

# FAQ

## LCMS SALE OF HONG KONG PROPERTIES

– May 3, 2019 –

### **Why is The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) selling property in Hong Kong?**

The LCMS is selling three properties in Hong Kong that were previously being used primarily as housing for missionaries and as office space for the LCMS Asia Regional Office. With the move of our Asia Regional Office to Taiwan, these properties are no longer needed for LCMS ministries in Hong Kong, and the prudent stewardship of LCMS resources has led the LCMS Board of Directors to sell these three properties.

### **Why did the LCMS move its Asia Regional Office out of Hong Kong to Taiwan?**

The LCMS Office of International Mission (OIM) relocated its Asia Regional Office to Chiayi, Taiwan, for several reasons. The building there in central Taiwan is exceptional, with ample housing and office space for the OIM regional missionary staff and plenty of room for expansion. They were able to relocate there at little cost and with no capital investment. Chiayi also offers a much lower cost of living for our OIM staff than they were experiencing in Hong Kong. Finally, the opportunities in Taiwan are significant, particularly since Taiwan enjoys religious freedom and is home to the only Mandarin-speaking Lutheran seminary in the world.

Taiwan is part of the OIM Asia Region, which includes 15 countries—Cambodia, China, Hong Kong (an administrative region of China), India, Indonesia, Japan, Macau, Malaysia, Myanmar (Burma), Papua New Guinea, The Philippines, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand—with 10 partner churches and nine seminaries. The LCMS works with partner churches all over Asia to train pastors, church leaders, and laity to share the Gospel in word and deed and to plant churches, show mercy, and provide Lutheran education. [international.lcms.org/asia](http://international.lcms.org/asia)

### **Did the LCMS agree or promise to transfer all of its property in Hong Kong to the Lutheran Church—Hong Kong Synod (LCHKS)?**

The LCMS agreed a number of years ago to transfer several pieces of property to LCHKS, when the LCHKS indicated they were ready to receive them. The majority of these properties have already been transferred to the LCHKS. The LCMS and the LCHKS are currently in discussion about making the transfer of the remaining agreed-upon properties, and the LCMS is prepared to transfer these properties once all legal steps necessary to enable the transfers, including governmental approvals, have been implemented.

The three properties that the LCMS is currently selling have never been included in any discussion of potential transfers to the LCHKS. The LCMS Board of Directors is solely responsible for deciding to sell the three properties in question and for determining the use of the sale proceeds. The LCMS has the full right and authority to own and sell its properties as it believes is prudent and in furtherance of the mission of the LCMS.

Over the decades, the total number and value of properties which the LCMS has gifted to the LCHKS is substantial and further demonstrates our longstanding partnership with the LCHKS.

### **Has the LCMS stopped or curtailed its mission work in Hong Kong and China?**

Absolutely not. The LCMS and the LCHKS continue to partner in mission throughout the greater China region. LCMS career and GEO missionaries serve in Hong Kong in partnership with the LCHKS, especially in Lutheran primary schools, high schools, and the Lutheran School for the Deaf. The LCMS also provides a world-class education to Hong Kong expatriate children (K-12) through the Hong Kong International School. [international.lcms.org/asia/hong-kong](http://international.lcms.org/asia/hong-kong)

The LCMS began work in Hong Kong in 1949, shortly after the formation of the People's Republic of China. In 1977, the LCHKS officially became an LCMS sister/partner church. It also is a member of the International Lutheran Council. In July 1997, Hong Kong rejoined China as a Special Administrative Region after being under British rule since 1898.

It is vitally important to stress that our focus and mission in China have not changed. The LCMS continues to have missionaries on the ground to support our efforts and to work alongside the LCHKS. In spite of the many hurdles, God's Word is clearly working in China today, and the number of Christians in China is growing rapidly. The LCMS has supported work in China through two areas in particular: education and mercy.

Through Concordia International School Shanghai, the LCMS provides quality education (preschool through high school) to Shanghai's rapidly increasing expatriate population and equips its students for service to others in China and around the world. Founded in 1998, with a current enrollment of nearly 1,200 students, the school has rapidly grown into a world-class institution with a distinctly Christian atmosphere, providing wonderful opportunities for service in the greater Shanghai community and beyond. [international.lcms.org/asia/china](http://international.lcms.org/asia/china)

### **Has the relationship between the LCMS and LCHKS become strained because of the sale of the property?**

The LCMS and the LCHKS have been partner churches since the formation of the LCHKS in 1977, and the LCMS highly values the relationship and opportunity to work together with our sister church in sharing the Gospel in Hong Kong.

The LCMS met with the highest leadership of LCHKS, a valued church partner, on multiple occasions to discuss the transfer of the five remaining properties and the sale of the three properties in question. Those early meetings were cordial and cooperative. In the last 18 months, however, the highest leadership of the LCHKS has written a number of disappointing letters to LCMS leadership expressing several inaccurate assertions and assumptions. The LCMS has responded with clarifications and corrections, and with repeated offers to sit down in person to discuss the matter and improve the relationship between the LCHKS and the LCMS. Those offers have not been accepted by the LCHKS.

### **How has the sale of the Hong Kong properties been received by the LCMS Council of Presidents?**

At their April 29, 2019, meeting, the LCMS Council of Presidents was thoroughly briefed and responded to the false accusations that have been circulating regarding the sale of the Hong Kong properties. They unanimously passed the following resolution:

Given the past false and derogatory claims, which are violations of the Eighth Commandment, on the issues of property in Hong Kong, the Council of Presidents affirms that the LCMS Board of Directors and President Harrison have acted honorably and with integrity in the matter of the handling of properties in Hong Kong.

