

Welcome to HKSKH St. Mary's Church



As a parish church of the Diocese of Hong Kong Island within the Anglican Province of Hong Kong Sheng Hui (HKSKH), St. Mary's Church has been ministering to and serving the community of Tai Hang and its surrounding Causeway Bay area for over a century.

Founding of HKSKH St. Mary's Church

St. Mary's Church began as The Eyre Diocesan Refuge for Destitute Women, founded by Miss Lucy Eyre, a British Missionary, in 1898. The mission of the Refuge was to rescue the destitute and "fallen" women in the local society.

Back then Tai Hang was a fishing village close to water and far from any other Anglican parish.

Bishop Gerald Heath Lander formed a team to pick up these women and accompany them to St Stephen's Church on Bonham Road for Sunday worship. Subsequently, a chapel was established near the Refuge in 1911. The land was bought at HK\$960 with the donation from the Church of England and the chapel was constructed at the cost of HK\$3,550. Thus 1911 marks the founding of St. Mary's Church.



Figure 1: Early picture of St. Mary's Church in Tai Hang with the original building

Current Building

Planning of the current building began in December 1930 and broke ground in December 1936. The building was completed in 1937 but not consecrated until 25 March 1949 because the debt to pay for the construction was only settled after the war.



Figure 2: Construction of the current building (circa 1937)

Japanese occupied Hong Kong on Christmas Day in 1941. At first St. Mary's Church was forcibly closed. It later opened its doors for worship though most outreach and mission services were still suspended.

The building was rated as Grade 1 historical building by the Antiques and Monuments Office of the HKSAR Government in 2009.

Architectural Characteristics

The architecture of St. Mary's Church epitomizes the Contextualization Movement of 1930s.

The Exterior

With its red brick walls and green roof tiles, the exterior was designed to resemble a Chinese imperial palace. As a church building, however, its architectural layout follows that of a "Basilica".



Figure 3: The green and red tiled roof of the church building with its golden "crown" at its apex

Lined along the exterior wall are repetitive Chinese characters of "longevity" within which is the sign of the Cross. They separate the church on the upper level from the community hall on the ground level, showing how heaven and earth are connected through Jesus Christ.



Figure 4: The exterior wall of the building is lined with the Chinese character of “longevity”, separating its two levels

The Interior

Continuing the contextualization of the exterior design, the interior of the Church also adopts many Chinese traditional elements and motif.



Figure 5: The interior of the church with the vertical columns “transposed” to the ceiling

The Pulpit

The Pulpit is shaped like a lotus pedestal. For Chinese, lotus symbolizes cleanliness and purity and represents holiness in Buddhism. It was also used as a Christian symbol when the Nestorian Church (the Church of the East) was introduced to China during the Tang Dynasty (7th century).



Figure 6: The Pulpit with its lotus pedestal



Figure 7: The crucifix of St. Mary's Church was also adapted from the Nestorian Cross.

The Baptismal Font

The Baptismal Font has an octagonal shape as the number "eight" relates to the eighth day when Jesus was resurrected. The round basin symbolizes the womb from which the baptized person is reborn.



Figure 8: The octagonal shaped baptismal font

The Altar

The altar is a typical Chinese traditional table with rounded legs and winged top edges designed for sacred offering.



Figure 9: The altar is made of solid wood carved with numerous Christian symbols

Carvings on the altar include:

- Lily - the flower of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- Holy Bible
- The Crucifix
- Wheat – ingredient of the Communion bread
- Chalice
- Carp – represents vitality as the fish jumps out of the water, and is a sign of resurrection and salvation
- Lotus in the center – born from many small crosses, the death of Jesus by crucifixion cleanses us of our sins
- Waves and wave crest – this is the pattern typically used on the Chinese imperial cloak to symbolize the perpetual kingdom built on a solid foundation, in this case being the Kingdom of God
- Water bottle – the living water in the biblical context
- Flying bird – the bird quenches its thirst on the water, meaning one will never be thirsty again, symbolizing an eternal blessing



Figure 10: The meandering clouds above the altar reminds one of the presence of the Almighty God in this place of worship.

The Stained Glass Window



Figure 11: The stained glass window portrays the Blessed Virgin Mary with the infant Jesus

The stained glass window at the apse with the Blessed Virgin Mary and infant Jesus was fitted in 1962 to commemorate the Golden Jubilee of St. Mary's Church. It was designed by the Revd. Wong Po Lam, then vicar of the parish. The entire stained glass window was made by local craftsman. It was consecrated on 16th November 1962 at the Golden Jubilee Thanksgiving Service by Bishop Ronald Hall.

The stained glass depicts the humbleness and absolute submissiveness of Mary kneeling before God:

Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her. ~ Luke 1:38

Four rays of light radiate from the center of the crucifix, reminding us to lift the cross and let the true light of Christ radiate towards the world.