

Kowloon Union Church  
"Where all are one"  
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Secretary: Candy Lam  
Minister: Maggie Mathieson  
Minister-in-charge: Phyllis Wong



**First Sunday after Christmas**  
**31 December 2023**  
**Morning Worship at 10:30 a.m.**

(\*: Congregation stands)

### APPROACH

**PREPARATION SONG** "Lead Me Lord"

– Composer: S M Wesley

\* **CALL TO WORSHIP**

\* **HYMN** "Hark The Herald Angels Sing" – Music: F Mendelssohn, Words: C Wesley

**CALL TO CONFESSION**

**PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

**ALL RESPOND** "Kyrie Eleison" (Lord, have mercy) – Trad. Orthodox Chant

**ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS**

### THE WORD OF GOD

Lord, open our lips.

**And our mouths shall show forth Your praise.**

**HYMN** "Who Would Think That What Was Needed"

– Music: R. Pritchard, Words: J Bell

**SCRIPTURE READING**

Your Word, O Lord, is a lamp to our feet.

**A light to our path.**

Luke 2: 22 – 40 (N.T.)

Lord, may Your Word live in us.

**And bear much fruit for Your glory.**

**HYMN** "See Him Lying on a Bed of Straw"

– Composer: M Perry

**FAMILY TALK**

**SERMON** "The Ways to Perfect Faith"

\* **AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

### THE OFFERTORY

**CONCERNS OF THE CHURCH**

**PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

**THE LORD'S PRAYER**

**ALL RESPOND** "Emmanuel"

– Composer: B McGhee

**OFFERTORY**

**THE PEACE**

\* **HYMN** "Meekness and Majesty"

– Composer: G Kendrick

\* **COMMISSION and BLESSING**

## CONCERNS OF THE CHURCH

*God does nothing except in response to believing prayer.* – John Wesley

**Please remember as you pray. . .**

- As we gather for the last service of this year on 31 December, let us take a moment to reflect on the journey we've shared as a church community in the past year. Through joys and challenges, we have stood together, strengthened by our faith and fellowship. As we bid farewell to 2023, let's also look ahead to the promises and possibilities that the new year holds. In 2024, our beloved church will celebrate its centenary, a milestone marking a century of spiritual growth, community service, and shared devotion. Let us embark on this special year with renewed purpose, fostering unity, kindness, and love within our church family. May our collective efforts in the coming year be a testament to the enduring spirit of our community, and may we continue to be a beacon of hope and inspiration for generations to come.
- Seven high school girls have started a cultural renaissance in the heart of the northwestern African country of Mali. Their impactful play 'ET ON SE RACONTE!' is playing in the 'Les Praticables' theatre festival and addresses the harsh realities of forced marriages and the pervasive influence of jihadist threats in their region. These young playwrights use art to raise awareness and challenge societal norms. Amidst personal and communal challenges, their narratives shed light on the complex interplay of violence and familial ties. The girls' storytelling emerges as a powerful expression of resilience and creativity, emphasizing the urgency of confronting societal issues. As we reflect on their inspiring journey, let us offer collective prayers for peace, understanding, and strength for communities worldwide facing similar challenges.
- The Sri Lankan President has granted amnesty to over 1,000 convicts as a Christmas gesture, releasing them from overcrowded jails across the country. Among those freed were individuals imprisoned for the inability to pay fines. The amnesty comes on the heels of a military-backed anti-narcotics drive that led to the arrest of nearly 15,000 people. With the nation's prisons chronically overcrowded, holding almost 30,000 inmates in facilities designed for 11,000, the presidential amnesty aims to alleviate the strain on the penal system. The country's economic challenges, exacerbated by longstanding structural weaknesses and various shocks, have plunged it into a crisis. Issues such as poor governance, a restrictive trade regime, a weak investment climate, and fiscal indiscipline have resulted in high deficits and substantial financing needs. In the spirit of unity and well-being, let us fervently pray for Sri Lanka's economy, seeking stability, prosperity, and equitable growth for all its citizens amidst these challenging times.
- Chinese police have intensified efforts this year to combat fraudulent schemes involving fabricated government documents to lure investments into fake national projects. According to state media, over 260 cases and 180 criminal groups related to these scams, amounting to HK\$1.6 billion in investor funds, have been dismantled. These frauds, often conducted online and with operations based overseas, exploit individuals by convincing them to pay initial capital or membership fees, with fake poverty alleviation projects being a common guise. As China seeks increased domestic and foreign investment to stimulate its slowing economy, online fraud poses a significant challenge, with global asset managers also grappling with scams using their brands and logos illegally. Let us pray for the Government of China in its efforts to tackle crime and corruption, particularly in the

online sphere, fostering a secure environment for genuine investment and economic growth that benefits the people.

