

Hong Kong November 2016



Jackie Pullinger MBE

Towards the end of November 2016 a group of 23 musicians from all over the UK set off for an adventure to Hong Kong. We had been invited to take part in celebrations there marking 50 years of working with and serving the needy in Hong Kong by missionary Jackie Pullinger. Some of us had been in Hong Kong before and knew Jackie personally, others had never travelled outside Europe - but we all knew that God had called us to go and be a blessing to Jackie and all whom she serves.

I'd first heard about these planned Jubilee Celebrations late in 2015 when I received an email from Jackie:

This is to let you know that we are planning a worship event at the end of November next year to celebrate my 50th year in Hong Kong. We are trying to see if we can get a tent somewhere. I would love you to come and play. It would probably be between the 25th to the 27th of November. Would you be available and any other musicians too? I feel a great need for horns and trumpets.

So I set about asking around my musician friends, particularly focussing initially on my brass player friends! By early 2016 I already had a good team together, all of whom were keen to take part in this adventure!

Over the next few months many emails were exchanged and the team was finalised. All of us were excited at the opportunity to go to Hong Kong, more than anything else because we wanted to be a blessing to Jackie and her team, but first and foremost to give thanks to God for all that He has done over these past 50 years in bringing freedom to people caught up in drug addiction, prostitution, poverty, crime and so on. Jackie's story is one of God's power to set people free!

If you've not read it, do get hold of Jackie's book 'Chasing the Dragon'. This really is a Christian classic now and is a remarkable story!

And so, after a 12 hour journey from London Heathrow, we arrived at Hong Kong international airport - tired from the journey and 8 hours ahead of UK time - but excited to see what God had in store for us.



Arriving at Hong Kong international airport

We took various taxis to 'Shing Mun Springs' in the New Territories area of Hong Kong to check in to our accommodation for the next 3 days. Shing Mun Springs is the main complex where many people, both young and old, are housed by Jackie and her team. Those who live there go through various stages of help. Some are helped off drug addiction, others from exclusion from school and others still learning how to function properly as families.



Part of the Shing Mun Springs complex

We were immediately thrown in the deep end with rehearsals that first evening in a hall in the complex known as 'Hang Fook Camp' (named after one of the earliest places Jackie had to house needy people). Jo Garcia, Lindsey Stoker and I had travelled out to Hong Kong in 2009 to join in celebrations for the opening of this hall, and it was a joy to come back to the same place!

Over the next 3 days we spent many hours working alongside the local worship teams and were also joined by other musicians and worship leaders from all over the world. The aim was to get to know each other, to worship together and to see how we could best work together musically. It was a very rich time blending our different cultures and musical traditions in preparation for the 50 hours of worship over the following weekend. Very quickly we all enjoyed working together in new ways and seeing God's Spirit at work. Some of the worship times over those 3 days were wonderful with a very real sense of God's Spirit around us and angels protecting us!



Some of our musicians working together with the local worship teams

In between rehearsals we were amazingly well looked after by our hosts. Everything was so well organised - from transportation to meals and accommodation. We felt very honoured to be so generously and lovingly looked after. We also had opportunities to socialise and eat together. On the Wednesday evening we all enjoyed a Chinese buffet in one of the local restaurants:



Chinese Buffet in Sha Tin

On the Thursday afternoon, many of us were given a tour of Shing Mun Springs to hear about the work that goes on there. It was fascinating to hear about the work with many young people (known as 'Go-Getters') as well as some older men and women who are helped by this wonderful work. There is a huge desire to bring people into a place of healing and wholeness, both as individuals and as families. So many of the people who are helped had little to look forward to in life, and now that they've learned to follow Jesus, they have a real hope and a future.



One of the first people Jackie introduced to Jesus nearly 50 years ago pointing out where he lived in this model of the Walled City



A garden in Shing Mun Springs dedicated to the memory of John To who was married to Jackie for around 7 years before passing away from liver failure (a common problem with ex drug addicts). Jo, David Brownlow and I were privileged to play at Jackie and John's wedding!

