

# St. Mary's Past Students' Association

## NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER 2021

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### SMPSA NEWS – WE NEED VOLUNTEERS!

To foster interaction within the alumnae network, and to strengthen our sense of belonging to our Alma Mater, especially when we are experiencing a new normal where large gatherings will not be possible for an extended period of time, the SMPSA Exco is planning to take the opportunity to launch a few new initiatives, and would be needing volunteers to lend a helping hand.

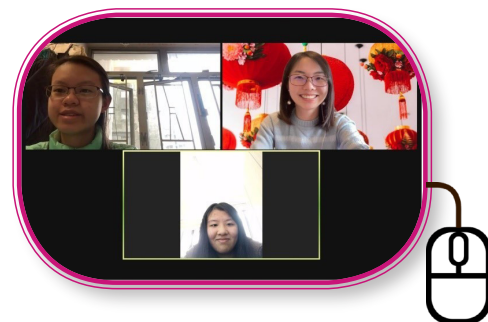


Such initiatives include revamping our website, engaging in social media channels, producing merchandise items, and forming various networking groups. The Exco cordially calls for members who are interested and knowledgeable in these areas to join our working teams to help bring the work to fruition. For further information, please refer to the last page of this newsletter and sign up accordingly.

We look forward to serving with you under the banner to support our beloved Alma Mater!

### Mentorship Programme 2020 - 21

Social distancing does not mean social disconnection. As our Mentorship Programme went virtual this year under the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, 18 alumnae participated in the Mentorship Programme in the 2020-21 school year to share their academic and life experience, as well as professional knowledge, with 36 F.5 students who completed the programme.



*Mentor Haity Man connected with her mentees over Zoom meeting....*



*... as well as lunch gathering!*

Mentors and mentees were able to meet online as well as in person during the course of the year, according to needs and feasibility. The feedback on this hybrid interaction mode was encouraging. In fact, it opened up the possibility for the School's Careers Team to connect with our alumnae overseas for contribution. As such, though the pandemic did bring a lot of limitations and challenges, it also introduced opportunities as teaching and learning enters a new normal!

Past students who are interested to become a Mentor may send an email to the Careers Mistress, Mrs. Queenie Mui ([queeniewong@smcc.hk](mailto:queeniewong@smcc.hk)). While recruitment for the 2021-22 programme term had already ended, the window is always open for the following school year.

## A Lifelong Path Led by God

- A Conversation with Sr. Virginia Wong,  
new Provincial Superior

“Would you like to become a sister?” A young girl was asked by a nun when she graduated from a Canossian school. “No! It’s a good thing, but not for me,” the girl replied immediately at that time. That interesting exchange was the beginning of the religious call for Sr. Virginia Wong, teacher at SMCC from 1975 to 1984, Headmistress of SMCS from 1999 to 2006, and most recently, Provincial Superior of Canossian Missions (Hong Kong & Macau). “I’ve never really planned for any move in my life. It has always been God leading the way, showing me a path. At every opportunity I simply learn as much as I can, and be prepared to take on the next challenge if God finds me useful,” she said humbly.



Sr. Virginia sends her best wishes to all St. Marians.

The first turning point came in 1959. Sr. Virginia was sent by her family to Hong Kong from Guangzhou, where she had just finished Primary 6. Albeit having good grades back home, she had to repeat class in order to cope with the local syllabus. “I did feel frustrated, but later I found that it was in fact a good opportunity for me to get my foundation right, especially in English language,” she recalled. “I also realized the power of a teacher’s words. They can inspire or discourage a student equally easily,” she added.



Sr. Virginia in 1977.  
Looking the same!

Sr. Virginia’s vocational life budded when she attended school at Sacred Heart Commercial College after Form 5. There, she was acquainted with Sr. Marie Remedios, who asked her about her interest to become a nun. “I declined immediately because, honestly, I didn’t think it was for me,” she said. Nonetheless, Sr. Virginia still attended adorations at Sr. Marie’s invitation, and spent time at the convent for spiritual exploration. “God has a plan of His own. Very soon I found my vocation,

and understood that religious life was indeed for me. I entered the novitiate in 1967 at St. Mary’s. That’s why I have very fond memories of the campus here,” she said with a wide grin.

