

# St. Mary's Past Students' Association

NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2020

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## Happy 120th Anniversary to our Alma Mater!

The year 2020 marks the 120th Anniversary of St. Mary's. The PSA Exco would like to take this opportunity to wish our Alma Mater a happy birthday. Yet due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all celebration activities have to be put on hold. We also apologize for the delayed publication of our newsletter, as we all faced various challenges over the past months. With the onset of the new school year, we are glad that we are finally able to bring you another issue of our newsletter. We wish all the best for St. Marians near and far, and may God bless our Alma Mater on her 120th birthday, and for many more to come.



*All shared prayers for St. Mary's during the Thanksgiving Mass.*

On 8 November 2019, a Thanksgiving Mass cum Kick-off Ceremony event was held at school to launch the year of celebration. Jointly organized by SMCC and SMCS, the event was held in the College Hall, attended by staff members and student representatives of both schools, together with more than 100 guests, thanking and praising our Lord for all His blessings bestowed upon St. Mary's in the past 120 years. Before the Mass ended, the two schools were also presented the Apostolic Blessings from Pope Francis.



*Guests officiating at the Lighting Ceremony.*

Then, students from SMCC and SMCS presented a preview of the upcoming anniversary celebration activities through songs, dance and a short drama. The event reached its climax when guests gathered on stage to officiate the Kick-off Lighting Ceremony, and concluded with a cozy lunch reception held at the School Hall of SMCS. All guests enjoyed a joyous time reminiscing the happy days at St. Mary's with their beloved sisters, teachers and friends.

## LATEST UPDATE

*Our Alma Mater is currently planning to hold the following Anniversary events during this school year, subject to safety and health concerns. Further details will be announced once available,*

*but do mark your diaries for the time being:*

*- SMCC 120th Anniversary School Drama - week of 19 April 2021*

*- SMCC 120th Anniversary Concert - 29 June 2021 (Tue) at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre Auditorium*

## 2019-20 : A School Year Like No Other

With the outbreak of the COVID-19 disease right after Chinese New Year, the whole territory was brought to a sudden halt. School classes were suspended, learning and teaching was greatly interrupted. In June, after more than four months of suspension, schools finally reopened to students. Yet with the sudden resurgence of COVID cases in early July, the EDB instructed all primary and secondary schools to allow students to start their summer vacation immediately to avoid potential spreading of the disease on campus.

Now, class has resumed for the new school year. The experience accumulated during the past months were essential to help learning and teaching under the new norm. The following article, which was written at the end of June 2020, offers a snapshot on how the teaching and administration teams at our Alma Mater overcame the unprecedented challenge.

We took the opportunity to visit our two Patrons, Ms. Helen Au, Headmistress of SMCS, and Ms. Janet Wong, Principal of SMCC, to hear from them the challenges and developments during these few months.

“We were all caught off-guard,” said Ms. Au. “No one had ever expected a pandemic like this. When class suspension started, we were concerned about the learning habits of our students. It was a race with time for teachers to come up with practical ways of interacting with their students. From simply using the school’s intranet to distribute learning materials, to the migration to Google Classroom for addition class control and homework submission; from at first using Zoom for conducting real time class to switching over to Google Meet. It was a great challenge

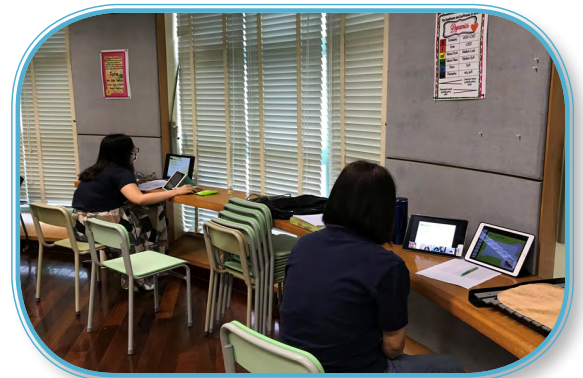
for our teachers, who are concerned about their students, as well as how parents at home can help in the process,” shared Ms. Au. “I’m very appreciative of the teachers’ effort and enthusiasm. They were supportive to each other and showed great team spirit even when things get difficult,” said Ms. Au with a big smile on her face.

