

New Faces at Trinity

This autumn, Trinity welcomed a record intake of new students, with 63 new full-time and 17 new part-time students. Here are a few of their stories.



The Hong Kong Pastor

As Mark Nam stood in front of the 2,000-member Hong Kong church The Vine leading worship, he noticed something that would change the direction of his ministry. From his unique vantage point, he saw the glow of certain faces, separate from the others. He saw foreign domestic workers, refugees from Africa and East Asia, people without homes, the elderly. He realised with a jolt that the church's Sunday celebration wasn't necessarily comfortable for them.

They came as people who were treated as second-class citizens all week long, who would silently take seats in the back and quickly leave at the end. He felt God asking him, 'What do you see?' And Mark realised that what he saw was depth and resilience. Despite everything, these people sought God. He felt God say, 'They are the living stones with whom I'm going to build my church.' That moment began a year-long transition for Mark from serving as a worship and creative arts director to becoming the church's community

and family life pastor, focused on building the family of God in his church, and wondering how to build community in such a diverse city.

Mark knew what it meant to experience the church as family. Born in Wales, he grew up in Hong Kong with his parents. He returned briefly to the UK for secondary school and university, but at the end of his first year of university his mum grew sick with cancer and died only a year later. One of Mark's first memories of leading worship was when his father asked him to lead them in worship at his mother's bedside as she passed away on New Year's Eve in 2001. In the weeks that followed, as Mark grieved, his father suggested a year-long return to Hong Kong, to the place that felt most like home.

In Hong Kong, Mark immersed himself in the community of The Vine, and they became extended family members who ministered to him in his pain. The year passed, and Mark finished his law degree in the UK, then returned to Hong Kong. But before he could begin to practice law, those leading The Vine met with Mark to ask him to join them in church ministry. Mark and his fiancée Kayi sensed the Holy Spirit's call, and, Mark says, 'I let go of six years of study and all the money it took to pay for it. I became the associate worship and creative arts director.' After five years in this role, Mark experienced that moment in worship, saw the glow of those faces before him, and recognised that he wanted to help build the family of God in new ways.

With the support of the church's leaders, Mark transitioned roles and began to oversee The Vine's small group ministry, with more than ninety groups meeting across Hong Kong, Kowloon, and the outlying islands—creating teaching materials, investing in leaders, leading mission trips into China and the Philippines, and developing ministries to the Cantonese-speaking community and foreign domestic helpers.

As the church grew, the pastoral issues grew in complexity, and Mark grew in

understanding. 'You can never presume to know what the issues are, let alone what the solutions might be,' says Mark of the church's outreach to refugees, foreign domestic workers, and others. 'Jesus looks at people, he gets into their group, goes into their homes and eats their food. He sits on the street with those on the street who have nowhere to live. He hears their stories and weeps with them. Only once we'd done that could we start to build family and actually be constructive.'

Then one day, as Mark prepared to preach about the Old Testament kings, he thought about Saul. He thought he could identify with that young king in certain respects—and he could see that Saul had relied on his gifts and favour rather than relying on God, which made Saul insecure, trying harder and harder in his own strength. 'I knew I was running on fumes,' Mark explains. 'All I'd learned growing up, through training and seminars, I'd exhausted it. I didn't want to crash like Saul. I prayed with my wife, and we felt called to pursue a season of sincere theological study and reflection and rest.' He and the church agreed that if he studied part-time, the church work would become a distraction, so Mark became a full-time independent student at Trinity, living in Bristol to be close to his father again and his wife's family.

'Being a full-time independent student can be challenging,' says Mark. 'You have to raise funds for yourself. Part of my spiritual formation is learning to surrender and trust—that's an essential part of our time at Trinity. If I'm going to encourage church members to step out in faith, I can say that I've done it. If I'm going to tell them to let go and embrace the new life God has for them, I can say I've done that myself.' Mark pauses and continues, 'I miss The Vine. I miss it very much. But I'm finding a new family at Trinity. I'm inspired by the other students' acts of faith, of obedience. I'm inspired by the stories of others around me who are growing in community.'



Laura had spent fifteen years working in Chatham, the second most deprived area of Kent, as a probation officer with forty to fifty people on her caseload. 'The rewarding thing was when people wanted to change, and being able to give them the skills to change and move on—it's providing a valuable service both to them and to the community they're from.' But increasingly Laura felt like she was only doing half a job; she wanted to help restore people's souls along with their life skills.

The Probation Officer with a Newborn

As Laura Faturoti moved through the ordination process—pretty sure she was going to pass her BAPs and halfway through looking at colleges—she found out she was pregnant.

'I was kind of thinking, I'm not sure this is going to work. I might need to put this off,' she says. But Laura already has two older children, age 9 and 10, and had wanted to see the family moved and settled before secondary school.

She was twelve weeks pregnant when she and her family came to visit Trinity. During her interviews with Principal Emma Ineson and Tutor in Christian Doctrine Justin Stratis she mentioned her pregnancy. 'They both said, "That's fine—we'll do whatever it takes to make it work." Trinity was the only college to respond like that.' As Laura and her family drove away from college, she remembers, 'It just felt so right for all the family. The spouse stuff was not all geared toward women. For my husband, Ebum, and me, it was important that this was something we did as a family. It is really important that we all had the time and space in these two years to be formed in this, and that's why residential training was the only option we looked at.'