As you may have guessed, Sr. Virginia never planned to be a teacher either. “I preferred solitude and wasn’t comfortable talking to a big group. But I guess God knew me better than I knew myself,” she laughed. She was assigned to help in various school duties on the St. Mary’s campus, and after obtaining the relevant qualifications, she became a full-time teacher at SMCC in 1975.

“Recalling my own experience as a student, I chose to be an approachable and encouraging teacher. I stayed close to my girls and tried my best to give them individual attention,” said Sr. Virginia. “God also helped me overcome my fear of talking to crowds. My superior, Mother Mary Asti, told me to ‘just go with one thought and elaborate’, and it worked!” she gladly shared. Sr. Virginia stayed at SMCC until 1984, when she was sent the UK to study for a degree in Education.

The year 1997 was another turning point for Sr. Virginia. She was assigned the role of Headmistress



Sr. Virginia was surprised to see that the old pull-bell of the convent, which she used to operate to inform sisters of meal and prayer times, is still well-preserved.

at Holy Family Canossian School. The Education Bureau had just introduced the School-based Management policy, and the construction of a new wing at the school was about to start. "It was a huge challenge for me because everything was unfamiliar. I prayed to God for guidance and wisdom, and worked hard to learn everything quickly. It was a tough yet rewarding experience, and I thank God for the wonderful team of people He put around me to help," said Sr. Virginia.

Yet, like always, the unexpected would happen. Two years later, just one day after the celebration of the project completion, Sr. Virginia received a phone call informing her about her new

assignment to head another school. "I was naturally a little disappointed. But when I realized that it was St. Mary's, fond memories rushed back, and I was excited about the reunion!" she said. Sr. Virginia joined SMCS as Headmistress in 1999, and stayed on until her official retirement in 2006.

"My retirement came at the perfect timing, thank God for that," she said. "Ever since I left Guangzhou, I didn't really have many opportunities to visit my mother there. Sadly, she was at her final days then. I'm grateful to God for enabling me to spend time with her during those days. It wouldn't have been possible if I were still actively working," she said.



*Sr. Virginia (front row, middle) with teachers and students at the SMCS School Opening Ceremony in 2005.*

In the following years, Sr. Virginia continued to contribute to the management and development of various Canossian schools. "It is extremely meaningful and fulfilling to see the outcome of good education. Aside from imparting knowledge, we nurture young people's heart and soul. And we learn from them too, so there is mutual influence. I'm very thankful for the opportunity to serve in a mission that is close to my heart," she added.

To this day, God still has new plans for His faithful servant. Most recently, Sr. Virginia was appointed Provincial Superior of the Canossian Missions (Hong Kong and Macau). "There are challenges to overcome, especially for the continuation of our Canossian education work, given the aging sister community and the declining number of new vocations. We've been transitioning school leadership to lay



*Sr. Virginia signing her name at the Primary 6 Graduation Lunch in 2006.*

Canossian educators, and we're blessed to have been able to develop a group of helpful, collaborative and loving school heads who are dedicated to keeping the Canossian spirit alive in our students," said Sr. Virginia.

It was truly an inspiring experience talking with Sr. Virginia. Through exceptional humility, she exemplified how we should have trust in God's plan; and with great obedience, she showed us how we should work diligently when facing challenges. "Give your best at all times, and pray to God for wisdom and strength. He will take care of the rest," Sr. Virginia advised. She is still our Spiritual Directress after all these years!



*Our alumna Mabel Leung happened to be Sr. Virginia's secondary school teacher! Sister still calls her Ms. Leung.*

Before we parted ways, we were deeply touched when Sr. Virginia said with a contented smile: "In school days, students are proud of their school. Today, I'm proud of my students. When I see them, it really makes me feel that my whole life's devotion is worthwhile." Thank you, Sr. Virginia, we are equally proud of you!

## Happy Retirement

Five teachers from SMCC and SMCS celebrated their retirement at the end of the 2020-21 school year.