Now that school has restarted, there are many arrangements made to ensure a safe learning environment for our young sisters. With guidelines from

the EDB, the administration staff help students adapt to the new hygiene requirements. “Students coming to school have to line up and go past body temperature check points, as well as sanitize their hands. Assemblies are replaced by classroom broadcasts, and students visiting the toilets during recess time are guided to stand in line with safe distancing,” said Ms. Au. “In addition, we have to minimize sharing of materials between students, therefore the library is temporarily closed, and P.E. lessons are mostly about stretching and dancing, instead of ball games. Equipment such as iPads are properly sanitized after each use. Even the dismissal arrangement after school has to be orchestrated to avoid students



*Poster reminders and distancing indicators can be seen around the campus.*



*Teachers at SMCS initially paired up to offer online class for mutual support and learning.*



*Instead of being arranged in pairs, seats are now spread out inside classrooms.*

crowding up! The workload is indeed heavy for our teaching and janitor teams, but they are dedicated to ensuring a safe learning environment for our students,” Ms. Au explained.



*Teachers help to maintain order during school dismissal.*

“Though we only have half-day school now and lesson time is compressed, we see that our students are enjoying class, and happy to meet their friends and teachers. The engagement with parents has also improved as teachers regularly made calls to them directly; most of them are appreciative of the efforts made to care for their children,” shared Ms. Au. “We are on the alert all the time as the pandemic is not behind us yet. However, I’m confident that with God’s grace, and with the cooperation from everyone at stake, we will be much better prepared in case of future challenges!”

The challenge for the secondary school during class suspension is similar: everyone being caught off guard. “At first, we used our e-Class intranet system for sharing teaching materials, but soon we realized the limitation. We then moved to the Zoom platform and also Google

Meet, and teachers and students work amongst themselves to set the best time for class. The experience was more engaging, and a good learning opportunity for students on self-management,” shared Principal Ms. Wong. “We also maintain connection with parents to update them on their child’s progress, and offered assistance to families with financial challenges – obtaining SIM cards for internet service, and face masks for protection,” said Ms. Wong.



*Hand sanitizers can be found in all common areas.*

“The biggest challenge for us was to prepare students for this year’s DSE exam. Though the exam was postponed by a month to the end of April, it was a totally new experience for our teachers and students. I’m glad that both parties did their best and rose to the occasion,” she said.



*Can you recognize our tuck shop? Now the tables and chairs have been removed to avoid social gathering.*

“Now that class has resumed, our focus is to help our students to re-focus on the curriculum. After all, they have been away from normal class for almost four months! The school year has been extended to the end of July, and arrangements have been made to cut the syllabus for the final exam, and to offer exam papers with shorter length, in order to lessen the pressure on our students,” revealed Ms. Wong. “We are now planning for remedial lessons in August for students in Forms 3 to 5, so that they can be well-prepared for the new school year.”

“Looking back, this whole experience has been an enlightening one, especially for our teachers. Online platforms can play a significant role in engaging students. We shall see how we can select suitable tools, how to motivate students’ interest, and track effectiveness. It is my sincere hope that what we learnt during those few months can bring us insights which are sustainable in the future,” said Ms. Wong.

