

## **The Darlington Synod coordinating group for Chinese mission**

The birth of the Chinese mission in the Northeast was initiated by Rev. Law as its pastor. It was with greatest difficulties and hardship at its inception, due to the lack of finance, resources and initial support for this ministry. As there was insufficient resources to sustain a full time minister in Middlesbrough

By the grace of God our prayers was answered, when Newcastle area had a similar vision and the idea to combine the two areas to form one ministry within the North East was envisaged. This vision has led to the expansion and outreach ministry into the Chinese communities in both Newcastle and Middlesbrough areas. However this did not totally resolve the issues of finance and resources to sustain the ministry. We were then blessed by the intervention of the Methodist Church of Hong Kong who answered the calling of the lord by giving their full support and backing to the development of a ministry in the North East region of the UK. With their foresight and vision they also saw the importance and of the needs of developing and offer sucker to the spiritual, physical and emotional needs of those overseas Chinese, also to those who had emigrated and their subsequent generations. Without which this group would lose their language, cultural roots and in addition it will also provide support to visiting students studying far from home. The Northeast Chinese mission will give the church an opportunity to do good for the overseas Chinese population and to introduce and bring the word of God and ministry to them. Like the Samaritans aiding those in need and like Paul who converted and brought god to Rome. It is hoped that we can emulate this so that the overseas students and the emigrated population to spread the word of the lord and his wisdom back home with them.

With the intervention and support of the Methodist Church of Hong Kong we were able to carry out this outreach programme/mission into the Chinese community within the Northeast.

The germ and development of the Durham Ministry started with the first Chinese bible classes in Middlesbrough and Newcastle. In time a steady growth in attendance due to the success of Rev. Laws; in time he was asked by the District Chair of the Darlington District (Rev. Ruth Gee) with a view to have a cross over ministry.

Rev Law proposed a collaboration of Darlington District and Newcastle and Darlington District to form an inter-district Chinese Ministry. This came to fruition in 2014, when the Synod coordinating group for Chinese mission was setup under the mutual agreement of Newcastle and Darlington District to oversee the Newcastle and Middlesbrough Chinese congregation.

## **Middlesbrough**

Last year Teesside University opened a branch campus in Hong Kong and China. Through this they were able to recruit more students to study in the UK this year with offering them additional courses and places.

At the induction day event at Teesside University we were able to invite over 40 students to attend our student café event which is held on a Thursday, through this and the stand by me programme set up by the student workers and assisted by the mentors we hope to provide them with support during their stay and study in the UK.

The Chinese mission in Middlesbrough has a steady attendance rate of approx. 40 to 50 regular attendees.

Activities provided in Middlesbrough includes; Tuesday Bible study, Thursday Student Café, Saturday Chinese classes are popular which attracts 30 students last year and 40 students this year; through this we are able to encourage more attendance of the church for Sunday school and service. In Middlesbrough we are served by Joanne our student worker who works with the Chinese students in the northeast area and runs our Chinese student café, on 1st Oct the café attracted 60 attendees. Other team member includes Joann the student worker serve Chinese students and Julia is the pastoral worker, who helps with the needs and care of the congregation. Rev. Law provides Holy Communion every month and assist and overview the staff serving the congregation and the nearby university.

We were able to hold many events over this year, the most memorable being the celebration of Chinese New Year held on the 22rd February with our English counterpart and congregation in 2015.

Due to our successes we are hoping to continue and develop our Chinese classes and to encourage the students to attend the Chinese bible classes and subsequent Sunday services.

By this development and by bringing the message of Jesus to the students, it is with hope that we will be able to open the eyes of the student to the lord by removing the plank from their eyes so that they may develop caring and consideration for their fellow man. By being able to turn the other cheek and care for those less fortunate than themselves. By volunteering and help by taking part in events and services within the Chinese church and community and walk in the path of the righteous, alongside our lord.

## **Durham**

In 2013 Durham University Christian fellowship invited the group to start a Chinese Christian fellowship in Durham Elvet church. This decision has led to a multiplication of numbers of Chinese students studying in Durham; resulting in the new Chinese Methodist congregation being setup and to join the Synod coordinating group.

Durham Chinese Methodist mission was inaugurated in Sept 21<sup>st</sup> 2015 at Old Elvet church which attracted an initial attendance of approx. 20 people; of a mixture of local Chinese people and university students.

The services being offered at the Methodist church includes Sunday services and Friday fellowship with an attendance rate of about 40 people, and Tuesday bible study has a stable attendance of between 10 to 15 people. Due to access and transport issues for the elderly and some of the congregations, the venue was subsequently changed to North Road church which has much better access due to its proximity to the bus station and some metered parking. On Oct 1<sup>st</sup> the team was joined by Rocky a newly appointed intern whose purpose is to serve the Chinese students. Rocky is a graduate from Durham University and a committed Christian, who wish to serve God and to explore his faith and learn some ministry from Rev. Law. We have recently reached our first anniversary and have celebrated this occasion by praising God. With this milestone we hope the coming year the student numbers will surpass last years; we will be organising events such as the day trip arranged on the 31<sup>st</sup> October to York to visit York Minister and the city.

Since the start of the Durham Mission there has been a many organised events. Most memorable of those was the Mayoral visit by the Mayor of Durham to a Service to the students of Durham university on the 16<sup>th</sup> November 2014; a joint service and celebration of Christmas by the three Chinese congregations (Middlesbrough, Newcastle, and Durham) on the 26<sup>th</sup> December held at old Elvet church. There was a visit by the Methodist president to the Northeast, where a joint service of welcome was held by the Durham Methodist and the Durham Chinese mission.

Many good works has so far been achieved by the new Durham Chinese mission with the local migrant Chinese and collaboration with the university and the university students.

It is with this aim and hope the Durham mission wish to continue to develop their cooperation with the local students through engagement via the stand by me programme. And the local population and congregation through joint working and more joint services in the future. The stand by me programme provide work with students and the student worker who developed and led to the development of the Elvet mentors. We hope to further develop this programme to have more mentors and cascading this via the Church Together Association to access and equip the programme with more mentors to the stand by me programme.

As such we are planning future events such as a joint service with the local congregation to celebrate the coming Chinese New Year. Through cooperation and joint interventions and activities the needs of the local population, students with the Chinese mission/congregation can function in unity to assist those new souls attending Durham University to receive the light of the Lord.

In future work with the local circuit/Elvet church and the future development of the Chinese mission we hope to further strengthen our ties and to work in harmony with the needs of the students and the university. Also working with the university to attract more students to the university to study theology and or theological students to the mission to bring the good news to the Chinese people be it in the UK or the Far East.

Rev Lawrence Law