*Ms. Helena Kung*



*Mr. Cyril Lee*



*Ms. Praxedes Law*



*Mrs. Maria Lam*



*Mr. Mikel Tso*

- **Ms. Helena Kung** joined St. Mary's in 1983 as Home Economics and Chinese teacher. She also taught EPA, History, Chinese History and Religious Education over the years. Passionate in needlework, she was advisor to the Dressing Room Prefects, in addition to being White House advisor. Ms. Kung was retiring after serving St. Mary's for 38 years.
- **Mr. Cyril Lee** came to St. Mary's in 1985. He was teacher of Physics, Mathematics and Pure Mathematics. He was also Head of the School Maintenance Team, looking after all corners of our historic school campus. Mr. Cyril Lee had served 36 years at St. Mary's upon retirement.
- **Ms. Praxedes Law** joined St. Mary's as primary school teacher in 1988. She taught Chinese and Religious Education, and was also Curriculum Leader. Ms. Law was retiring after 33 years of service.
- **Mrs. Maria Lam** had been primary school teacher at St. Mary's since 1999. Apart from being teacher in Mathematics and Music, she was also Discipline Mistress. Mrs. Lam served 22 years at St. Mary's.
- **Mr. Mikel Tso** joined St. Mary's in 1993. Through the years he had been teacher in Economics, Integrated Science, Computer Science and IT. He was also in charge of building the school's IT infrastructure, and guiding technology matters on campus. Prior to his retirement, Mr. Tso was Vice Principal, having served at St. Mary's for 28 years.

On behalf of all past St. Marians, we extend our profound gratitude and best wishes to all retiring teachers. May they enjoy a happy and healthy life full of God's blessings!

## Marians in Faith

On Palm Sunday, 28 March 2021, during a time when public masses were still suspended, Marians in Faith organised another online spiritual programme themed "The History and Spirituality of Christian Fasting", a most befitting topic for Lent, and attracted over 30 participants.

Father Vincent Woo shared with participants the history of fasting, which in fact was a common practice in several religions. Participants were inspired to reflect on how we connect our minds and body during fasting, and how that could impact our spiritual life, as well as our connection with God.

To enrich your spiritual life, join Marians in Faith on their Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/MariansInFaith> and stay tuned for upcoming events.



## *Interviews with Mr. Mikel Tso, Ms. Helena Kung and Mr. Cyril Lee*

### **- Turning New Pages after Retirement**

“It is a little difficult to adapt to a new morning routine,” laughed Mr. Mikel Tso as he began to share his life after retirement. “The first thing I had to do was to put away my alarm clock,” he said. “That’s very true! I was used to going to bed at around 9 p.m., and now I’m staying up till way past midnight!” added Ms. Helena Kung with a giggle.

Mr. Tso and Ms. Kung both retired after serving 28 and 38 years respectively at St. Mary’s. We caught up with them over Yum Cha, and they shared some interesting stories with us.

Ms. Kung joined St. Mary’s in 1983 after having taught for two years at another school. For more than three decades, she had shaped and nurtured numerous St. Marians in terms of their etiquette, passing down essential skills on taking care of themselves and others at home.



*Mr. Mikel Tso and Ms. Helena Kung saying hello to all...please excuse the masks!*



*Ms. Helena Kung (front row, second from left) with members of the Home Economics Club members in 2011.*

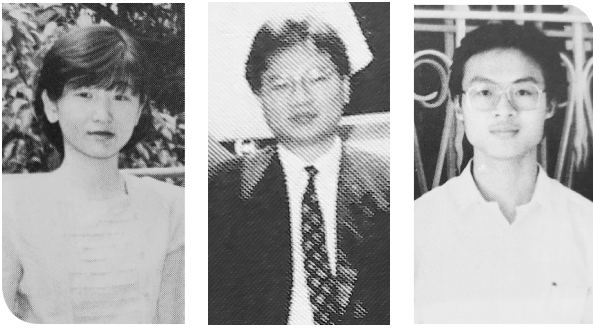
What had she noticed about our girls through the years? “As the society develops, more families have relied on domestic helpers for assistance. Our children often lack the opportunity to look after themselves independently. Home Economics classes help our girls to be more aware of their personal well-being, and equip them with day-to day skills which will come in handy when they start their lives independently. I’m really glad that the subject remains in the syllabus at St. Mary’s even after all these years. Our girls are extremely lucky!” said Ms. Kung.

