Hong Kong in 2015: 10,092

South-central Asia 55%
Southeast Asia 28%

- Pakistan
- India
- Bangladesh
- Sri Lanka
- Indonesia
- Vietnam
- The Philippines
- Other Places

Ratio of Refugees to Asylum Seekers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hong Kong</th>
<th>9,900</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Worldwide</td>
<td>144,000,000</td>
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II. Refugee Ministry – Biblical, Theological and Historical Reflections

A. Biblical Background for Welcoming Strangers

One consistent theme in the Bible is the need for God’s people to welcome strangers. This emphasis naturally arose from the nomadic life of the ancient Near East, which was the setting of the Old Testament, and it continued as the Church spread throughout the Roman Empire, which was the setting of the New Testament. Travelers far away from home needed protection and provision in order to survive in often hostile environments. In both the Old and New Testament periods, hospitality to strangers was expected not only as a moral obligation but also as a sacred duty.

The two most important Scripture passages for understanding this biblical mandate are Genesis 18:1-16 and Matthew 25:31-46. In Genesis 18, we read the story of Abraham and Sarah welcoming three mysterious visitors into their home. After receiving lavish hospitality from the patriarch and his family, the visitors returned the favor with the good news that Sarah would bear a son in the coming year. This unexpected blessing was the result of divine presence in their midst through strangers who turn out to be heavenly visitors. The story draws on the ancient belief of theoxeny – that the gods visited the earth in disguise in order to test the generosity of human hearts. Thus, Abraham
and Sarah received divine blessings and the fulfillment of God’s promises through an act of hospitality. This occasion is recalled in Hebrews 13:2: “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.”

In the Parable of the Last Judgment in Matthew 25, hospitality to strangers is highlighted again. Here the Son of Man as king is shown at the end times separating people into two groups like a shepherd dividing sheep and goats. The righteous are those that he praises for taking care of him in his time of greatest need – “I was a stranger and you welcomed me” (v.35). They are welcomed into the kingdom. When those on his right hand express surprise, asking when these reported acts of mercy were performed, the king responds, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me” (v. 40). Those on the left side are sent to eternal punishment for refusing to help the king in his time of greatest need. They too express surprise and claim never to have encountered him in such circumstances. The king answers, “Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me” (v. 45).

This passage is remarkable in its depiction of a *theoxeny* or divine visitation that is simultaneously positive and negative. Christ comes as a needy visitor to test the character of mortals, who are later judged according to their earlier treatment of him when he was in disguise. Those who pass the test will not only receive a reward, but eternal life. Those who fail the test will be punished accordingly. On the Judgment Day, actions taken will speak louder than words. American scholar Christine Pohl calls Matthew 25:34-40 the most important passage for the entire tradition of Christian hospitality as it “personally and powerfully connects hospitality toward human beings with care for Jesus.”

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B. Theological Reflection on the Care for Refugees

Among the strangers in urgent need of hospitality are those fleeing their homeland because of imminent danger to their lives. The issue of refugees and asylum seekers poses a great challenge to the society and the Church. How should Christians respond?

Luke Bretherton, a British ethicist, argues that the Church must carry out its ministry to refugees based on solid biblical and theological reflection. He introduces the concept of ‘hallowing bare life’ to understand the refugee’s plight and to shape a faithful response. Bretherton characterizes the refugee’s stark existence as ‘bare life’ – i.e., life exposed to death at every turn, especially due to state violence. To counteract this inhumane situation, the Church must ‘hallow’ or sanctify bare life in keeping with the second petition of the Lord’s Prayer – “Hallowed be your name” (Matt. 6:9, Luke 11:2). He says, “To hallow the name of God involves us standing against that which desecrates God’s holy name. The rendering of creatures as bare life constitutes such a desecration.”

According to Bretherton, the Church hallows bare life through acknowledging refugees near and far as God’s gift, God’s judgment and God’s promise.

- Hallowing bare life as gift recognizes that every human being is a unique individual created in the image of God. Each possesses distinct identity, dignity and the right to communicate and relate with others. The Church’s duty of care involves creating places where persons seeking asylum are treated with respect and given opportunities to act on their own behalf.
- Hallowing bare life as judgment calls into question the human

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2 Bretherton takes this phrase from the writings of Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben.
tendency toward exclusion as a response to those who are different. The Church makes a counter response of welcome and inclusion to those who have been rendered bare life due to our sins of greed and idolatrous security.