She started to look into a new career in community or youth work. Her friends asked her why she wasn't training to become a vicar, and after saying no many times, she began to consider it.

Laura gave birth to Levi just two weeks before induction at Trinity, and the newborn has attended a full course load with his mum for the first term. 'Who on earth would do this?' Laura says now. 'But we've done really well. There's no way I could do this without a massive amount of prayer. There are a lot of people praying for us. And everyone here has been amazing. So many people in lectures have come up to me to say what a blessing it is to have Levi in class. Once, in Howard [Worsley]'s lecture, Levi woke and started to scream. I was hurrying to quiet him, and Howard said, "That is a fantastic reminder that Jesus came as a baby and disrupted everything."

Laura and her family will be in Bristol, living and serving in the Fishponds area, for two years, with no idea where God may lead them next. 'The uncertainty is really hard—it's hard especially as I think of our children. We literally just sold our house and came here. But through all of this God has a plan. We'll do this, and we'll trust him for the next step.'

The Doctors, Stopping to Seek God

A year ago, medical doctors Tom and Harriet Dove decided that they needed to take a year to step out of the intense pace of their lives and reflect. Married for two years, the Doves were both working at a hospital in Nottingham, where they'd completed medical school.

As part of their year-long break, the Doves travelled to complete a Catholic pilgrimage along the Camino de Santiago, journeying 900 kilometres on foot for five weeks across Spain to Santiago de Compostela. 'We were taking time off from the conveyor belt of medicine that kept going,' Tom explains, 'having a break from the system to regain perspective. The walk was very quiet—the same rhythm every day. Walk, then eat lunch. Walk, then have a snack and a drink. Walk, then have supper. It was such a simple way to live; it gave us space to reflect and to walk with God. It was about slowing our minds down so we could think a bit more clearly.'

By the end of their pilgrimage, Tom had recognised a possible interest in pastoral work and deeper theological study, and the Doves were discussing the idea of theological college. The couple visited Trinity, with Tom considering the Graduate Diploma

programme, because they saw Trinity as a place where they could engage academically while also moving closer to family.

During their interview day, Harriet sat listening with Tom and thought about her own desire to deepen her understanding of the Bible since becoming a Christian a few years earlier. 'When we visited, I realised I could do this also,' she remembers. 'I didn't have to have a certain background or to have already done certain things. When they talked about spouses doing part-time studies, I thought I'd like to do that. But then when they talked about the community here, and what it can mean to learn in community, I thought, I want to do *this*.' Though Harriet had already secured a place for her GP training in Bristol, the surgery accepted her deferral of the job for the year it would take to complete the Certificate programme full time.

'I want to grow my faith with all these people,' Harriet adds, 'with people from all different backgrounds and viewpoints, and to have discussions with people with different experiences.'

With their shared concern for medicine and ministry, the Doves wait to see the ways in which God may direct them after Trinity.



The International Politics Student

As Sam Rylands completed a programme in international politics at the University of Nottingham, he found himself wanting to know more about his Christian faith. He began a postgraduate programme at Cambridge to study theology and simultaneously became more involved in his church.

As he sat one morning in chapel, thinking about his life and where he might be headed—questions about possibly teaching, or working in law or politics, or charity work—Sam had a sudden clear sense of God saying to him, *Sam, you are going to be a vicar*. In the moment, it seemed clear enough, but Sam couldn't help feeling some skepticism, and so he prayed to ask that if this were God's will, he would provide a sign to confirm that. Sam went to church that evening, in the centre of Cambridge, and listened to a sermon about God keeping his promises to Abraham. The speaker intoned, 'If God is calling you—do it, do it, do it!'

Sam enrolled in the Church of England Ministry Experience Scheme, which offers young adults placements in churches around the country to help them consider

a possible call to the church while gaining a wide range of ministry experiences. They placed Sam in Tollington Parish, London. With his interest in politics, Sam says, 'I have a passion for social justice, for seeing how the church can work for that and serve its community.' He found himself working in a community dealing with drug, knife, and gun crime, and discovered how much he valued his time spent in youth ministry. At the end of his year in the programme, Sam was offered a choice between two roles—a chance to apply his interest in politics and international relations in the House of Lords or a role in youth and community work in Tollington. He chose to continue at Tollington because he felt called there and believes that the church is the best place to seek the transformation of communities.

Now an ordinand from London Diocese, Sam came to Trinity because during his visit 'the thing that struck me was the very vibrant community life. I recognized that part of the education is the community aspect. The staff genuinely felt welcoming and interested in me as a person, and it felt like the college is going in a really healthy direction. It is a vibrant place to be.' ■



What Does It Mean to Forgive?

Our Tutor in Theology and Ethics, **Rev Dr Jon Coutts**, has recently written *A Shared Mercy: Karl Barth on Forgiveness and the Church* (Intervarsity Press) to explore what it means to forgive and reconcile in the context of the church.

Q: What are the qualities of 'Christian' forgiveness?

A: Ten years ago when I left my first pastoral ministry to go to seminary, I must say I was pretty rattled. I wasn't sure exactly what leading a church was supposed to mean anymore. It wasn't until a class on reconciliation taught by David Guretzki

that I realised a lot of my worries revolved around questions I had not yet thought to ask. Questions about forgiveness, and the difference it makes to church. And the more I looked into the meaning of forgiveness the more I realised how complicated it could be. Does it mean forgetting the past? Does it require an apology from the other person? Does the other person even have to know I've forgiven them? As these questions