While the tradition of domestic science prevails, knowledge on computer science is also passed on to our girls. Mr. Mikel Tso had stayed as our Computer Science teacher since the first day he joined St. Mary’s. “That was 28 years ago. I’ve taught elsewhere for ten years after returning from Australia. A friend of mine who played the organ at my wedding, happened to be a past St. Marian. She introduced me to her Alma Mater, and the rest is history!” he recalled. “St. Mary’s is the first all girls’ school that I taught at,” said Mr. Tso. We asked him if that was a challenge. “Not at all! During my matriculation years, I was one of the few boys who studied at a girls’ school, so I was already very familiar with the situation,” he laughed.

In the past few decades, there have been many unprecedented developments in the field of technology. “Back in my days, students were taught how to develop computer application tools. Today, students learn the way to select appropriate tools, and how to apply them effectively. Multi-media is currently the most popular area of interest. Yet I believe our girls should also put emphasis on other areas that are in high demand, such as skills on handling database, which is of rising importance across many aspects of commercial or public service fields,” explained Mr. Tso. “There will never be enough time to teach everything and to catch up with technology advancements. That’s why I always emphasize that self-learning is an essential lifelong skill, especially when it is much easier for us to access information and resources these days!” he added.



*Mr. Tso with the IT prefects in 2003.*



*Ms. Helena Kung (left), Mr. Mikel Tso (centre) and Mr. Cyril Lee (right) during their early days at St. Mary's. Can you recognize them?*

What are their plans on post-retirement life? Ms. Kung shared: “I’m taking it easy and hoping to enjoy some free time first. Then I can take the opportunity to put my expertise to practice – home cleaning and re-organizing. I’ve also started Tai-Chi lessons to stay healthy, and am really looking forward to travelling with friends again when time is ready,” she said. May all your wishes come true very soon, Ms. Kung!

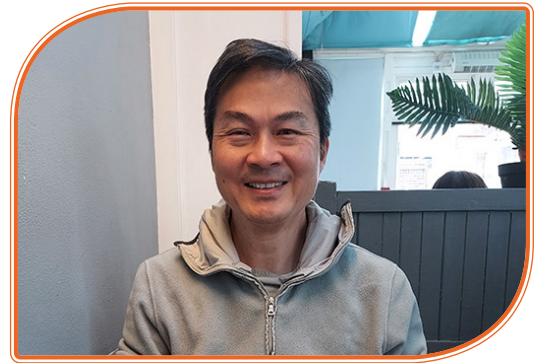
As for Mr. Tso, he was as busy as a beaver preparing his relocation to Melbourne by the end of September to join his family. “Recently I’ve been busy with packing stuff for shipment, and trust me, that’s a lot of work! I even managed to dig out some old suits with padded shoulders! Those will definitely not make their way on board,”

he laughed. “I’m very excited about the move, because I’ll be in time to attend the wedding ceremony of my elder son, scheduled for the end of the year. I can’t believe how fast time flies!” A heartfelt congratulations to Mr. Tso, please do keep us posted when you are promoted as a grandfather!

Besides catching up with Ms. Kung and Mr. Tso in Hong Kong, we also had the opportunity to meet with Mr. Cyril Lee in London over an enjoyable lunch in lovely sunshine, after a heavy shower.

“A recruitment advertisement in the newspaper started my teaching career at St. Mary’s,” said Mr. Cyril Lee, who was a fresh engineering graduate at the time. Fast forward 36 years, Mr. Lee has now retired, and recently moved to the UK with his family.

“I started with teaching Physics and Mathematics, and was thrilled to be asked to teach Pure Mathematics at F.6 and F.7 as well just after a few years. I was over the moon because it had been my dream to teach the subject ever since I first studied it back in my secondary school days!” he said.



*Greetings from a beaming Mr. Cyril Lee!*

“Before the DSE was introduced, science students usually preferred Biology over Pure Mathematics. However, in recent years, I’ve noticed a gradual increase of interests in Pure Mathematics by the students, and I am pleased to see that it eventually made the lead and ‘overtook’ Biology!” he laughed.