- Hallowing bare life as *promise* includes the lives of refugees and asylum seekers in the hope of the kingdom of God. In living out the prayer to hallow God’s name, the Church reconfigures former social relationships and develops new public friendships to witness to the in-breaking of God’s reign here and now. This promise requires mutual sacrifice and change on the part of both the Church and the refugees and asylum seekers.⁴

Hallowing bare life can be a difficult endeavor. Yet, the task becomes clearer when we realize that refugees and asylum seekers as children of God are also subjects of divine justice and forgiveness, regardless of their immigration status. Welcoming the stranger then is not so daunting when we remember that the hospitality and home we offer are not our own. They belong to God. Therefore, refugee ministry is simply the extending of God’s hospitality in Jesus Christ to the ‘least of these’ as an act of faith, a sign of hope, and a time to love.

### C. Christian Roots in the Institution of Asylum

Finally, it should be noted that there is a historic relationship between Christian ministry to refugees and the secular institution of asylum. While modern states hold the legal right to grant asylum to persons seeking protection, the tradition of asylum and its religious counterpart – sanctuary – can be traced back to biblical times. In the Hebrew scripture, there were six cities of refuge where those guilty of certain acts like manslaughter (crimes without intention) could safely flee to in the region.⁵ These cities had links to former religious sanctuaries and were designated as places of refuge. The sacred nature

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⁴ Bretherton, 145-152.
⁵ See Numbers 35:6-34, Joshua 20:1-9, and Deut. 4:41-43.
of refuge was also present in the ancient sanctuaries of Greek and Roman religions.

With Emperor Constantine’s conversion to Christianity in the 4th century, churches in the West were given authority to grant sanctuary in their premises as well as to serve as advocates for those under their protection. These roles were important as the Church undertook to “exercise mercy and dispense justice in a world that had little time for either.”6 In the Church’s eyes, the authority of secular rulers was given by the grace of God. Thus, the right of Christian sanctuary was a divine prerogative. However, increasing conflicts between the Church and the state over institutional power saw the Church losing influence over time.

After church sanctuary was repealed in England in the 17th century, the civil authorities sought to exercise exclusive power to grant asylum and protection. The opportunity arose when the persecuted Calvinist minority in France called Huguenots were offered permanent asylum in England by the Crown. This may have been the first use of the English term ‘refugee’ as understood in modern international law.

Even as the legal right of church sanctuary ended, the practice as a moral right did not. Christians and churches continued to follow their conscience by protecting and sheltering those fleeing persecution, slavery and death. This tradition continues into the present as churches work to create places of safety, welcome and inclusion for those in search of refuge in their city or country. By offering welcome to the most needy of strangers, Christians seek to bless the encounters between nation-states, communities, citizens and unprotected persons in the name of the Lord. And in so doing, the two questions that churches must always ask are: “Did we see Christ in them? Did they see Christ in us?”7

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6 Linda Rabben, Give Refuge to the Stranger: The Past, Present, and Future of Sanctuary (Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 2011), 57.
7 Esther de Waal, Seeking God: The Way of St. Benedict (Collegeville:
III. Testimony of Refugees Formerly in Hong Kong

Testimony 1 – The Faithfulness of God

Ada came from Ethiopia and was processed more quickly than most asylum seekers... in about 3 years. While her struggles here in Hong Kong were like most asylum seekers and refugees, one of the things she was fearful about was where she would end up. She would be sent somewhere (Canada in her case) to a place that was completely unfamiliar, not knowing anyone, and not knowing what life would hold for her there. While some of the asylum seekers may relish that prospect, it can also be worrisome not knowing these things. This is Ada’s story regarding her resettlement in Canada.

In October 2014, the United Nations informed me that I would be sent to Calgary in December. I did not know anyone there, but when I told my pastor at RiverGrace International Christian Fellowship, he mentioned that one of his former students lived there. He was sure he would be willing to help me out when I arrived. Sure enough, he was and I started communicating with him via Facebook. He was willing to help me out and his family even wanted to host me at Christmas time.
so I would not be alone.

Two months before I was to leave, the UN said that I was not going to Calgary but to Halifax. I was devastated since I did not know anyone there nor did anyone that I knew. I prayed with the pastor’s wife and she reminded me that God had allowed me to get out of my country and that God did have a plan for me even if I did not know what it was. Though I was still fearful of what I would do when I arrived, I tried to have faith that God would provide someone… a friend… who would be willing to help me get adjusted.

About a week after I arrived in Halifax, as I did not drive or have a car, I had to take a taxi to an appointment. As I was riding in the cab I started talking to the cab driver. He was also from Ethiopia.