# 120 Years

*The story of St. Mary's began in 1886. The Italian Canossian Daughters of Charity, who were living on the Hong Kong Island, had to look for a place near the sea for sick Sisters and orphans to go sea-bathing and recuperate, as recommended by doctors. Their prayers were answered when a piece of walled-in land with a small Chinese house on it was on sale at a modest price in Tsimshatsui, Kowloon (Chatham Road was then by the seaside). The Sisters immediately raised funds to purchase the lot. They also raised livestock there, which was forbidden on the Island.*

*In 1900, with rising need for schooling as the population grew, the Sisters transformed two rooms of the house into classrooms to enroll 30 students. The school was named "St. Mary's School".*

*past*



*present*



# Under the Banner

*In 1960, the school adopted the new name “St. Mary’s Canossian College”, replacing “St. Mary’s School”. And in 1981, the primary section became independent and was named “St. Mary’s Canossian School”.*

*For 120 years, the spiritual values of our Alma Mater have shaped, touched and inspired generations of St. Marians. We are forever grateful to the Canossian Sisters, and to the teachers and staff who have worked tirelessly to nurture us with love and care.*

*Let us take a walk down memory lane with the following photo presentation of days past and present!*

*past*



*present*



# ...SCHOOL NEWS...

## Lift Installation for Two School Buildings

Due to the long history of our campus, the school buildings will inevitably be in need of upgrades from time to time. The availability of lifts has always been one key area of concern for School Management, as it impacts user accessibility and safety. Recently, we are delighted to learn that funding application to the Education Bureau has been approved for the installation of lifts for two of our buildings.

### 1. The St. Magdalene Building

To accommodate growing needs for classroom space, the 5-storey St. Magdalene Building was built in 1998 at the area where previously the badminton court, and the bungalows for the Chemistry Lab and Physics Lab, were located.



St. Magdalene Building

The facilities in the building are mostly special function rooms - the Chemistry Lab is on the fourth floor, the Physics Lab on third, the ICT Rooms (a.k.a. Computer Rooms) on the second, and the Home Economics Room occupy the first. The ground level is an air-conditioned multi-function covered playground, as well as a quiet corner dedicated to our Foundress for students' prayer needs.

The new lift will enable teachers and students requiring mobility assistance to easily access all floors, and help in the delivery of teaching materials and equipment. The construction will take place at the corner behind the basketball court in front of the building, replacing the tree currently there. Incidentally, this tree is being planned for removal as its roots have been causing damage to both the building and the ground of the basketball court, posing potential danger to students. Therefore, this is an opportunity to upgrade accessibility and improve campus safety at the same time.



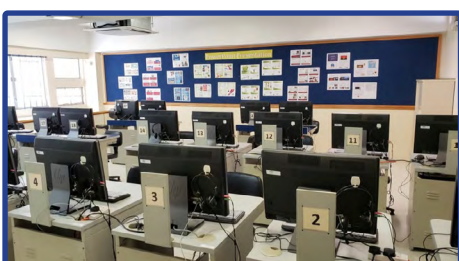
*The lift will be built behind the basketball court.*



Chemistry Lab



Physics Lab



ICT Rooms



Home Economics Room



St. Magdalene Prayer Corner

## 2. The College Hall Building

The other construction that has limited accessibility is our College Hall Building which was built in the 1950s.

For years, the lack of lift service has been a growing challenge for janitors, teachers and students who have to carry bulky and heavy items, including huge drama props and delicate musical equipment, up and down the building, to and from the Gymnasium and Hall, by stairs. In addition, the lack of accessibility facilities have also made it impossible for past students or guests in need of mobility assistance to join School events held in the building.

We are happy to learn that two accessibility facilities will be built for the College Hall Building - a passenger lift and a wheelchair lift.



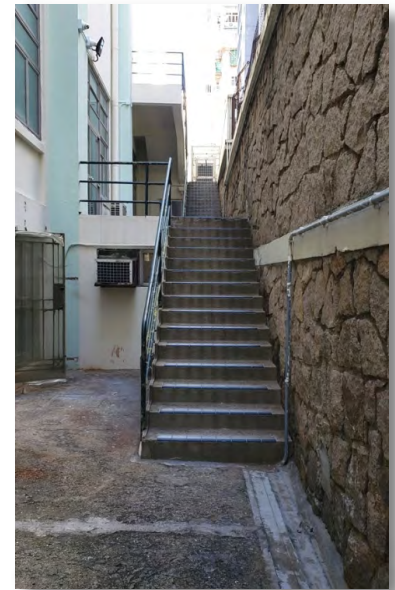
The College Hall



The lift for the School Hall Building will replace half of the arch staircase outside the Tuck Shop.