- Hong Kong's captivating natural landscape, adorned with lush mountains and picturesque coastlines, faces a threat from the environmentally damaging practice of concretizing hiking trails. Concerns raised by environmental groups and NGOs, such as the Concern Group on Concretisation and Green Earth, highlight the adverse impact of widespread concrete usage on these trails and advocate for sustainable trail management, engaging citizens and the government in awareness and conservation campaigns. Despite the challenges posed by rapid construction and urban projects, the Concern Group collaborates with the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department to promote alternative materials like wood and gravel, fostering a more eco-friendly approach to trail construction. Recognizing the urgency of conservation, the Concern Group also conducts education programs and volunteer training initiatives, emphasizing the importance of "Leave No Trace" principles. As Hong Kong's natural beauty faces the threat of concrete intrusion, let us pray for the success of these efforts, seeking harmony between urban development and the preservation of the city's unique natural heritage.

### **For the Ecumenical Prayer Cycle**

We lift up in prayer the churches and people of all faiths in Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, and Palestine.

We are **thankful** for:

- lands and monuments sacred in the origins of Judaism, Christianity and Islam
- those who unceasingly work for peace and reconciliation in the Holy Land
- the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel
- those who continue to welcome the multitudes of refugees in their lands.

We **pray** for:

- ending the violence racking this region that the people might live together in peace, security and respect for each other
- those who have grown weary and disillusioned in searching for solutions
- an end to religious differences being exploited to perpetuate conflict and further displacement of people
- political leaders who will courageously bring about justice and reconciliation for the sake of all.

### **For the Congregation**

- Pray for those facing health challenges that require body strength restoration: Edna Lai, Paul Wong, Kevin Ng, Revd Bud, Jeanette Lee, Hend, Ng Kam Lee, Raymond Lau, Joy Babasa, Julianne Long and John. We continue to remember our senior members and friends: Mrs Samuel and the mother of Alex Melwani. May God heal the sick and give strength to those caring for loved ones at home and in care facilities.
- We thank God that Paul Wong has come through his first hip replacement surgery well and is now in recovery and will prepare for the second hip to be done. May the Lord strengthen Paul as he faces recovery and a second major surgery.

## Announcements

**Today** - A warm welcome to all who join our worship this morning. Please stay and join the tea and coffee fellowship after the service.

**Thank you** Brother Aimé, for sharing the word of God with us this morning.

**New Year Appeal From the Peacemaking Team** - As we enter the new year, the peacemaking ministry is appealing to you all for donations of supermarket vouchers. These vouchers will enable us to provide for families and people in need within our community. For more details, please get in touch with Katie Ho.

### **2023 Christmas Donation**

It is our custom here in KUC to combine the offerings from both the Christmas Eve and Christmas Day worship services (except the promissory offerings) and present them to a local organisation or appeal. This year, the donation will be given to the 'Ethnic Minority Cleaning Workers Union,' a local Grassroots organisation.

### **Dates For Your Diaries:**

**Want to contribute to the KUC Centenary Book?** Join the creative writing workshop being organised by KUC on **January 14 (Sunday)**, 1 PM, Lower Fellowship Hall. All written creations resulting from the workshop will be received by the Centenary Committee. Our KUC friend, Yvonne Yu, will be our resource person and facilitator. See you all there!

### **English Service for Week of Prayer for Christian Unity**

This year, the worship materials for the Unity gathering have been shared by the people and churches of Burkina Faso.

**Date: 23 January 2024 (Tue)**

**Time: 8:00 pm**

**Venue: St. Mary's Church (5 Dyer Ave, Hung Hom)**

Speaker: Revd Eden Fletcher (The Methodist Church, Hong Kong)

Theme: "You shall love the Lord your God and your neighbour as yourself" (Luke 10:27)

### **Starting in February 2024**

As part of the KUC centenary celebrations, the Christian Education Committee will launch a new study series entitled 'Discipleship. Then and Now'. Every first Sunday after worship in the Upper Fellowship Hall.



	<b>TODAY 31 December</b>
Liturgist:	Maggie Mathieson
Preacher:	Aimé Girimana
Pianist:	Eva Kwan
Lector:	Paul Cooper
Intercessory Prayers:	Journaliz Badon
Family Talk:	Maggie Mathieson
Greeter:	Lucy Lim , Edith San Juan
Offering:	Stephanie Mumbi, Ching So
Offering Counting Team:	Robert Lam, Ramon Bultron
Sunday School Leaders:	Mary Adesina, Jailyn Tomitis
I.T. Team:	Venus Cheng, Bervinder Kaur
Free will offering last week: HK\$ 16,619.30 Promissory offering last week: HK\$200 Special Christmas Offering: HK\$8377-	