The more I talked to him the more he looked a little bit like my dad. As we talked more, the cab driver turned out to be my uncle whom I had not seen for some years. Our family did not even know that he was alive. The last we heard from him was from a refugee camp in Kenya! Who, but God could put us together thousands of kilometers from home just a week after I arrived?

Life in Canada has had its ups and downs with working a bit, then applying to university to finish my education, and just getting used to winters in Canada. God also provided me with an Ethiopian fellowship, and I’m beginning to feel that this is my home.
Testimony 2 - The Painful, Joyful Face of a Refugee

I have always believed that to be in a proper position to write a story about a cow one needs to be a cow, so what shall I say about a refugee! As a former refugee, I feel I am in a proper position to write about a refugee. As per now the total number of world refugees stands at about sixty million of which the majority are from Syria.

It’s commonly not easy to comprehend what happens in the world of refugees as they take their own space amongst the many. But after going full circle of a refugee life, I can humbly state that the life of refugees are sandwiched with both PAIN and JOY. A refugee is more often than not faced with a lot of pain of uncertainty, pain of losing loved ones, hope, belongings, shelters, food, relationships, dreams,
opportunities, respect, identity, separations to mention but just a few.

The reason for becoming a refugee is NOT only the striving to escape and survive to see another sunrise, but it’s much more than that. It involves a lot of emotional war games and puzzles to solve. Escaping and surviving a prevailing or looming threatening situation is always the first step towards becoming a refugee, and every one of us is a potential refugee. Even Jesus Christ was a refugee, for his parents Mary and Joseph had to flee the threatening situations (King Herod).

In most cases, when people come face to face with grief, they are faced with the pain of uncertainly of the unknown place they ought to escape to. This kind of anticipation leaves people in suspense and always leave them with the sense of loss – loss of self-esteem, loss of capability, loss of love, loss of the place originally called home or root, loss of everything, hence, incapacitated.

However, not all refugees go through the same circle, there are others who are instantly acknowledged or accepted as refugees because of the nature of the threats they are faced with, for instance, victims of natural calamities like floods, earthquake, tornadoes etc. This group of people are faced with serious emergencies that the kind of anxieties that they exhibit supersedes those of other groups like political refugees as I was but, nevertheless, they all go through the same kind of pain I mentioned above.

It’s ironic to say that although refugees go through untold sufferings like rejection, non-acceptance by some section of the community that they are forced to interact with, they still find some JOY and meaning of life as the result of finding new homes, meeting new friends, finding and building new hopes, new cultures and readjustment to new life altogether and above all feeling of SECURITY & SAFETY.

As for me, I have always caught myself meditating on how great our God is and how he has been doing his work in me. I can testify that for
those who wait for the LORD, they shall always find rest and fulfillment of their dreams. It might not look easy but he will put it together for you, and his timing is the best! In life before we are faced with troubles, and we have wonderful dreams which tend to fade away as soon as we face troubles. St. Andrew’s Church walked with me through the valley of darkness and made me fear no evil. I faced my problem of asylum seeking and refugee with courage because of the abundant love and support I got from the members of the congregation. My Christian faith has also become much more stronger and as I write now, I’m so joyful to be with my little kids, that I hadn’t seen in a decade. Finally, God said, let them be reunited, and here we give him all the glory. You can’t imagine that the tears of pain have been replaced by the tears of joy. And my childhood dream of flying a plane has become real plus many other golden opportunities that I’m exposed to right now!

It’s so amazing that God’s plan is indeed to prosper us. He will definitely accomplish the great work he has started in you; therefore don’t waver—he will be there for you; just believe!

By Lakony Wilson
23\textsuperscript{rd} March 2016
IV. **Hong Kong Churches and Organizations Serving Refugees**

**Christian Action**
Christian Action’s Centre for Refugees was established in 2004 and is the only community centre for this vulnerable group in Hong Kong. Each month we serve 600 families and individuals by providing them with comprehensive support where they can access shelter, food, education, counseling and tools in a place where their voices are heard with dignity and compassion. [www.christian-action.org.hk/refugees](http://www.christian-action.org.hk/refugees)

**Island Evangelical Community Church**
Island ECC welcomes refugees to become a part of life in the church. We assist refugees with practical needs if possible but believe that encouragement, fellowship and spiritual guidance can make all the
difference in their lives. https://www.islandecc.hk/

**Kowloon Union Church**
Kowloon Union Church supports refugees through the Peace Making Programme which includes fellowship, outreach and empowerment activities. The fellowship is a community of faith where refugees support each other through prayer and sharing God’s word. The outreach programmes connect refugees with the local community. Workshops are held to empower them and enrich their lives in Hong Kong. http://www.kuc.hk/