Due to the tight space around, the passenger lift can only be constructed between the Hall Building and the St. Magdalene Building. New side doors to the Gym and the Hall will be created to allow direct access to the two locations. Regrettably, half of the once iconic arch staircase outside the Tuck Shop will have to be removed to make way for the construction. Nonetheless, the remaining half will also undoubtedly become the perfect reflection of how the past blends seamlessly with the present.

The wheelchair lift will be installed beside the Tuck Shop, near the Kimberley Road entrance, along the staircase going up to the side doors of the Gym and the Hall, providing an additional backup access route.



A wheelchair lift will be installed by the staircase to the Hall near the Kimberley Road entrance.

We look forward to the completion of the project, and we are grateful to the School for always bringing improvement to the campus environment for all St. Marians, young and old.

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### Mailing of Newsletters to Members Overseas

To our members residing overseas, we apologize that due to international postal service limitations during the COVID-19 pandemic, we are unable to mail you your hard copies.

Please access our newsletters on the SMP SA website to keep updated.

We shall resume our mailing distribution once normalcy returns.



## Notice of the Annual General Meeting 2020 of St. Mary's Past Students' Association

Date : 31 October 2020 (Saturday)  
 Time : 3:00 pm  
 Venue : SMCC Hall

### Agenda

1. Adoption of the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 23 March 2019
2. Chairman's Report
3. Adoption of the Financial Report for the last financial year ending 31 August 2019
4. Any Other Business

All members are welcome.  
 Please register your attendance in advance.

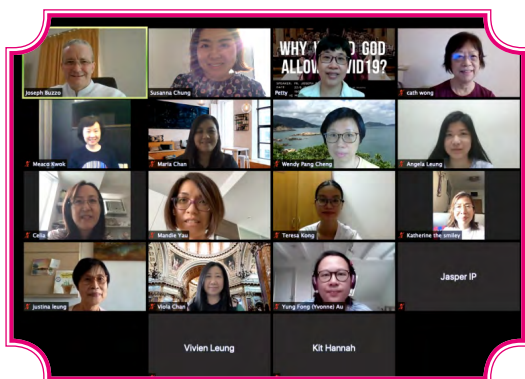
Prior Registration Required



In accordance with the hygiene and security measures of SMCC and SMCS, members who plan to attend the AGM must register in advance by completing the Registration Form, and returning it to us on or before 26 October 2020 (Mon). **Access will only be granted to those who have successfully pre-registered.**

The Proxy Form and the Registration Form can be downloaded from [www.stmaryspsa.org](http://www.stmaryspsa.org).

## Marians in Faith



We're going virtual! Marians in Faith organised the first online spiritual programme on 22 August 2020: **Why would God allow Covid-19?**

Father Joseph Buzzo shared with us why God may have put us through this uncertain and difficult time. He has asked us to see the good in everything, as God is always good, though it is not always understood by us. Around 20 participants joined us on the day, including Ms Catherine Wong, former principal of SMCC, who shared with us her new vision in faith arising from

this pandemic. We are working to organise another activity later this year. Join us on <https://www.facebook.com/MariansInFaith> to keep updated.

## ...CLASS REUNION NEWS...

The Class of 1985 celebrated their 35th Anniversary reunion over dinner on 26 June 2020. 14 classmates from the Science classes joined and shared fond memories together with their Chinese teachers Miss Teresa Wong and Miss Iris Mok. They recalled the days when Chinese Literature was introduced to Science girls for HKCEE! To reconnect with the group, please contact Susanna Chung at [susannachungss@yahoo.com.hk](mailto:susannachungss@yahoo.com.hk).



Girls from Class of 1985 sharing a "bunful" moment!