On the Thursday evening most of us had booked to go and see a play being put on based on Jackie's book, Chasing the Dragon. The play was at a local theatre on Hong Kong island. Quite a few of us took the opportunity to use public transport to get from Shing Mun Springs to the theatre. Part of that was a ride on the famous 'Star Ferry' across Hong Kong Harbour. The ferry hasn't changed in years, although the route is now shorter than it used to be as so much land has been reclaimed over the years. The views from the ferry at night are wonderful!



Hong Kong skyline at night

The play we went to was an exceptionally moving depiction of how Jackie came to faith and her call to be a missionary. It tells the story of her rejection by several mission societies and her decision to get on a boat stopping at as many places as possible, praying to know where to get off.

The play continued to show her arrival in the Walled City which was an area of Hong Kong completely outside the law, because of an anomaly in the agreement between China and Britain. Many prostitutes, triad gangs and drug dealers ended up in the Walled City. The affects of drugs, gang warfare and vandalism that Jackie witnessed were incredibly moving. In the midst of all of this, Jackie started a youth group right in the heart of the Walled City. At first, no-one would listen to her, but her tenacious faith and God's faithfulness eventually won many to faith. Many heroin addicts and triad gang members gave their lives to Jesus and were set free miraculously through the power of prayer. Towards the end of the play a number of testimonies were given by the actual people who'd been set free and most of us had tears in our eyes as we saw how much God had done through the faithfulness and dedication of Jackie.

Some of the testimonies were particularly moving. One spoke of living in the Walled City and regularly seeing dead bodies of people who had died from drug taking piled up outside the toilets - and knew that was his destiny also! Many others shared how Jesus not only freed them from drug addiction, but gave them wives and children. One woman said she was the daughter of one of the drug addicts and it if hadn't been for Jesus redeeming her Dad's life, she wouldn't even be there!



Chasing the Dragon programme cover

On the Friday we had some free time, so a number of us went to some of the famous markets and others again on to the star ferry to go up on to 'The Peak' which has wonderful views over the high-rise buildings on Hong Kong Harbour, looking over to Kowloon and the mainland:



Some of the music team enjoying amazing views of Hong Kong: from the ferry and from 'The Peak'

From the Friday evening right through until Sunday evening saw 50 hours of continuous worship in a huge 'tent' right on the same spot that the Walled City used to stand on. The Walled city was demolished in the 1990s and was turned into a beautiful park. As Jackie says, it's not many who see a dream becoming a reality like this! She saw the horrors and darkness of the Walled City turning into a place of beauty, but had no idea how that could actually happen. In the heart of the park is what is known as 'Jackie Pullinger Rock' with a plaque honouring Jackie and all that God had done through the calling God had given her.



Jackie Pullinger Rock (pictures taken on our previous visit in 2009)

The times of worship over the weekend were an extraordinary mix of wonder, joy, celebration, healing, laughter, tears, proclamation and so much more with hundreds attending the sessions. The musical team was quite incredible with worship led by people from across the world as well as by the amazingly gifted local worship teams, most of whom had been brought to faith and healed through Jackie and her team. Each session had spoken testimonies from those who'd been set free by Jesus through the power of prayer. Many who spoke were people Jackie had met in the walled city in her earliest days there. The stories were humbling and challenging as each gave thanks to God for all he'd done in their lives.



Worship in the tent, and some of the musicians and worship teams

The whole celebration weekend began with a fanfare for brass and percussion specially written for the occasion by one of our trumpeters, Pete Desmond. There was a huge roar from those who were there as the fanfare ended!

Epiphany had the opportunity to play Sound Portraits as part of the celebrations on two occasions, and many of those we played for were clearly moved by those times. It was great to see members of the public coming forward to share prophetic words and pictures for each person/couple we played for.

We also gave two performances of the 'Toy Symphony' conducted by Jackie herself and involving a good number of the young 'Go-Getters' playing some of the toy instruments (helped by some of our musicians) - all of which was great fun! We all looked hilarious in our party hats which were given to us for the performances!!



Some of the worship team and performing the 'Toy Symphony'

There were many times of ministry as well. Jackie and the others had received a number of prophetic words that many would be healed over the 3 days of worship. It was a privilege for us as musicians to play for people alongside those who were praying. We saw many deeply touched as we played for them and I'm sure we'll hear testimonies back of people who were healed and set free - and in some cases brought to faith for the first time.