**Union Church Hong Kong**
Union Church Hong Kong currently is helping a number of asylum seekers financially and in other ways. It is a very difficult adjustment for them as individuals and for asylum seekers as a group, especially since they are not allowed to work in Hong Kong. So we feel called to do what we can to help make their daily lives a little less painful and stressful. http://www.unionchurchhk.org/

**St. Andrew’s Church**
St. Andrew’s welcomes refugees and asylum seekers to be part of our church family, joining our Sunday services and regular ministries. We provide free English classes twice a week, and host many other events that seek to serve the asylum seeker community. These include 'World Refugee Day' events, winter clothes distributions, and eye-sight screening. http://www.standrews.org.hk/

**St. John’s Cathedral**
Our work with refugees is in a drop-by basis and assistance with food coupons, occasional money gifts, referrals to other organizations such as Christian Action and sending volunteers to Christian Action to prepare meals for refugees. We do not have a dedicated ministry programme to refugees. http://www.stjohnscathedral.org.hk/
The Hong Kong Christian Kun Sun Association
The Association partners with international and local churches and Christian organizations to visit asylum seekers and refugees in prison and detentions centres, providing the gospel message in Christian outreaches, services, classes and counseling. http://www.ksa.org.hk/

The Vine
The Vine Refugee and Asylum Seeker Ministry includes weekly Christian fellowships, discipleship training, leadership development, financial assistance, counseling, and other social activities. At present The Vine Refugee and Asylum Seeker Ministry serves about 250 refugees and asylum seekers in Hong Kong, mainly from Africa, Southeast Asia and the Middle East.

RiverGrace International Christian Fellowship
RiverGrace International Christian Fellowship has been serving a few asylum seekers for around 5 years. There are about a dozen who attend our service on Sunday or Fellowship on Wednesday morning. We do some donations of clothes or other items and pay transportation costs to any of our events. We have sponsored hikes, cooking /baking classes, beauty skin care classes and Cantonese language classes. We partner with Christian Action for use of our church for their activities. In the fellowship times we run Bible courses or studies that are practical and transferable. http://www.rivergraceicf.com/
V. **Refugee Ministry Programmes**

**The Vine Refugee and Asylum Seeker Ministry**

The Vine Refugee and Asylum Seeker Ministry (RAS) responds to the growing needs of refugees, torture claimants and asylum seekers in Hong Kong. Seeing the traumatic situation and difficulties faced by asylum seekers during their stay in Hong Kong, the ministry aims at transforming lives of refugees and asylum seekers by meeting their spiritual, psychological and social needs. It aims to equip and empower individuals and families both spiritually and physically to become positive, contributing members in our community.

Our RAS ministry serves about 250 refugees and asylum seekers mainly from Africa, Southeast Asia and other parts of the world. We run a weekly gospel fellowship on Wednesdays and Thursdays. Beside our fellowships, our RAS members have showcased their creative and artistic talent in a variety of charity theatre productions. Our ministry also provides opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers to engage
with the community through outreach programs such as African drumming activities, presentations at school assemblies; through singing, dancing and sharing, classroom interaction with students, cultural exchange programs with schools and organizations, fellowship, bible studies and prayer gatherings. Our African dance group is here to light up your events with vibrant African gospel music and dance. Above all, we share the love of Christ in a culturally diverse society.

Vine Community Services Ltd, which provides humanitarian help to our refugees, organized Home and Away Football games, which provide opportunity for refugees to practice football with players from different organizations, build friendship and engage with the community. By hosting friendly games regularly, the refugees find their self-worth enhanced as more people in the corporate world gain insight and understanding of the refugee situation. If you are interested to register and participate in our Home and Away charity football games, feel free to contact us. http://vcsl.org/

**Christian Action Centre for Refugees**

Drawing from over 50 years of experience serving refugees and a trusted, collaborative relationship with well-recognized partner agencies such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Justice Centre Hong Kong, we are in a unique position to provide Hong Kong’s refugees with a holistic program of care and development. The programme is made possible with the help of hundreds of donors and volunteers who generously give of their time, expertise, and financial support.

Christian Action Centre for Refugees assists refugees with basic essentials such as shelter, food, clothing, toiletries, and emergency cash grants. We are also one of the few sources for education and training support, as well as psychosocial and mental health services. By providing the most vulnerable with a ‘home away from home’, our support system enhances their social, financial, cultural, mental and spiritual well-being.
Spreading awareness and providing platforms for the local community to engage with refugees is also one of our core priorities. Only with awareness can tendencies to react, to push away, to retaliate be replaced with allowance, acceptance, tolerance, and empathy.