Mr. Lee was impressed by the maturity, industriousness and strong organisational skills of St. Marians. “The ability to learn independently and the ability to adapt, utilising their knowledge in different contexts, for sure it is a process of lifelong learning, especially when we are overloaded with information nowadays,” he said. “Be a learner; be a thinker.”



*Mr. Lee in a ball game with students during SMUD 2013.*

So, how’s life in the UK now? “We have just moved over about a month ago, and things have been going fine so far. I love ball games, and I am glad to have found a basketball court near our home. Also, I hope to pick up snooker again soon,” he said. Enjoy the games Mr. Lee. With your precise mathematical calculations, you can surely perfect all your three-point shots, as well as producing some remarkable pots!

Here’s to new chapters of our three beloved teachers, may your new adventures be as bright as the sun in a clear blue sky!

## ...SCHOOL NEWS...

### Alumnae Visit to School

On behalf of the School Management Team of SMCC and SMCS, we would like to inform all alumnae that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, only essential visits are currently allowed on campus (e.g., planned meetings and academic events). Non-essential visits are suspended until further notice.

For those coming for essential visits, please make prior application to the Vice Principal or School Office via serving teachers or staff. A confirmation will be issued to acknowledge your visit. Please check-in via the Kimberley Road school gate where visitors will be requested to show confirmation of identity, as well as fill out a Health Declaration Form, before entering the school premise.

The School Management Team would like to thank all alumnae in advance for their understanding and cooperation towards this matter, and for their continued support to their Alma Mater. Stay healthy.



### Want to make a donation to your Alma Mater?

Thank you in advance for your generosity in supporting our Alma Mater. Donations will be pooled to support campus maintenance and development needs of SMCC and SMCS.

As the Education Bureau requires that all donations must be approved by the Incorporated Management Committees and properly documented for record-keeping, cheques are the preferred way of payment.

Please make the cheque payable to “The IMC of St. Mary’s Canossian College” or “The IMC of St. Mary’s Canossian School”, marking “General Donations” at the back. If a receipt for tax deduction purpose is required, please also indicate the name to be put on the receipt and the address for mailing.

For further enquiries or other donation intents, please contact the school offices for assistance:

SMCC - Ms. Dolphin Li at 2724 2771 ([dolphinli@smcc.hk](mailto:dolphinli@smcc.hk))

SMCS - Ms. Macy Ho at 2368 4204 ([macyho@smcs.edu.hk](mailto:macyho@smcs.edu.hk))

Thank you again for supporting our Alma Mater!



### Termination of Hard Copies of Newsletter



The Exco would like to inform members that starting from the 2022-23 school year, we shall terminate the postal delivery of hard copies of our newsletter for environmental and labour-efficiency reasons. We shall continue to distribute the newsletter through email, and members can also access them through the SMPSA website.

Therefore, the upcoming March 2022 issue will be the last with a hard copy. Members who have been receiving the newsletter through the post are reminded to update their email addresses with our Membership Secretary at [membershipsec@stmaryspsa.org](mailto:membershipsec@stmaryspsa.org) to ensure that they are able to receive newsletters in the future.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our deepest gratitude to all the students, teachers and janitors who had helped us in lettershop and postal work during the past years. A big thanks to all of you!

Help share this message with your fellow St. Marian friends!



## St. Mary's Past Students' Association

[www.stmaryspsa.org](http://www.stmaryspsa.org)

# We Need Volunteers!

The SMPSA Exco is planning a special project to energize the community, bring different generations of St. Marians closer together, and stay more connected with our Alma Mater. We need volunteers to help in our three planned initiatives:

### Website & Social Media

Revamp website, launch social media channels

### Merchandise & Sales

Introduce broader variety of merchandise, develop online shop

### Networking & Events

Enable networking events for different generations of St. Marians via industry chapters or interest groups

Members who are interested to lend a hand can scan the QR code on the right or visit the SMPSA website for details, and complete the Volunteer Registration Form by **30 November 2021**. Looking forward to serving with you!



Details



Enquiries: [volunteers@stmaryspsa.org](mailto:volunteers@stmaryspsa.org)