One of the other musicians who joined us (an amateur clarinetist) sent an amazing testimony of healing after arriving home, Here's a little of what she wrote (used with permission):

Hi amazing musicians! I can barely put into words that don't ramble too much about my journey this last week. So thankful to you musicians for the beautiful music and songs played and created. As I joined in it was a step of courage because I'm not a professional musician!!! He took me on many journeys over those days involving past present and future. In the "rehearsals" sessions I was so touched by your instruments and songs.

The environment created was a safe place and I felt like a child that could explore creatively and just free to be myself in the context of the moment.

Your instruments and songs took me on such a journey, drawing out creativity and courage in me, affirming by music a deeper sense of belonging in God's family And healing balm! It was a safe and unified place and such a picture of His kingdom.

As you played and sung I was not only drawn to worship in the present, but God was doing a deep deep work ... The strings and flute were like a feminine healing sounds and literally felt like my heart was being massaged and tugged and mended. The cello by Jo was indescribable. The brass were like a male voice which I can't put into words but it started to connect me to Father God in a way I had strived for but couldn't do in my own strength. And you guys are so fun and mischievous!

On the plane on the way home to London I plugged in my headphones and instantly got classical music! Before take off I had tears streaming down my face as Jesus took me on this amazing journey with the music, from start of life to current Too much to write but suffice to say it was beautiful and healing beyond words. He sat me on this stunning horse and we kind of flew for ages. I am so having an awesome horse in heaven! Then he dressed me like a bride and led me on into what is next. I know the scripture and believed them for years but His presence through the music was something else.

I wouldn't have been able to experience this without the journey of the previous days.

I had Menieres disease since 2007 with notable hearing loss in my left ear, painful sensitivity to noise which makes me unsociable coz I couldn't tolerate. When I got off the plane I realised I was healed. My hearing is restored!

How wonderful! I'm sure there will be many other similar testimonies that we'll hear about over the coming days and weeks!

The final evening was one of great celebration and dancing - giving thanks to God for all His faithfulness and wonders shown over the last 50 years.

We all managed to get on our various flights home and have arrived back tired, but so thankful to God for the opportunity He gave us and humbled and challenged in our walk with Him.

Finally, here are a few brief reflections from some of the musicians since our arrival back:

- ◆ *Wow, what a week! So refreshed, amazed and deeply moved by so many extraordinary testimonies and astonishing stories. A very humbling experience and we were thrilled to be a tiny part of sharing our love for Jesus and his miraculous power to heal the broken.*

- ◆ *I was sooo pleased and relieved I came. What an inspiration for us all! Just the straight forward Gospel readings and up to date examples of Jesus' work there- no complicated doctrines/ arguments/ but plain life examples of Jesus at work. What an amazing work! It makes us question our own life's journey and motives.*
- ◆ *What an awesome experience! Every aspect of the visit was simply divine and very moving - like Deep Calls unto Deep. It was most definitely the place to be. I travelled back with some of the people that were present at various stages of the event and they also shared they were very moved and that it was a life changing experience. May the Lord continue to strengthen, anoint, protect and use Jackie for His Glory and the benefit of His Kingdom in HK.*
- ◆ *What an awesome week in HK and an immense pleasure and privilege to be part of a wonderful celebration of the unique personality that is Jackie. We were all truly blessed in so many ways and our gifts as musicians were all part of the ministry that we could see, feel and know, was going on.*
- ◆ *It was an incredible time and I felt so privileged to be there. I also felt such joy which I haven't known for some time.*
- ◆ *I Will treasure the memory of that week. It's humbling to think that God can use our musical offerings in such deep ways.*
- ◆ *There was something magical or other-worldly about the whole experience and the beauty is that in all our disparate ways, we all came together as one and we all were hugely and irreparably blessed. I think many ears are hearing anew just now, and hearts are being inclined.*

Steve Woods, who did much of the practical organisation for the weekend and looked after us amazingly, wrote:

- ◆ *Such compliments to you guys and your amazing gifts and we would love to have you return for a time to work with us. I can easily see this form of healing / blessing tried out here.*

So I can see us going back again at some point before too long!

Thanks so much to all of you who prayed for us or helped financially so some of the team were able to go. Your prayers were abundantly answered!

- Richard Williamson