With over 12 years behind us, our workshops are tailor made to suit the needs of different age groups and settings, including church congregations, schools, corporate organizations, and social groups. Through these highly interactive sessions, we educate our participants on the plight and cultures of refugees in Hong Kong and around the globe. We discuss what it means, on a spiritual level, to go through the refugee experience first-hand, and what responsibility we have, as followers of Christ, to care for this highly disadvantaged population. Our workshops are available in English or Cantonese, and most are facilitated by a refugee who has been in Hong Kong since 2004 and has been granted permission to work here.

Please contact us for more information:
2723 6626
ckmsc@christianaction.org.hk | www.facebook.com/ckmsc | www.christian-action.org.hk/refugees

Kowloon Union Church Peace Making Programme
Kowloon Union Church is an inter-denominational and ecumenical church that cares for different socially vulnerable groups in Hong Kong. The Peace Making Programme aims to serve as a bridge to local churches and the community for socially marginalized groups. In this way, more people will come to understand and care for those in need around us, and to bring peace and eliminate discrimination. The refugees are one of the main focuses of our ministry.

Every week we hold a fellowship meeting for refugees. We welcome various groups such as student organizations and church fellowships to participate and organize activities. We regularly visit different churches, schools and community organizations to share the challenges and difficulties of refugee life in Hong Kong. In sharing sessions, our
The church pastoral team introduces refugee ministry workers, and refugee brothers and sisters are invited to share their testimony. Our church workers can also provide simultaneous translation and sharing in Chinese. It is our hope that local communities become more informed about the situation of refugees. We welcome any invitation for our peacemakers to come and share among you.

The Peace Making Programme is a mission full of possibilities. We welcome cooperation with different organizations to provide refugees with the services they need. Please contact us for more information: peace@kuc.hk | 23672585 |

VI. Local Church Feedback

All things work together

Hong Kong is a well-known cosmopolitan city where the East and the West co-exist. Many foreigners have arrived for business, travel, or settlement since Hong Kong opened up its borders. Even so, many Hong Kong people seldom come in contact with foreigners due to their living or work environment. When faced with those of different nationality, language or culture, there is some unfamiliarity for Hong Kong people. Africans are by far the most mysterious since they are a minority among the foreigners in Hong Kong. The past few years, I had the opportunity to take part in international missionary conferences and workshops with participants from all corners of the globe. A number of representatives from African countries (such as South Africa, Kenya and Zimbabwe) were among them. Upon my first meeting with these African brothers and sisters, truthfully I had some uneasy feelings. But after I got to know them over sharing, exchange and game sessions, those feelings gradually faded. In fact, Africa is so vast and bountiful (she is the second largest continent in the world, including more than forty countries), with each country having its own unique culture. Thus its people cannot be comprehended with a simple description. However, from the experience previously mentioned, I can say that African people are warm and welcoming, magnificent in song
and dance, and have music and rhythm flow from their souls.

Then later, through Rev. Phyllis Wong of Kowloon Union Church, we organized a gathering of a group of African brothers who were asylum seekers from Cameroon, Congo and other places at our Saturday teen fellowship in the Tsing Yi Chuen Yuen Church. They shared the African culture and life, and the situation and struggles of living in Hong Kong to the group of early secondary school students. As described before, these brothers were also skilled in song and dance, and although they were not able to formally work in Hong Kong, you could feel their strong passion for life through their music and testimony. At the beginning, the youngsters at church seldom had a chance to meet foreigners and were hesitant about speaking English. Thus at the first meeting they did not show much eagerness to learn about African culture. The following summer we invited the African brothers again to teach the art of African drums. After a few bonding sessions with the enthusiastic African teachers, the young ones not only learned the art of drumming but more importantly gained the courage to interact with foreigners and learn about their culture. I remember one youth approached me after the end of the course and said, “If I had the chance, I would love to go see Africa.” The horizons of these young people have broadened though their encouraging and inspiring teachers.

The Bible says “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28). Our African brothers are willing to stand up and be used by the Lord and are indeed a great witness for God. Their experiences, culture and lives alone can enrich the souls of many. May God continue to bless the people of different cultures in Hong Kong and through their lives continue to bless those around them.

Rev. Wong Wai-cheong
Tsing Yi Chuen Yuen Church,
HK Council of the Church of Christ in China