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Hey guys, I'm back in action!

... Back in Taiwan, back in Taipei, back in the Taiwan Episcopal Church, back at St John's University, back in ACTION!

I was in the UK for almost six months, then spent a few weeks in Australia (*including many deliriously happy hours forever changing planes in Bangkok Airport!*) and finally back here. See some of the photos overleaf in Oz – me catching a massive big fish, my first ever (*okay... they all said it was tiny, but it seemed huge to me!*) – and a Mwanza reunion in the middle of nowhere in Australia (*I discovered that there's quite a lot of nowhere in Australia!*). I just loved it all, what a country, what wonderful people, what a great lifestyle, it was all just amazing!

Catching my first ever fish



And so to Taiwan, arriving in the early hours of Tuesday March 1, long delayed by fog at Taipei Airport.....

Taiwan news

A diplomatic row...

I arrived back in the middle of a big diplomatic row between Taiwan and the Philippines, after the Philippines had deported some Taiwanese baddies to Mainland China for trial, rather than to Taiwan.

Diplomatic spitting and spatting ensured that the row went on far longer and deeper than necessary, which was resolved eventually – only to have territorial disputes erupt between all countries in the South China Sea who would like to claim that some of the remote uninhabited islands, together with the oil or whatever lies underneath, are theirs and no one else's.

Meanwhile the long-running trade dispute

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The Mwanza reunion

with the USA over American beef and its additives continues – hence the beef noodle shop across the road from here has a big notice up saying '*Australian beef is used here...!*'

Earthquake, tsunami and nuclear problems...

Then came the terrible earthquake, tsunami and nuclear problems

I live at the very top of the island



in Japan. Tour groups rushed back to Taiwan and anxious relatives waited for news. The trauma was bad enough without the wall-to-wall sensationalist media coverage by the Taiwan media – paranoia and panic were setting in and the end of the world was predicted. Being on the same Pacific Rim of Fire, and also liable to strong earthquakes, the Taiwan government upped its efforts of reassuring the public that our nuclear reactors were all safe and prepared, just in case; and spent a lot of energy trying to persuade Mainland China to reposition its planned nuclear reactors away from its eastern coasts, and thus away from Taiwan.

Only this last weekend we had another big rally here in Taipei against nuclear power and to try to get the government to stop building the no. 4 nuclear power station, presently under construction. Also reassuringly not, no. 1 and no. 2 nuclear power stations are both not far from here, right on the coast...

One good thing, however, was that Taiwan people gave extremely generously to the relief effort for Japan; including the Diocese of Taiwan who collected donations for the Anglican Church in Japan – we raised US\$ 35,000!



With Revd Steve Maina (see text on page four)

A new title...

Meanwhile, although I haven't moved, I have a new address. Not in English, but in Chinese. Administrative changes in local government mean that Taipei County and Taipei City have now merged into one and we are now known as 'New Taipei City'.

How long the title 'new' will last is anyone's guess (in 1949 the currency officially became known as NT\$ 'New Taiwan Dollars'; their 'newness' continues to this day!) I suppose we are really now part of 'Greater Taipei City' but names are names are names. Anyway, one end result is that there's no more money



The Chung-Li new outreach building

for grants; local schools and even our church used to get quite a bit from the local township council for children's extra-curricular activities but not any longer!

A flower show...

Oh yes, and we had a flower show. But not just any old flower show – this was the 'Taipei International Flora Expo' no less, and you have never seen anything like it. Miles and miles of parks and gardens – and even the baseball stadium – all converted into the most magnificent display of every kind of flowers and trees.

Celebrating the opening of the new Chung-Li outreach building



Open for six months over the winter to April 2011, it received a total of almost nine million visitors. Nine million! The place was packed, queues were long, but it was GREAT!

Church life

I had a lovely visit from Revd Steve Maina, the national director of CMS New Zealand, himself from Kenya. I took him around to visit some other missions as they have foreign missionaries here big-time. One of them told us that in Chinese society the fear of failure and losing face is so strong that it makes the church fearful of outreach and church planting; that's one reason why they need so many missionaries.

Not so with the Anglican Church however; yesterday I was at Chung-Li City, just south of Taipei, for the opening of a brand new outreach station, eventually to become the daughter church of Good Shepherd Church, Taipei.

We're renting the two lower floors of this building and God has really blessed us so far! All of our churches, clergy and church members are being encouraged, challenged and pushed into action, into mission, outreach and church planting. The stuff about failure becomes more like... *it's better to try and to fail than not to try at all, because not to try at all is the biggest failure of all!*

Prayer request

It's true that some of our outreach is struggling, and we would appreciate your prayers. Other causes for concern are student numbers here at St John's University. The basic problem is the ever-decreasing birthrate and the huge number of universities (our population is about the same size as Australia's, but we have three times as many universities!). Yes, we are now recruiting students from Mainland China but this is the first year they are allowed by the government to come and study here, and numbers

are very limited, set by government allocation.

While we are also recruiting students from other countries overseas, for now all classes are taught in Chinese, so that is a limiting factor; and yes, we are trying to keep the reputation and standards of the university set high, but it is difficult to maintain standards when there is so much competition!

Speaking personally...

Well I've moved to the Chaplaincy of St John's University, and I spend many happy hours talking on the phone, sending emails, organising and welcoming visitors, producing the diocesan '*Friendship*' magazine (many of you may have received a copy of the latest issue, if you don't want further copies, just let me know), teaching, checking English, whatever!

I arrived after the new term had started, so many classes are on hold and ready to start in September which means I have a few months to get sorted and discern what to do or what not to do for next term. Before then, we have a host of visitors lined up for the summer, and my job is to accompany them, take care of their every problem and generally make sure they are settled and happy... and some summer camps are lined up too for me to teach. Watch this space!

Thank you for all your support, prayers, care and concern, and please continue!

Love

Catherine

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